

SOFIA UNIVERSITY "ST. KLIMENT OHRIDSKI"

FACULTY OF HISTORY

## STATEMENT

under the procedure for defense of a dissertation on a topic

**"Authority and Ideology in the Early Neo-Assyrian Empire (934–745 B.C.)"**

For acquiring of the educational and scientific degree "PhD"

by

Candidate: **Zozan Mehmet Tarhan**

Scientific area: **2. Humanities**

Professional field: **2.2. History and Archaeology**

Doctoral program: **„Ancient history” - Ancient history**, department "Ancient history, Thracian studies and Mediaeval history"

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The work consists of a total of 342 pages, organized as follows: Title page, Contents and Acknowledgments (I-V), followed by Introduction and four sections: I. Sources; II. Historical essay...; III. Power in the Early New Assyrian Empire...; IV. Ideology in the Early New Assyrian Empire...; Conclusion, Bibliography (from 1 to 297 p.). After them comes the Appendix (from 298 to 336 p.).

PhD student Zozan Tarhan, in addition to studying at the Faculty of History of Sofia University „St. Kliment Ohridski ", where she obtained a bachelor's degree (in

Archaeology) and two master's degrees (in Ancient History and in Archaeology), several times she specialized in prestigious universities and schools abroad, something that made her a well-prepared scientist in a certain field of Ancient history - Assyriology.

In the **Introduction**, in addition to the serious **Motives** and the complex scientific historical **Methodology**, including philological, archeological and text-critical interpretation of the sources, the **Objectives** and **Tasks** of the research are presented. They consist mainly in revealing political history and royal ideology, as well as the interaction between the two. Here, as a necessary historiographical basis, is a good overview of the main research on the topic.

**Section I. Sources** (9-24 pp.) Is rightly divided into two parts: Chapter 1. *Written sources and Chapter 2. Archaeological and iconographic sources.*

**Chapter 1** presents the corpus editions of the written sources - inscriptions, lists, chronicles, ritual and cult texts, literary texts, which are the basis for the work on the topic of the dissertation. **The author does this competently and analytically.**

**In Chapter 2**, the dissertation introduces us to summarized information on archaeological and iconographic sources. The iconographic ones are primarily reliefs with figurative scenes, and the archeological ones are connected with the palace construction activity of the kings. They are actively used later in the text in the research and development of the issues in Sections III and IV.

**Section II. Historical Expose of Assyria before the Neo-Assyrian Period - Some Marks on the Development of Assyrian Royal Authority and Ideology** (25-41 pp.) is the basis for the actual work in Sections III and IV. It is presented with two chapters. The first covers the **Old Assyrian Period** (2004-1736 BC), with special attention to the fundamental role of Shamshi-Adad I (c. 1809 – 1776 BC) in transforming the city-state of Ashur into a territorial early class state, and the second - the **Middle Assyrian Period** (1353-935 BC), with the restorer of the state Ashur-ubalit I (1353–1318 BC) and his successors Salmanasar I (1263–1234 BC), Tukulti-Ninurta I (1233–1197 BC), and - Late and Tiglath-Palasar I (1114–1076 BC). In fact, **here the author successfully traces the genesis and early manifestation of phenomena in foreign expansionist politics and royal ideology, which will become the rule in the heyday** of the Early Neo- Assyrian Empire.

**Section III. Power in the Early Neo-Assyrian Empire** (42-193 pp.) *consists of 9 Chapters*. It is essential in the study. *The first 8 chapters present 10 Neo-Assyrian rulers*: Ashur-dan II (934-912 BC), Adad-nerari II (911-891 BC), Tukulti-Ninurta II (890-884 BC), Ashurnazirpal II (883 –859 BC), Salmanasar III (858–824 BC), Shamshi-Adad V (823–811 BC), Adad-nerari III (810–783 BC), Salmanasar IV (782–773 BC), Ashur-dan III (772–755 BC) and Ashur-nerari V (754–745 BC). **Based on a detailed and undoubted contributory analysis of the available sources by Zozan Tarhan, both the sequences of events and the routes of their military campaigns, as well as their construction activities, have been**, presenting the early Assyrian state as a successful empire in West Asia.

The *Ninth Chapter* traces the main *Institutions and Positions* in the Early New Assyrian Empire and outlines their role in the functioning of the state apparatus. These are: *the palace, the army, the governments* of (districts, cities, villages) and *temples*.

**Section IV. The ideology in the Early Neo-Assyrian Empire** (194-264 pp.) consists of 6 chapters. And this section is essential for the study.

In the First Chapter *What is (Assyrian) Ideology ?*, against the background of different views, argues the author's idea of ideology - in the case of the kings of Assyria, which is based on religion.

Chapter Two *The King Chosen by the Gods* develops the vision of an Assyrian ideology, which is expressed in the idea that the king is chosen and appointed by the gods to carry out their will. The means for this are the *title* and *epithets*, the *call to power*, and especially the *coronation ritual*, in which **Zozan Tarhan argues her contribution, which is expressed in the fact that the enthronement ceremony was held in year zero, and that it is reaffirmed every next year.**

Chapter Three *The Role of the King as Priest* examines the actual functions of the king as high priest, well reflected in analyzed written texts and observed in specific iconographic scenes. Here, through the manifestations of the king-priest, it is demonstrated how religion perfectly fulfills its role in ideology.

Chapter Four *The King as Conqueror. The Imperial Mission* advocated the view that the conquests of kings were conceived and presented as commissioned by the gods. In this context, the author argues for the imperial nature of the Early Neo-Assyrian state, ie. **empire**.

Chapter Five *The Unparalleled King* continues his ideological support for the king's exclusivity as the supreme and patronized chosen one of the gods.

Chapter Six *The Personal Palace and Iconographic Sources as Markers of Kingship* are based on archaeological and iconographic sources. Archaeological - royal palaces demonstrate the power and grandeur of royal imperial power, and iconographic - complement this with ideological justification.

**The Conclusion** (265-277 pp.) successfully summarizes the achievements in the essential contents of III and IV Sections of the dissertation.

**The Bibliography** (278-297 pp.) is significant and significantly presents the historiographical basis in the development of the work.

**The Appendix** (298-336 pp.) consists of a **Glossary** (with titles and positions, as well as a standard Mesopotamian calendar); **Table; Cards; Plans; Images**. It is very useful with the best possible illustration of textual analysis and synthesis, and should undoubtedly be considered an integral part of the work.

**The text** of the dissertation **is written very professionally**, but there are **technical errors** (missing letters, shifted syllables, etc.) that should be corrected.

**There is no plagiarism in the work.**

**The Abstract** meets the requirements. **I accept and approve the contributions listed in it.**

The author has **enough publications on the topic of the dissertation - 2 published and 2 - in print.**

**Against this background and as a summary I will list other especially important merits and achievements in the dissertation of Zozan Tarkhan:**

-the author **achieves successful reading, knowledge and self-interpretation of different types of sources: mainly written, but generally speaking - archaeological, incl. and iconographic.**

- this **helps her to present in detail and critically use the historiography** on the topic. The doctoral student **confidently comments on the opinions in science on various issues on the subject, always looking for reasons to support the available statement or to argue her point of view;**

-the history of the Early New Assyrian Empire is presented by the dissertation not only as part of the Old History of Mesopotamia, but also as **an integral part of the Old History of the Eastern Mediterranean and Western Asia - united societies and peoples from the Mediterranean to The Iranian plateau**, incl. I would say that this is a kind of early globalization, which will become a role model for the next empires in antiquity: New Babylonian, Persian, etc.

-the extremely reasonable explanation, noted several times in the text, that **the wars of Assyria are not only for prey, conquest of territories and population, but for possession of important for this part of the world, trade routes and sources of raw materials, among which I will emphasize , metals are especially important.** This is one of the reasons why the Assyrian army was the first most modernized and successful imperial army at that time in this part of Old World history.

-In this context is the question of **Assyrian ideology**, which has not only its religious foundations as a **royal ideology**, but justifies the **imperial behavior of the kings of the Assyrian state to conquer territories and populations**, which is undoubtedly chronologically the first empire of the "new age", from the first centuries of the first millennium BC.

**In Conclusion.** The text of the dissertation presented and commented on here illustrates a very good knowledge and text-critical handling of the sources and historiography by Zozan Tarhan, in which her analyzes and syntheses give grounds for new and contributing conclusions, with which this dissertation indisputably and profitably fits into the science of Assyriology as part of the Ancient History.

Based on the above, **I recommend the Scientific Jury to award Zozan Mehmet Tarhan the *educational and scientific degree "Doctor" („PhD“)***, in the Field of 2. Humanities, Professional direction 2.2. History and Archaeology.

Date: 16.12.2021  
Sofia

Signature:



Kalin Porozhanov