

STATEMENT

of **Prof. Dr. Dr.Sc. Dilyana Boteva-Boyanova** (Sofia University St Kliment Ohridski, Faculty of History, Department of Ancient history, Thracian Studies and Medieval history),

according to order № ПД 38-460/18.07.2025 of the Sofia University's Rector Prof. Dr. Georgi Valchev for a Scientific Jury (ScJ) and the decision of the ScJ, held during the period of 29-31 July 2025 through e-mails,

for the PhD study of the full-time doctoral student **Nikolay Todorov Penev** on the topic "*Ancient Thrace in the Works of Xenophon*" for the award of the educational and scientific degree *doctor* in the professional field 2.2History and Archaeology (Ancient History); Academic Supervisor: Associate Professor Dr. Julia Tzvetkova.

I begin this statement with the clarification that I have known my colleague Nikolay Penev since the academic year 2019-2020, which came out to be difficult due to the first COVID restrictions; then he was a student at the Master program "Antiquity and Middle Ages ". Working with the students on the reports of ancient authors, I constantly emphasized that the respective information must be analyzed and evaluated after a mandatory careful acquaintance with the life of the person who created it. Giving as examples the destinies of Thucydides and Polybius, I showed the admissibility of a different point of view on their work – one that challenges their designation as ancient historians of a highest-quality. Reading "*Chapter 1. Xenophon. Life and Activity*" (pp. 13-77) and the beginning of "*Chapter 2: Literary Legacy and Influence*" – "*2.1 Dance with the Muses*" (pp. 78-81) of the dissertation, I noticed with satisfaction that N. Penev had actually embarked on this path, while working with the works of Xenophon. I am far from thinking – God forbid! – that this chapter was provoked by our seminars in the 2019/20 academic year, because even without my insistence on looking for the personality behind each text, the then MA student was already captivated by the personalities of Antiquity and at each lecture he would surprise me either with a series of years in the life of one or another ancient author, or with a curious detail from a specific biography.

Nikolay Penev's curiosity about ancient thinkers leads him through the difficult, but important, dilemma of the year (the earlier or the later suggested in the specialized literature) of birth of the author, to whose works the dissertation presented for defense is dedicated; during the PhD study, it seems that the forces and time were predominantly

invested in searching for a solution to this very dilemma. I hasten to say here that although at first glance the in-depth analysis of this specific problem is a deviation from the topic of the dissertation, my deep conviction is that they are integrally connected. It is a credit to Nikolay Penev that he chose the in-depth and time-consuming analysis of a truly fundamental starting point; thus he comes to the reasoned conclusion that 442/441 BC seems to be the most likely year for the birth of Xenophon (pp. 25, 77).

The main part of “*Chapter 2. Literary Legacy and Influence*” is dedicated to “*2.2 Corpus Xenophonticum*” (pp. 81-120) and presents 15 works by Xenophon with clarifications about the known codices and translations – a very useful part of the study, which is a contribution within the Bulgarian historiography (cf. for example volume 2 of „Извори за историята на Тракия и траките“, BAS, 2002). In this part of the dissertation I find only single and minor omissions and congratulate Nikolay Penev on this achievement. In the otherwise originally presented part “*2.3 Influence and Reception*”, a comment on the influence of Xenophon’s “*Anabasis*” on Arrian and his “*Anabasis*” is unexpectedly and inexplicably missing, although the work of the later author itself is cited within the framework of this analysis (p. 121).

In “*Chapter 3. Ancient Thrace and Thracians in the Corpus Xenophonticum*” four main parts are fixed, and two of them are with more or less artistic titles: “*3.1 Images and Masks*” (pp. 135-169); „*3.2 Thrace in Asia Minor (Xen., An. 6.4.1) and some communities related to the Thracians*“ (pp. 169-187) – the English translation of this title in the Abstract does not entirely correspond to the meaning in Bulgarian; „*3.3 Orchestra*“ (pp. 187-197); „*3.4 List of some Geographical Realities in the Corpus Xenophonticum*“ (pp. 197-201). In the context of the rather telegraphic style of the exposition in this chapter, the text on the Thracian Sosias (pp. 158-167) stands out as an exception, with an undoubtedly contributing analysis; as a real and meaningful scholarly contribution I would also point out the topic of the Thracians in Asia Minor, which has so far been sparsely developed in historiography.

The PhD text presented for defense takes me back to the winter semester of the academic year 2019/20 for the MP "Antiquity and the Middle Ages" also for another reason (beyond the one already commented on above). Already in the first weeks I was impressed by the activity of the then MA student Nikolay Penev and his creativity in analyzing the ancient sources, as well as his motivation to make efforts to master new

knowledge. This quality of his led him to the auditoriums where I had lectures, even such that were not part of his curriculum. When he learned that I was also giving lectures to students in Modern Greek Philology, he began to regularly attend them; he used to learn on regular basis the material that I was teaching there and appeared for the relevant tests, doing impressively. I dwell here on this fact because in the PhD thesis presented for defense, on p. 168, the author has made an error, inexplicable for me and unacceptable for a person with his experience. Back in December 2019, in the test on the early history of Ancient Greece, he had given a correct answer to the task on the three main characteristics of the Greek polis (according to Aristotle), one of which used to be the *autarky*.

The “*Conclusions*” (pp. 202-204) are concise but meaningful. The nine wrap-ups formulated and numbered sound convincing and logically follow from the analysis within the framework of the dissertation. Immediately after the conclusion, an “Index” is given (pp. 205-212) of 151 pieces of information from the *Corpus Xenophonticum* with data on Ancient Thrace, Asia Minor Moesia, Paphlagonia, Greater (Bigger) and Lesser (Hellespontine) Phrygia; of these, 40 are “marked in green” because they are “direct information on ancient Thrace” (according to the definition of the author himself). An obvious drawback of this otherwise useful index is the lack of cross-references to the information in Appendix 2.

The Bibliography consists of three parts: „*Ancient sources*“ (pp. 213-221), „*Online sources*“ (p. 221) и „*Secondary sources*“ (pp. 221/2-238). Several inaccuracies are noticeable here: Photius is given in the rubric “Ancient sources” (p. 215) – obviously the title of the relevant section should be worded differently; the entry “Ботева, Д. (1993)...” is misleadingly formulated (p. 225); titles that are cited in the section with ancient sources are repeated in the section with the secondary sources.

The PhD thesis includes a separate “*Volume II. Appendices*” (pp. 239-583), which consists of two parts: “*Appendix 1. Catalog of the Sources on the Life and Works of Xenophon*” (pp. 244-411), which presents 20 ancient, late antique and early Byzantine authors; and “*Appendix 2. Catalog of Xenophon's testimonies on Ancient Thrace and the Thracians*” (pp. 412-583), with excerpts from 15 works. As a serious omission, I would mention the lack of internal references between *Volume I* and *Volume II* (as named by the author of the PhD thesis).

The *Dissertation Abstract* correctly reflects the text of the PhD thesis and its achievements. Nikolay Penev has already one published study (2021), in which he gives publicity to a previously unpublished archaeological artifact. Two further papers are reported as forth coming; the responsibility for this delay of these publications is definitely not an eventual postponement of the submission of the manuscripts by the PhD student.

I have no doubt that in its current form the submitted dissertation meets all scientific, legal and ethical requirements for a successful defense. The above-mentioned qualities of **Nikolay Todorov Penev's** research, despite individual failures, inaccuracies and omissions, give me reason to **vote “FOR” his awarding of the educational and scholarly degree “Doctor”** in the field of higher education 2. Humanities, professional field 2.2. History and archaeology.

Signature:

21.10.2025

Prof. Dr. Dr.Sc. Dilyana Boteva-Boyanova