

REVIEW

By Professor PhD **Nadya Manolova-Nikolova**

Regarding

Vladimir Krasimir Terziev's doctoral dissertation on the topic

'Health enlightenment among the Bulgarian society 1856 – 1878'

Academic field: 2. Humanitarian sciences; Professional field 2.2. History and Archeology:
Bulgarian History
(History of the Bulgarian Revival - XVIII – XIX centuries)

Sofia University "St. Kliment Ochridski" – Faculty of History – Department "Bulgarian History"

Vladimir Terziev began his doctoral studies in "Bulgarian History – History of the Bulgarian Revival" in 2020 and completed the course on 01st February 2023 with the right to defend his doctoral dissertation. I have known Vladimir Terziev since he was specializing student and later as Master's degree student in the professional field "Bulgarian Revival" in the department "Bulgarian History" in the Faculty of History, Sofia University. His doctoral three-year, full-time study program was a logical continuation of his previous education and his aspiration for academic work. The final result was his dissertation work on the topic of 'Health enlightenment among the Bulgarian society 1856 – 1878'.

All the submitted materials, necessary for the defense the abstract and other publications on the topic are in accordance with the *Regulation for the Conditions and the Order for Obtaining Academic Degrees and Academic Posts at Sofia University* and the *Law for Development of the Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria*.

In the introduction of his work the author clarifies his motives to undertake the research of the topic. An appropriate structure is outlined, consisting of an introduction, four chapters, a list of used sources and literature, and abbreviations. For the volume of the listed sources and literature reviewed it is more than enough to point out that they occupy pages 312 to 346, with a large scope of sources and authors.

The introduction is extensive and contains a number of important clarifications. First, clarifications about the terminology used, like health enlightenment, health promotion, health education, health culture among the population, etc, as well as the key term – modern health education. This specification of the terminology in contemporary context is fundamental for the building of the entire text of the dissertation.

The chronological frame of the research is outlined in a concise and appropriate manner, since it is well-known and in accordance with the accepted periodization of the final stage of the Bulgarian Revival. At the same time I would like to note that not all processes and occurrences, especially those related to matters of culture, could be limited in time-frame with

specific years. This often causes issues during the building of the analytical text.

The main aims and tasks of the research are well-founded and defended by using an appropriate methodology. The methodology combines both analytical and comparative approaches, complete with newly discovered documents and other materials. Several problems about the topic have been implied, mainly related to the perseverance of the traditional medical knowledge, which effectively brings the topic into the XX century and gives new perspectives for research in future works by the author.

In the introduction, and with a good reason, the doctoral candidate makes a detailed analysis of the existing literature. He outlines the achievements of the historical medical literature and the achievements of the historical research of the process of modernization of the Bulgarian education, i.e. the health enlightenment. As a merit of this analysis I would like to point out its veracity, chronological consistency and its critical summary.

At the end of the introduction there is a short characteristic of each of the four chapters with view of explaining their titles. Structurally, the four chapters consist of several paragraphs, all dedicated to matters related to their titles.

The first chapter aims for a summarized presentation of the topic “Medical knowledge during the Revival”. The first paragraph is entirely dedicated to the traditional folk medicine, and it contains information both for its study and characterization. I think that the first paragraph contains plenty of unnecessary details, which are well known (for instance, information about healers, medicine men, herbalists, etc). At the same time I would like to admit that there is a collection of interesting information about the different traditional practices from different texts and regions, which are compared and this is very useful.

The second paragraph of chapter one consists of two sub-paragraphs. The first one sheds light on the more global aspect of the modern health education, while the second is dedicated to its reception in Bulgaria. The text has been re-worked and is significantly more convincing than the initially proposed variant. Again, the main terminology used by the author has been clarified – modern medical science, sanitation, medicine.

The third paragraph talks about the conflict between the traditional and modern medicine, or, more precisely about the efforts made by the Bulgarian intelligentsia to introduce and impose the modern medical science. The author rightly accentuates upon the interactions between the tradition and modern health knowledge, and the tendency towards the acceptance of the modern – a tendency, which became predominant after the Liberation of Bulgaria.

The second chapter, titled “Towards modernization of the Bulgarian health culture during the Revival – prerequisites and main directions” aims to clarify the main factors which led to the introduction of modern medical knowledge among the Bulgarians. As a starting point, the author briefly describes the Ottoman policies of reforms, mainly those in their army and the changes in the entire society of the Empire that stemmed from these reforms. This is important with a view of the historical accuracy and the consequences that influenced different spheres of the social life. The information about Bulgarian and foreign medical professionals is very detailed; the influence of the epidemics for broadening the health culture

and awareness among the population and the measures undertaken by the Ottoman authorities are also discussed in detail. The relative social changes in the Bulgarian society and the western influence are pointed out as contributing factors towards modernization. I do not think that the very detailed explanation about the formation of the Bulgarian medical class, along with the apothecaries and midwives was necessary in this paragraph. Yes, the formation of such class undeniably played a crucial role for the affirmation of the medical knowledge, but it does not carry new information about the main topic, which is the health enlightenment.

I do think that the connection between the medical professionals and the local authority structures is well explained, because this connection brought benefits from the well-organized health promotion propaganda and the elevation of the status of the medical profession, a summary of which can be found on pages 151 – 152. I would also like to add that I consider the information about the foundation of the two hospitals in Tarnovo and Varna as unnecessary.

Via an acceptable chronology and interesting information the author tells about the development of the profession of apothecary, the acceptance of new medicines and means of treatment, but again as a “sideline” to the main topic.

The third chapter logically continues the clarification of the connection between the conscious awareness for health promotion and the development of the schooling system during the period of the Revival.

The first paragraph of the chapter deals with the rarely discussed question as to when the awareness for a purposeful popularization of the hygienic norms in school arose. It looks into detail the favourable conditions for ascertaining sanitary norms and protection of human health mainly during the 60s and 70s decades of the century. The author uses a well-founded definition for health enlightenment activists, mentioning specifically the contributions of several of them – namely, Sava Dobroplodni, Stefan S. Bobchev, Anastas Granitski and others. Although in reality no actual debate existed about the health education of the young generations of Bulgarians, according to Vladimir Terziev there were numerous articles and letters in the press at the time of Revival dedicated to the matter and thus their authors debated on the issue of such education. These people belonged to the movement, according to which schooling should bring practical benefits in a person’s life, and the health education was considered a part of it. The author of the dissertation does not neglect to mention that elements of such education were indirectly included in the more traditional type of schooling as well.

In the second paragraph the narration goes back towards the first half of XIX century, and this approach has been used a lot in the previous parts of the work. This “going back” is necessary as to clarify the role of Doctor Petar Beron, Emanuil Vaskidovich, Neophit Bozvely and other health educators, but this again proves that the year 1856 cannot be defined as a starting point for the health promotion activity. The connection between health education and the ethical and religious character of the schooling at the time is very logically emphasized. The role of the Bulgarian and foreign literature on the matter of health education is well explained and supported by appropriate examples, like the introduction of gymnastics as a subject in some

schools, and the lectures and talks held by teachers and doctors. The big responsibility the teachers and school boards had for the health education and healthy behavior of the young people is very well pointed out, too. The conclusion made in this paragraph is correct – yes, hygiene was not included in the school curriculums as a subject, after all, but knowledge of the topic was constant presence in the work of pedagogues, doctors and other adepts of the modern medical science.

The scope of the reviewed written material is wide and includes primers, encyclopedias, and textbooks on natural sciences, anatomy, physiology, anthropology, psychology and many others with content that often includes medical knowledge. The doctoral student has managed to some extent clarify their influence during the epoch by locating their use in the schooling process. The conclusion at the end of the third chapter correctly points out that at the time only the fundamentals of the modern health education were set in schools, but this tendency would continue to develop in Bulgaria after the Liberation.

What makes a good impression not only in the third chapter but also in the preceding ones is the very accurate and critical perusal of the sources used by Vladimir Terziev, due to which he makes a number, albeit minor, of corrections on their origin and use in the already existing works on the topic. This shows already formed research skills of a good future historian of the Bulgarian Revival.

The last chapter of the dissertation is dedicated to the press and other publications from the period which deal with the topic of health promotion. The aforementioned method is applied extremely well, resulting in a suggested correction of the accepted opinion about the first Bulgarian medical book. The attention towards the translated, but very detailed and popular among the health professionals “Practical Medicine” by Anastas Granitski is fully deserved, as well as its high contribution for the development of Bulgarian medical thought. Vladimir Terziev defends the opinion (one that has been already expressed in the literature) about Dr. Vasil Beron’s work “Natural History” as being the first Bulgarian medical work.

Detailed is the analysis of Sava Dobroplodni’s book “Concise Health” and its popularity, as well as of the second book, published in 1851, the original of which belongs to the Spaniard Mathieu Orfila and a number of other works, mostly translations. The summaries made after the overview of the Bulgarian and foreign literature are convincing and logical. (pages 253 – 257).

Terziev’s analysis of Dr. Ivan Bogrov’s pamphlet about the village doctor and Ljuben Karavelov’s criticism is very good. It confirms the author’s thesis about the interactions between traditional healing experience and modern medicine. (pages 263 – 264). Some of the scientific works of the doctors during the epoch of Revival are also noted, without the author dwelling on them in detail, due to their limited influence among the Bulgarian society at the time.

The second paragraph of chapter four elaborates on health education through publications in the press at the age of Revival. Their diversity makes it possible to emphasize the different approaches to different classes of society to which the health theme is offered.

In the next, third paragraph, the main topics covered in the health education literature are outlined. Although mentioned in one way or another in the preceding parts, here we find rather a summary presentation of the most important positive factors for the protection of human health. Because of this repetition, I think it would be more valuable to present the literature on maternal care and raising young children, about alcoholism, sex education, premature burials.

The summary at the end of fourth chapter about the increasing number of publications and distribution of health literature is completely logical and proven.

The conclusion of the dissertation presents in a summarized and progressive form the main theses and conclusions made by the author in the four chapters of his work.

Regarding the style and means of expression used by the doctoral student, I will note that he uses clear and precise literary language suited to this type of research. At the same time, I do not consider certain language usages to be appropriate. Expressions like “not quite unknown”, “it cannot be said that there is no...” and other conditional phrases that show unnecessary uncertainty are often found. I would also correct naming Ljuben Karavelov as an “educator from Koprivshtitsa”, since when he wrote his article in his newspapers or in ‘Znanie’ magazine he was in Bucharest, and very far, mentally or physically, from Koprivshtitsa and the local educators at the time.

I consider the author’s main achievements to be the following:

- Very good analysis of the sources, with thorough tracing of their origins, uses and reuses.
- Critical use of the extensive literature on the subject.
- The contribution of a certain circle of institutions and Revivalists for the introduction and the popularization of modern medical concepts and practices is presented in detail.
- In chronological plan, the progress of Bulgarian society in the second half of the XIX century towards the perception of hygiene norms and medical understanding of human health as invaluable capital of society has been clarified.

Critical notes:

- The answer to the question what was the reception of the health promotion among the classes apart from the intelligentsia (the doctors, teachers, journalists reviewed in the dissertation) – such as guildsmen, merchants, farmers and others remains in shadow. It is a possible topic for further research.
- The text could be less lengthy after an assessment of which repetitions might be avoided.
- The time frame for the topic, which is 1853 – 1878 could be removed from a future publication of the work.

The abstract submitted for the defense focuses in detail on the main structural elements of the dissertation and its main contributions.

In the documentation needed for the defense Vladimir Terziev has presented us with a list of his publications, which are related directly to his dissertation. The doctoral student actively participates in the work in the field of “Bulgarian Revival” in the department “Bulgarian History” with several reviews of diploma works and many participations in scientific forums.

As a result of the analysis of the dissertation, the publication and his active doctoral work in the period 2020 – 2023 I express my positive opinion that Vladimir Terziev should be given the academic degree of “Doctor” and vote with “YES”.