REVIEW

By

Assoc. Prof. Dr. K. Nikov,

member of an Academic committee

Regarding: competition for holding of an Academic position Associated Professor in the field 2.2 History and Archaeology (The Northern Aegean in the first half of the 1st mill. BC) for the needs of the Centre of Thracology at Institute for Balkan Studies and Centre of Thracology-BAS,

announced in State Gazette No. 63/26. 07. 2024

The competition was announced following a decision of the Academic board of IBSCTh–BAS (Protocol No. 17 from 09. 07. 2024), while the Academic committee was elected following Order No. 87 РД-16, issued on 18.09. 2024 by the Director of IBSCTh-BAS. All procedural requirements of the Regulations for the application of the Act for the Development of the Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria (ADASRB) and the Regulations for the conditions and order of acquiring scientific degrees and holding Academic positions at IBSCTh-BAS were met.

There is only one candidate for the announced Academic position – Assist. Prof. Dr. Petya Velichkova Ilieva, who meets the minimum state requirements in accordance with article 2б, paragraph 2, 3 and 5 of the ADASRB and requirements in accordance with article article 18, paragraph 5 of the Regulations for the conditions and order of acquiring scientific degrees and holding Academic positions at IBSCTh-BAS.

Petya Ilieva holds an MA in Archaeology (Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski," 2000) and a PhD in Archaeology (Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski," 2006). Since 2014 she holds an Assist. Prof. position at the Centre of Thracology at IBSCTh-BAS.

The applicant participates in the announced competition with a monograph (habilitation), 10 extended articles (studia) and 5 articles.

Resulting from the dynamic academic activities of Petya Ilieva are her leadership/ participation in several foreign (5) research projects, lectures (10) delivered in various national and foreign institutions (including the University of Oxford and the Geneva University) and published reviews of two collective monographs. She is the complier and editor of different published volumes (3) and a long-term part-time teacher in the National Aprilov High School (since 2014).

Dr. Petya Ilieva is a renowned expert in the field of the cultural interactions in the Northern Aegean during the Early Iron Age and their reflection in the archaeological record and ceramic wares in particular. Consequently, her habilitation *The Late Geometric and Early Archaic North-Eastern Aegean. Through the emergence, distribution and consumption of "G 2-3 Ware."* (*Berlin-Boston: Walter de Gruyter*, 2024), (193 pages) did not come as a surprise. By contrast, it appeared a bit late, I would say, considering the significance of the research problems, which it raises. This is the first comprehensive study in the international and national academic archaeological bibliography on a very specific ceramic group – that of the vases manufactured and decorated in G 2-3 Ware style. Several published studies, preceding the monograph (nos. 5, 11, 12, 13, 14) resulted from the long-lasting systematic, in-depth research of the author on the subject.

The structure of the monograph reveals a mature approach in optimal accordance with the specific nature of the studied material. The *Introduction and History of Research* (chapter one, p. 1-9) presents an in-depth historiographic analysis, which allowed the author to sketch an objective evaluation of the state of research. The aims are clearly defined (p. 9) and a clear and complex methodological approach for achieving these, is outlined.

Chapter two: *Recognising G 2-3 Ware: Technological Features and Ornamental System* (p. 10-28) is a *conditio sine qua non* in such summarising study. It emphasises the ability for extracting and summarising information from the vessels, part of which originate at sites, which have become legendary for the Aegean archaeology and the access alone to these is a unquestionable success. The analysis resulted in a multitude of observations, such as these regarding the following of a standardised procedure in the preparation of the clay (p.11), the varying level of technological skill and knowledge for the shaping of the vases at different centres of manufacture, as well as regarding the specific techniques applied by the potters for the surface finish and the firing of the vases.

Another emphasis and indisputable contribution of this chapter is the discussion of the ornamentation of this pottery group (p. 13-17). In addition to the detailed analysis of ornamental techniques and tools, the *Ornamental System* paragraph (2.2.2) is essentially the first comprehensive picture of the ornamental scheme and motifs employed by the G 2-3 Ware potters, which, as the author notes, recall these of the Greek Protogeometric pottery (p.16).

Realising the effort of the author for defining the chronological changes of the G 2-3 Ware, which is discussed as an entity of ceramic categories and decoration, I believe that the third sub-chapter of chapter two, *Relative Stylistic Development of G 2-3 Ware* (p. 17- 28)

turns into one of the main accents of the monograph. Here, similarly to many other parts of the study, the author employs data from an impressive, by its size, area, in order to suggest a narrower dating and/or the origin of a certain vessel or a motif (such as, for example, the detailed analysis of the stamped decoration, p. 24-25). Resulting from the attempt for exhaustive and in-depth discussion, in spite of the imbalanced information, which each site provides, is the clarification of three phases of development of G 2-3 Ware, each one of which is defined chronologically and receives its own look in the book.

The exhaustive and in-depth approach is clearly recognisable in chapter three *Repertory of Shapes* (p. 29-62), as well. It is a logical continuation and further development of the ideas introduced in the last part of the previous chapter. All known categories, which form the G 2-3 Ware, are presented in this chapter. Following the exhaustive approach, even shapes, which are represented at present by a small number of vases (amphoriskoi, pyxides, alabastra, stands) or single examples (salt-cellar, lekythos), are not omitted. In order to emphasise the nature of the style, the author again discussed the vessels and their decoration as a whole. Impressive is the attention to the details, which characterise the morphology of the different categories, an approach which was not adopted *per se*, but allows for the following and clarification (when possible) of the development in time of different shapes (a good example for it is the group of *Sessile* kantharoi, p. 29-32). This approach is always accompanied by the effort to identify and suggest to the reader the origin of each discussed shape. That way the encyclopaedic acquaintance of the author and the skilled use of knowledge on various ceramic styles from the Eastern Mediterranean and Anatolia during the Late Bronze and Early Iron Age are further revealed.

The identification of the centres of manufacture and distribution patterns of the products, as well as the origin of the style attract the attention in chapter four (*Centres of Manufacture and Distribution Patterns.The Question of Origin*) (p. 63-72). The discussion of such research questions is as ambitious as difficult to answer considering the objective obstacles which the author meets frequently. However, comments on these questions are a *sine qua non* for a thorough study of pottery, such as the discussed monograph. The interdisciplinary approach of the author allows for suggesting answers in varying degree of comprehensiveness. The fabric analysis of samples (117) from different sites (6) within the distribution area of G 2-3 Ware, conducted through micro-XRF spectroscopy, leads to important observations. Firstly, the results are indicative for the existence of several workshops and likely of travelling potters, who participated in the distribution network of the vases and of the technological knowledge for their manufacture. The most significant centres

of manufacture, as it appears at present, were Troy and Lemnos. The homogeneity of the fabric of some G 2-3 and Grey Ware vases allows for the suggestions that these were manufactured in the same ateliers. The author did not stop at this point and discusses varying distribution patterns as well as mechanisms of their implementation.

Another ambitious goal is set in this chapter as well: to look for the origin of the style. In spite that this important question was touched upon at varying degree in the preceding discussion, its summarised examination finds its logical place at this point (*The Question of Origin*) (p. 70-72*)*. The entire preceding analysis, set against the background of the development of other, earlier or contemporaneous pottery styles in the Eastern Mediterranean, results in the suggestion that the formation of the G 2-3 Ware is a consequence of the blending of multiple ceramic traditions. Based on the reconstruction of these processes, the author proposes Troy as the main centre of its emergence, while Lemnos contributed to its development later.

Although the questions of chronology are frequently touched upon in the entire discussion, the lack of clear stratigraphic evidence, which would allow for its clarification, is the reason for its examination in a separate chapter (chapter 5: *Chronology)* (p. 73-80). Considering the evidence available from the majority of sites with such pottery, the author proposes a relatively clear chronological frame of the existence of the style (middle-last quarter of the 8 – mid-7th c. BC), more precise *termini* of the phases of its development and clarifies further the features of each one of these *(Phases of Development)* (c. 77-80).

Amongst the details which offer a nearly completed picture of the study of G 2-3 Ware is chapter 6: „*Introduction, Adoption and Consumption of G 2-3 Ware by Northern Aegean Communities: A Contextual Approach*, (p. 81-98), which aims at identifying repeating patterns and contrasts of consumption, as well as the site-to-site variations (p. 81). In other words, in addition to presenting the various deposits, it aims at answer the question of the use of the pottery vessels. The author discussed the various contexts, grouped in accordance to the functional designation of the sites as per their researchers (cult sites, apsidal/oval buildings, domestic contexts etc.). In spite of the observed association between specific categories of vases and the function of some sites (for example the discovery of only drinking and libation vessels in the Sanctuary of the Great Gods on Samothrace or the use of serving and drinking vessels in the stone circles in the central part of the West Sanctuary at Troy), the unequal amount of information available for other sites logically restrains the author from advocating absolute inter-connections. The observation that some of the vessel categories are clearly

linked to cult contexts is an exception. Nevertheless, considering their discovery in other sites, this fact does not preclude their wider use.

As a final touch of the study comes the last (7) chapter *The Late Geometric and Early Archaic Northern Aegean: A Ceramic Perspective* (p. 99-113). No doubt, this text is intended as a broad picture of the processes, phenomena and interactions developing in the North Aegean community/-ies during the Early Iron Age, identified and reconstructed due to a "humble class" (according to the author) of archaeological finds (p. 99) and mainly owing to the skill of Petya Ilieva to combine information from different by their nature sources. The emergence and manufacture of these vessels (*7.1.1 Origin and Manufacture,* p. 99-101) are portrayed as phenomena of varying dynamics and intensity and encompass an impressive spatial and chronological area.

Petya Ilieva unquestionably proves how this ware acts as an argument visualising the transition of the local coastal communities of Aegean Thrace from the Early Iron Age to the Northern Aegean late Geometric and early Archaic *koine*. The author emphasises again the diverse distribution patterns of G 2-3 Ware and underlines the leading role of Lemnos for their distribution, a role facilitated by the central location of the island, which is a crossing-point of important marine routes.

