

REVIEW

by Assoc. prof. Iliyan Boyanov, PhD, Department of Archeology of the NBU,
member of a scientific jury for public defense,
appointed by Order No. 3-PK-61 / 06.12.2023 of the Rector of the NBU

for the dissertation work of Bogdan Stoyanov Atanasov "Technology and society at the end of the second millennium BC. in the Western Black Sea. The settlement from the Late Bronze Age near Durankulak", submitted for the acquisition of the educational and scientific degree "doctor" in professional direction 2.2. History and archaeology

The dissertation work submitted for defense consists of 364 pages of text, divided into an Introduction, an exposition in ten chapters and a Conclusion, as well as 32 pages of appendices, which fully fits into the generally accepted volume for similar types of developments. The topic was well chosen in view of the lack of comprehensive research on the end of the Late Bronze Age for the area between the Danube Delta and the Bosphorus along the Western Pontus. In this sense, the original author's work presented by Bogdan Atanasov is long-awaited and a contribution to Bulgarian, and not only, archaeology.

The chronological scope of the work is generally placed at the end of the second millennium BC. and is clearly related to the discussion of the end of the Late Bronze Age. The dissertation work is dedicated to a single settlement - Durankulak, but the author's request is based on it to cover the issues for the entire Western Black Sea.

In the introductory part, in a concise but comprehensive form, a summary of the state of archaeological research not only in Durankulak, but also in general for the Eastern Balkans is made. The results of these studies are compared with the overall picture of the Eastern Mediterranean at the end of the Late Bronze Age, with Bogdan Atanasov hinting here at one of the goals of his research, namely the presence or absence of a connection between the crisis of the state formations there in the XIII-XII centuries. BC and the heyday of Southeast Europe at that time.

In Chapter one, a comprehensive and critical historiographical review is made, outlining the problems and challenges facing the studies of Late Bronze Age sites. Emphasis is placed on

the periodization established today and the discussion about the end of the LBA and the beginning of the EIA. A little unconventionally, at the end of this chapter are placed the objectives of the dissertation work, which are stated clearly and concretely enough and demonstrate the excellent knowledge of the issues on the part of Bogdan Atanasov.

Chapter two is dedicated to the physical-geographical conditions and the paleoenvironment in the Second Millennium BC. in the Eastern Balkans. The information gathered in this chapter about the climate and environment at the end of the LBA shows that neither the appearance nor the disappearance of the settlement from the LBA near Durankulak can be explained by climatic factors alone.

In the third chapter, the history of the investigations of the settlement by the LBA is presented, and all the elements of the archaeological investigation and its documentation, including the tools with which it was carried out, are traced in detail. At first glance, this information seems too detailed and even superfluous, but when working with a limited to sparsely documented source base, every detail of the study can turn out to be key.

The following chapters are highly unbalanced and demonstrate a structuring of work typical of the German school of several decades ago, which is still used today in many cases. Chapter Four, which runs to nearly two full pages, outlines the boundaries of the Big Island settlement of the LBA and could easily be placed as an introduction to the subsequent Chapter Five (170 pages), discussing the architecture and stratigraphy of the site, which are inextricably linked to its disposition. This chapter is also the most important in the dissertation work, since there is no other object from the Second millennium BC. in the Eastern Balkans and in the Western and Northwestern Black Sea coasts, in which buildings from three architectural phases have been preserved one above the other. This allows the diachronic tracing of changes in architecture and the emergence of innovations such as terracing and apse houses, as well as the return to the original layout at the end of the settlement's existence.

Chapter Six is devoted to the basic livelihood of the population. Archaeozoological studies indicate a sedentary, agricultural-based economy. The analysis unequivocally shows that animal husbandry has an auxiliary function and agriculture is the main livelihood. Of particular importance is the observation that the presence of a large number of pigs can be taken as a sure sign that seasonal pastoral migrations do not occur, as pigs cannot move in a herd like cattle or cattle.

The next four chapters are devoted to the pottery, small finds, flint artefacts and metal objects from the settlement. A significant contribution here is the proposed chronology of the settlement in Durankulak in XII BC. According to Bogdan Atanasov, it is probably partially synchronous with Troy VIIb1, but it is possible that it was founded even earlier, in the XIII century BC.

In the Conclusion, the main conclusions of the doctoral student are presented in a synthesized form, some of which repeat those in the corresponding chapters.

In conclusion, I want to emphasize the contribution nature of the dissertation work. Written in readable, even engaging language, it fills an essential gap in native literature. Despite some recommendations and remarks, in view of my overall positive impression, I strongly recommend to the honorable scientific jury to award Bogdan Stoyanov Atanasov the educational and scientific degree "doctor" in professional field 2.2 History and Archaeology.

03/03/2024
Sofia

Sincerely:

