

REVIEW

of **Prof. Dr. Dr.Sc. Dilyana Boteva-Boyanova** (St Kliment Ohridski University of Sofia, Faculty of History, Department of Ancient History, Thracian Studies and Medieval History), on the basis of Order of the Director of the Institute of Art Studies at the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences for Scientific Jury (ScJ) № 291-PД/03.07.2023 and the decision of the Scientific Jury, taken at an online meeting,

about the PhD thesis of **Elina Antonova Anastasova** – full-time doctoral student at the Department of Fine Artes of the Institute of Art Studies, submitted for obtaining the **educational and scientific degree PhD**, in professional field 8.1 Art Studies and Fine Arts; title of the thesis “*Personifications in the Roman Art on the territory of Bulgaria (1st – 3rd century)*” (Sofia, 2023); research supervisor Assoc. Prof. Dr. Marina Koleva.

Let me start by saying that I know Elina Anastasova as an excellent student in the BA program "Archaeology" at the Faculty of History of Sofia University, and then I had the opportunity to see her further growth as a graduate student again at Sofia University (with a thesis on "*The Cults in Serdica based on numismatic and archaeological data*"), and as a PhD student at the Institute of Art Studies at the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences. Therefore, the fact of the already finalized dissertation is extremely satisfying for me personally and I would like to congratulate her on this undeniable success. To this brief presentation of her professional development I would also add her specialization in Roman art at the Austrian Institute of Archaeology (Vienna) in the period January-March 2020, for which specialization Elina prepared thoroughly, including making efforts to orient herself in the difficult German language. , Further elements of her CV are also seven already published articles (one of which co-authored), and her participation in 17 archaeological studies of sites from prehistory to the Middle Ages .

In her abstract Anastasova explicitly states, "*The dissertation is 616 pages long, which includes an introduction, six chapters, a conclusion; 197 titles of bibliography in Cyrillic and 239 titles in Latin; a catalogue; appendices (ten maps).*" A careful perusal of the entire text has shown that these data fully correctly reflect the most basic formal characteristics of the PhD research, which could also – right here – be unhesitatingly described as contributory. Two clarifications are also needed: 1) out of these 616 pages, 270 are catalogue descriptions of the monuments; 2) the pages mentioned by the PhD

student are computer pages and not standard ones, i.e. the volume of the work is considerably more impressive than the already respectable 616 pages.

The **Introduction** (pp. 3-15) sets out the aims and objectives of the work (p. 4), the methods, which are delineated in the table of contents but not in the text itself (pp. 4-6), the territorial (pp. 6-7) and chronological scope of the study (pp. 7-8), and the state of the research, which includes five aptly delineated – though in some cases tentative, – headings (pp. 9-15).

Chapter I (pp. 16-29) is devoted to the phenomenon of 'personifications in ancient art', presenting in strict chronological sequence the problems related to their origin, development and significance, with the discussions in the literature, including the complex historiographical picture surrounding the concept itself.

Chapter II (pp. 30-76) presents the personifications of natural phenomena. In the first part (pp. 30-59), five personifications – Helios-Sol, Selene-Moon, Eos; Oceanus and Ion – are brought together without clear and convincing argument, and a total of 37 monuments are commented upon. Particularly strange is the decision to include Aion in this general section, along with all the complex issues surrounding Mithras (pp. 33-46, 56-59), and without being reflected in the table of contents; in my view Aion should have been highlighted in a separate section. I am also inclined to assume that Oceanus' place is more in combination with the other "water" personifications, i.e. in the second part (pp. 59-74), which is now devoted to the personifications of rivers. Let me emphasize, however, that Elina Anastasova's decision regarding this structure is also permissible. The part on river personifications requires special commentary, since in her commentary on the coin depictions of Nicopolis ad Istrum (pp. 68-69) the PhD student has evaded the historically significant discussion of the possible identifications of the respective rivers, initiated as early as 1898 (Pick 1898, 343; Pick 1931, 8-9; Boteva 1997, 50 with lit.; Boteva 2010, 241-242 and fn. 58 with lit.) As expected, "Chapter II" ends with a highlighted "Summary on Stone Sculpture" (pp. 74-76), which is unfortunately not reflected in the table of contents. The dating of the monuments, the form and material of the monuments, the context and the territorial range are commented upon.

Chapters III and IV are devoted to only one personification each, Eros (the personification of love and overwhelming desire) and Pudicitia (whose exact nature

remains insufficiently clear so far, as is correctly specified and ably demonstrated in the text). And while there are 28 depictions of Eros in the territories under consideration – according to Anastasova he is "among the most popular personifications in Roman art from the territory of present-day Bulgaria" (p. 98), – and their analysis and comprehension has required serious efforts (p. 77-98), the personification of Pudicitius has so far been represented here by a single artifact – a monumental marble sculpture from Durostorum (p. 102), which predetermines the very limited length of this chapter (pp. 98-105). These mere six pages are hardly enough to form a self-contained 'chapter'. Perhaps when the thesis is published, which must happen in the very near future, consideration should be given to reformulating the structure and/or the classification, not only to "escape" from a "chapter" of such small length, but (and this is more important!) to remove the section on Hygeia as the "personification of health" (pp. 105-139), which, at least in my opinion, is an untenable thesis.

From this perspective is the problematic nature of **Chapter V**, devoted to "Personifications of States of the Body" (pp. 105-139), which includes Hygeia (pp. 105-139) and Eros with a Torch (Genius of Death) (pp. 139-177). The text on Hygia will not be commented on here because of the position formulated above. The analysis of the 40 images of Eros with a torch is detailed and systematic, however, with regard to this personification I am hesitant as to whether it is correct to include it in a separate chapter from the image of Eros associated with love and overwhelming desire, which is now in Chapter III. The author - of course! - has every right to such an approach, but it does require more thorough justification.

The most voluminous chapter is "**Chapter VI** Personifications of Abstract Concepts and Their Relation to Imperial Propaganda" – 90 pages in all (pp. 178-267); it analyses the personifications Bonus Eventus – represented in the territories under consideration by only two representations (pp. 178-184); Nemesis – by 18 monuments (pp. 184-207), Nike-Victoria – by 16 monuments (pp. 207-245), and Tyche-Fortuna – by 12 monuments (pp. 245-267). Here, too, the analysis follows the pattern adopted throughout the study, with the presentation of a rich (chronologically and territorially) picture of the iconography of the respective personifications, giving in turn the context of their appearance in present-day Bulgarian lands in antiquity.

The **Conclusion** (pp. 268-301) is informative and very detailed (I would even say too detailed!), and predictably recapitulates the whole text. The formulated conclusions sound convincing and follow logically from the analysis within the thesis.

The **Literature** used (pp. 302-333) is truly numerous and even impressive, adequately covering the thematic areas of the study. Gaps can always be pointed out, but they would not change the overall picture.

The **Catalogue** (pp. 334-606) is detailed and well organized. On pp. 15 we find a statement that it has "227 catalogue numbers", but my calculations (in the absence of general numbering) showed that the catalogue numbers are actually 232. 72 of these are images of Hygia and – as I have already pointed out – should not be part of this study. Each of the catalogue numbers includes detailed information on all relevant parameters. There is an obvious attempt to achieve comprehensiveness in referencing publications to each monument, but individual omissions are simply unavoidable due to the scope and polyaspect nature of the subject. To the section on Tyche, I would add the article by Rumyana Milcheva in Volume VII of *Jubilaeus*, dedicated to Prof. Margarita Tacheva, in which the marble head from Deultum is published.

The last element of the dissertation are ten maps that fully illustrate the attested geography of the cults analysed in the text, and for which the PhD student deserves special praise.

As minor failings of the text, I would point to individual typographical errors and stylistic mishaps – e.g., the statement that Eros is "a youth deprived of clothing" (p. 178).

The **Abstract** correctly reflects the text of the thesis and its achievements. Technically, however, there is a discrepancy between the pagination of the different parts of the study given in the table of contents included in the abstract and the actual pages. To be applauded is the fact that the young colleague has already five publications on the topic of this research, which in the period 2020-2022 have become an integral part of the Bulgarian historiography on the problems of antiquity. At the same time, I cannot help but note that I, at least, have not received an English translation of the abstract, despite the explicit legal requirement for such.

I have no doubt that in its present form the PhD thesis meets all the scientific, legal and ethical requirements for a successful defence. Moreover, this is research that

must be published without long delay, since the dissertation submitted for defence is serious and genuinely contributory research.

The above-mentioned qualities of the dissertation, presented by **Elina Antonova Anastasova**, give me reason to vote **FOR** the awarding of the PhD degree in Professional field 8.1 Theory of Arts, in the scientific specialty "Arts Studies and Fine Arts".

Signature:

30.09.2023

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