STATEMENT

From **Assoc. Prof. Violeta Kotseva, PhD**,

Department of Ethnology, Faculty of History, Sofia University “St. Kl. Ohridski”

for the PhD thesis of **Vladimir Krasimir Terziev**,

full-time PhD student in the Department "History of Bulgaria" - Faculty of History,

Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski"

in a professional field 2.2. History and archaeology

(History of the Bulgarian Renaissance),

titeled: **"Health education in Bulgarian society 1856-1878"**, with supervisor Prof. Dr. Plamen Mitev

for obtaining the educational and scientific degree "doctor"

Vladimir Terziev's dissertation is dedicated to the presentation, research and analysis of the health and educational activities in Bulgarian society in the period from 1856 to1878 and their role in imposing the norms of modern scientific medicine at the end of the 19th century. In the context of the overall process of modernization of Bulgarian society from the mentioned period, the broad theme of the coexistence between tradition and modernity, presented through an analysis of the new norm for health and treatment, is undoubtedly relevant. Taking into account the fact that for a long period of time the topic of hygiene and health culture has been a marginal research object for our humanities, a detailed analysis of this aspect would contribute to its overall elucidation of the history of health care. The lack of comprehensive research on health education with a view to the imposition of modern biomedicine reinforces the relevance of the chosen topic.

PhD student Vladimir Terziev completed his bachelor's degree at the Faculty of History of SU "St. Kliment Ohridski", Department of "History of Bulgaria", specialization "History of the Bulgarian lands 15th-19th centuries", subsequently and MP "History of the Bulgarian Renaissance" with honors. He was enrolled as a full-time PhD student in the same Department on February 1., 2020. He submits his work within the legally established deadlines.

The dissertation follows the established structure of an introduction, four chapters, a conclusion and a bibliographical reference, with a total volume of 346 pages. The bibliographic reference includes extensive source of materials from the CDA and its divisions in Smolyan, Varna and Plovdiv, as well as those stored in the BHA, published archival materials, memories, old printed books, periodicals, research and online resources, showing a very good knowledge of the literature and digital sources on the topic.

The main goal of the research is clearly and correctly formulated, namely *tracing the birth of modern health knowledge during the Renaissance and the ways of its dissemination* (p. 6). Already on p. 4, the author makes a request for research with a focus on the everyday life in the past, social relations and changes in perceptions through an analysis of the process related to the displacement of traditional medical knowledge and its replacement by a modern one. The author examines health education as a reflection of the interaction between Renaissance education and the history of health care in our country (p. 4) and correctly notes out that health culture is the main element by which the change from tradition to modernity can be traced (p. 6). The achievement of the main goal is subordinated to the main tasks, which are clearly and correctly formulated and set the framework for the entire study.

In the introduction, the author outlines the chronological framework of the research, the main methodology, the fundamental literature and sources on which it relies. The leading methodology of the research is aimed at the analysis of historical sources and data. In this regard, and given attention to the interdisciplinary nature of the researched topic, which combines three scientific fields - History, Medicine and Cultural studies, a probable selection of an interdisciplinary methodology would give a broader fundament for the conclusions drawn in the work.

The first chapter of the PhD thesis examines the health knowledge during the Renaissance. The author consistently dwells on several problematic points: folk/traditional medicine; modern medicine and the clash/coexistence between them. Based primarily on historical information, the author tries to present the situation known in the literature as cultural dualism (according to M. Georgiev), a term describing in this case the simultaneous coexistence of two medical systems different in meaning and worldview. The results are in some way sketchy, which is mainly due to the strictly limited methodology and mostly historical sources. The imposition of modern medicine is not a linear process that necessarily goes through the replacement and disappearance of some cultural forms at the expense of others. The coexistence of different medical systems is a fact even today. For example, on p. 36, the author claims that the main reason for the spread of superstitious ideas about diseases is mainly due to the group of traditional healers (bajachki), hojas, etc. Any healing practice exists thanks to the shared knowledge about the causes of diseases and their treatment. If there is no publicly shared belief in their efficacy, they would soon disappear, and even the present situation shows that they continue to enjoy popularity. Thus, the conclusion made on p. 71 that the controversy that arose regarding the role and importance of grandmothers-midwifes is evidence of the hesitations that occurred in society about which path of health care to choose, does not find arguments in the text. A cultural analysis of the period shows that society still lacked hesitations, rather they were inherent in a small group of educated medical doctors whose knowledge remained inaccessible and unknown to the broad groups of people, sharing a radically different worldview to which the healers and their healing practices responded.

The second chapter examines the modernization of the Bulgarian health culture during the Renaissance. PhD student Terziev consistently dwells on the following problematic circles in this part of his research: the context shaped by the reformatory acts of the Ottoman Empire; the increased interest among Bulgarians in the medical profession and its gradual imposition as one of the prestigious professions among the emerging Bulgarian intelligentsia, the influence of modern health knowledge on pharmaceuticals etc.

The third chapter is devoted to health education within the framework of revival education. The author pays special attention to hygiene as a prevention of diseases. A logical approach that most clearly shows that modern medicine comes with a radically different knowledge of the disease - not only treatment, but also the prevention of diseases, which requires a complete change of perception of the world and, accordingly, the way of life.

The fourth chapter is devoted to analyses of distribution of printed publications (books, brochures, press) on health topics during the Renaissance. Consistently within the scope of research interest are the main titles published during the time, the role of the printing press and the main themes that health literature advocated during the period as an emphasis in the transformation of the medical concept.

The author collects the main conclusions in the final part of his PhD thesis.

Vladimir Terziev shows a detailed knowledge of the historical literature concerning the researched problem. He skillfully handles the sources both by weaving them into a complete narrative and by using them to analyze the process of modernization of Bulgarian society. The dissertation is a complete text and the comments made below are only intended to improve the analysis and strengthen the conclusions drawn.

The entire text of the dissertation traces the coexistence of the two medical systems in the conditions of diametric opposition - the traditional one and the scientific one. The first worldview, unlettered, non-institutional, transmitted within the family-kinship circle, but accepted and shared by all, and the second - tied to the institutionalized norm outlining the parameters of a healthy body and society. Throughout the text, the author walks in the safe and comfortable field of facts and written data. However, when studying enlightenment (whatever it is) it is proper to point out its reflections on society, which requires a cultural analysis. Such, in my opinion, would give greater depth to the study. Replacing one concept of health and treatment with another requires tracking social processes in the context of their modernization. Adherence mainly to historical analysis in the study of social processes sometimes leads to schematic and hasty conclusions. For example, on p. 146, the author states that there is a public impulse to replace traditional healers, and the statistical data mentioned above in the text do not give grounds for such a conclusion. They show the impulse of a small educated group that does not represent the whole society. Even the material cited by the author refutes this thesis. For example, on p. 248, he points out the fact that sometimes even persons directly connected to the educational work and education in the country, such as St. Bobchev and Venko Grumnikov, do not know some of the medical works, but what remains for the general masses. This also explains the author's well-known "wobbles" towards final conclusions, such as the one made on p. 305, according to which the modern to the 19th century principles of health thought dominate in the studied period. There is no basis for such a conclusion in the text, since it is clear from it that the introduction of modern health knowledge does not completely supplant traditional knowledge. In this sense, the use of data beyond the chronological scope assumed in the study could show the complexity of this process, as well as it is not always in a linear direction. The text also lacks the users of the modern health culture - who are they, are there any, are they mainly city dwellers, are there uneducated people and representatives of the villages among them. The answer to these questions will show in full the reflections of health education on Bulgarian society during the Renaissance.

The comments made above in no way detract from the fact that the dissertation presents us the author as a well-prepared researcher, with the prospect of new interesting and contributing research in the field of social history, history of health work and its transformation in the conditions of transition from tradition to modernity. Proof of this is the author's publications on the topic of the dissertation research - a total of 16 in number (of which ten published and six in print). The abstract corresponds to the content of the dissertation. Incorrect citations and plagiarism are not detected. The text is a contribution to the history of health care with an emphasis on health education in the years following the Crimean War.

The procedure corresponds to the Law on the Development of the Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria, the Rules for its Application, as well as the internal Rules for the conditions and procedure for acquiring scientific degrees and for holding academic positions at SU "St. Kliment Ohridski". Therefore, expressing my categorical positive opinion, I propose to the respected Scientific Jury to award the educational and scientific degree "Doctor" to Vladimir Krassimir Terziev for the PhD thesis on the topic “**Health education in Bulgarian society 1856-1878"** and I will vote positively for it.

Sofia Signature:

20. 07. 2023 Assoc. Prof. Violeta Kotseva

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