Owing to her analytical approach, Petya Ilieva identifies the early drinking G 2-3 Ware set (*7.1.3 Consumption:* p. 105-110). The author also suggests the likely drinks, which were consumed, the manner of their consumption, as well as the association of different categories of vessels with domestic or cult contexts.

The last paragraph of chapter 7 (*Historical Implications*, p. 111-113) functions as a conclusion of the entire study. In this part the author steps beyond the time-frame of the existence of G 2-3 Ware and reveals, with her intrinsic skill, that the regional networks, which facilitated its distribution, continued to function with a varying degree of intensity and despite identified interruption (around the middle and in the second half of the 7th c. BC) and manifest now a new reality: that of the Archaic age.

The monograph also includes and appendix presenting the results of the μ-XRF spectroscopy and their interpretation (p. 115-127), bibliographic reference with over 260 titles (p. 129-136) and an index of place-names (p. 137-138).

The plates (52) illustrating the discussed vessels, site contexts and plans of the major sites, where G 2-3 Ware vases were discovered, contribute to the excellent impression conveyed by the study.

The study is pioneering by its nature and will become an irrevocable tool for every expert studying the interactions in the Aegean basin during the Early Iron Age.

The topic of ceramic vessels (except for those devoted to G 2-3 Ware: nos. 5, 11, 12, 13, 14), chronologically covering the time-span between the Bronze Age and the middle of the 1st mill. BC, is also present in other studies of the candidate (nos. 2, 4, 5, 7, 8).

A recognisable feature of the research of Petya Ilieva is the complex approach, which characterises her work with this group of archaeological artefacts. The ceramic vessels are not only discussed with the skill of a connoisseur, but are also always studied in a close association with the archaeological context. It is often employed as a tool for dating or as an argument for identification and following of diverse by their nature and dynamics processes and interactions or even as evidence for the ethnic affiliation of its manufacturers. This makes it hard to identify fields with "clear" contributions in her research, referring, for example, only to ceramic wares. An illustration of this are the extended articles on the ceramic assemblage from the cave of Maroneia or that on the sessile kantharos (nos. 2, 4, 5) where the particular artefatcs, the function of the discussed sites and the historical background complement each other and provide basis for summarising the diverse interactions (economic, cultural) between the ethnic groups of the Northern Aegean as a whole. Such approach is recognisable in other fields, in which Petya Ilieva has unquestionable contributions, which makes the inclusion of the same study in different subject fields, unavoidable.

A difficult to explore topic, which constitutes an important part of her research and mirrors the long-lasting scholarly interests of the candidate, is that devoted to the interactions between the Thracian population of the Northern Aegean coast and the nearby islands and the Greeks before and during the foundation of the Greek colonies (nos. 1, 6, 7, 10). These studies clearly demonstrate the skill of the candidate to extract information from varying and frequently unequal sources (written, epigraphic and archaeological) and to portray a picture that reflects the dynamic interactions between the two ethnic groups at different levels. Of particular significance in this thematic circle are the observations regarding the nature of the resistance of the Thracian population against the colonisation entangled in the complex rivalry between the different Greeks (no. 6) or that referring to the hybrid cultural identity of the Samothracian polis, consisting of several ethnic layers (no. 7). The key words for the successful establishment of the Greeks in Thrace, according to the candidate, is the blending and symbiosis between the two ethnic groups.

The reviewed work includes several studies, which manifest the broad and diverse palette of scholarly interests, well-illustrated through the complete list of publications of the candidate.

First comes the comparative analysis between the Aeschylus' *Lycourgeia* and representations in the Attic and South Italian vase-paintings of the 5th and 4th c. BC (no. 3). It introduces Petya Ilieva as a researcher with a long-lasting interest in subjects related to various aspects of the ancient vase painting. The in-depth analytical approach stands out in this particular case, which allowed for emphasising the different interconnections between the two forms of representation of the myth.

An unquestionable contribution and one more illustration of the wide range of topics in the academic interests of the candidate is the study of a terracotta stand from the Sanctuary of the Great Gods on Samothrace (no. 15). The text not only offers a new, well-grounded interpretation of a particular object, but also reveals the broad range of knowledge of the author and the skill to incorporate a single object into the vast amount of evidence from the Eastern Mediterranean.

The significance of the academic topics, which focus the research of the candidate is clear and supported by the impressive, by its volume, list of citations, some of which come from research published in academic publications, indexed and referred in international data bases.

Petya Ilieva has participated in numerous prestigious international (27) and national (10) academic forums and events.

The application of Dr Petya Ilieva in the competition for holding an Academic position of Associated Professor finds its significant support in the above-discussed academic contributions, which make her an established, on national and international level, researcher of the antiquity.

Considering the qualities of her complete academic production, as well as these of the habilitation monograph, I am convinced to support the election of Assist. Prof. Dr Petya Ilieva for holding the Academic position of Associated Professor.

29.10 2024 Assos. Prof., Dr. Krasimir Nikov