

REVIEW

by Assoc. Prof. Dr. Simeon Koychev Katsarov
(Plovdiv University "Paisiy Hilendarski")

of a dissertation for the award of the educational and scientific degree "**Doctor**"

in: field of higher education 2. *Humanities*

Professional field 2.2. *History and Archaeology*

Doctoral Program "*Historical Studies*".

Author : *Nikolay Valentinov Karamihov*.

Topic : "*Modernization through archaization, political ideas in Iran in the twentieth century.*"

Scientific supervisor : *Assoc. Prof. Dr. Valentin Pavlov Petrusenko (PU)*.

1. General description of the materials presented

By order No. PD-22-1638 of 14.07.2025 of the Rector of Plovdiv University "Paisiy Hilendarski" (PU), I am appointed as a member of the scientific jury for ensuring a procedure for the defense of a dissertation on the topic "*Modernization through archaization, political ideas in Iran in the twentieth century.*" for the acquisition of the educational and scientific degree " doctor" in field of higher education 2. Humanities, professional field 2.2. History and Archaeology, doctoral program "Historical Studies". The author of the dissertation is ***Nikolay Valentinov Karamihov*** - a doctoral student in independent study at the department "History and Archaeology" with scientific supervisor Assoc. Prof. Dr. Valentin Pavlov Petrusenko from Plovdiv University "Paisiy Hilendarski".

The set of materials on paper presented by Nikolay Karamihov is in accordance with Art. 36 (1) of the Regulations for the Development of the Academic Staff of the University of Plovdiv, and includes the following documents:

- a request to the Rector of the University of Plovdiv to disclose the procedure for defending a dissertation;
- CV in European format;
- minutes from the department council, related to reporting the readiness to open the procedure and preliminary discussion of the dissertation work;
- dissertation;
- abstract;
- a list of scientific publications on the topic of the dissertation;
- copies of scientific publications;

- list of noted citations;
- declaration of originality and authenticity of the attached documents;
- a certificate of compliance with the specific requirements of the respective faculty;

The doctoral student has submitted **3 (*three*) publications** and **a *Dissertation*** .

2. Brief biographical data about the doctoral student

Nikolay Karamihov graduated from secondary education in 1996 at 18 William Gladstone Secondary School in Sofia with a major in Persian Language and Culture. In 2014, he obtained a master's degree in Modern History at Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski". From 2003 to 2006, he was a doctoral student at the same university with a dissertation topic of "The Islamic Revolution in Iran and US Politics". During this period, Karamihov participated in international scientific conferences and seminars, including in Iran. In 2024, he was enrolled as a doctoral student in an independent form of study in the doctoral program "Historical Studies" at the Department of History and Archaeology of the University of Sofia.

During the period 2006-2022, Nikolay Karamihov was an editor at BGNES, an expert editor at the Strategygma Agency, a joint projects manager at the Center for Policy Modernization, a chief expert at the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology and MTITS, etc. Since 2022, he has been a state expert at the Ministry of Innovation and Growth.

3. Relevance of the topic and appropriateness of the set goals and objectives

The choice of issues in the dissertation work is sensitively relevant in scientific and scientifically applied terms. The interest in "Iran/Persia" has always been part of the political, diplomatic and historical discussion, not only in an international aspect, but also in our country, but the tangible presence of the topic "Iran/Persia" is unbalanced by a sensitive lack of serious in-depth research that would rely on reliable sources and make scientifically sound conclusions. In addition, the dissertation raises and examines current problems, such as the export of ideologies, the reaction of different cultures to shocks in a given system, the dynamics of use/abuse of cultural heritage by different political regimes. N. Karamihov's research also offers us a combinative and current methodology for comparing three, quite different in themselves, ideological systems - the "Tudeh" party, Zoroastrianism, Bahaism.

4. Knowing the problem

Nikolay Karamihov is very well versed in the scientific issues under study. The dissertation is based on a rich scientific literature (over 100 titles) and a documentary base, which the doctoral student creatively interprets. The wide range of opinions of scholars on the issue have been critically

commented on. Another positive aspect of the dissertation work, related to the bibliography Karamihov 's awareness is the skillful attraction of literature and sources to the scientific work , which it provides the multifaceted nature of the research problem and its adequate methodological base.

The scientific concept is designed to apply different approaches, taking into account formal-structural, semantic and even psychological aspects in characterizing the features of the formation and functioning of "modernization through archaization". The text of the dissertation also shows a very good knowledge of the theoretical statements related to political ideas in Iran in the twentieth century. This makes it possible to outline trends in their theory and practice , as Karamihov 's approach is not descriptive, but critically analytical - the different views and their results are commented on from the position of the research position adopted by the dissertationist . It can be said that the author has a broad awareness on all issues that concern the main subject of the dissertation.

5. Research methodology

Already in the introductory part of his dissertation, Nikolay Karamihov indicates the methods he uses when researching the object of his study: "historical method, analysis and synthesis, method of comparison, method of classification and method of generalization". This is an excellent combination of methods, which allowed the dissertationist to conduct in-depth and comprehensive research, allowing him to achieve the set goals and obtain an adequate answer to the tasks solved in the dissertation work.

6. Characteristics and evaluation of the dissertation work

The dissertation has a clear and logical structure: it consists of an Introduction (theoretical part), four analytical chapters, Conclusion, Bibliography and Appendices.

The structure of the dissertation follows the logic of the "complex path of the new/ancient nation" tracing the various manifestations of its identity:

- shaping the general historical framework. (Chapter I is dedicated to the development of Persian/Iranian history in different eras and communities, and the way in which it shapes and enriches the tangible and intangible heritage).

- the search for subjectivity. (Chapter II focuses on “Persian nationalism” and the desired Persian identity of the modernizing state and the direct use of archaization as confirmation of millennial historical continuity for political purposes).

- the dimensions in the system. (Chapter III is about the Islamic Revolution, where a very good critical review of the models of dynamic processes in Iran is made, here the prospects for the subsequent development of the country after the first Islamic Revolution can also be traced).

- in the construction/preservation of the specific identity. (Chapter IV is focused on the strong dynamics of the identity of the followers of the ancient local ideology (Zoroastrianism) and the relatively new Baha'i Faith and communist organization (Tudeh Party), one sees that specific constructive power of the "lowly visible" community in the construction of identity and in overcoming violence and oppression. Here not only the dynamics in the three "(seemingly) incomparable" ideologies are outlined, but a successful attempt is made to compare them and, in parallel with this, to trace the specifics of the "large" Iranian society, not only with its attitude towards them, but also with its own problems).

The work offers a thorough and detailed analysis of the main scenes from the "games of modernity and archaism", with the argumentation relying on numerous references to primary and secondary sources. A good impression is made by the skillful and appropriate placement of the events in a broader context, in which they acquire their true and full meaning, especially in relation to the history and culture of Persia/Iran. Also, references to other researchers and theorists abound, which deepens the interdisciplinary nature of the dissertation, as well as highlights more clearly the authentic element in the work of Nikolay Karamihov.

7. Contributions and significance of the development for science and practice

In order to assess the contributions of this dissertation, it is necessary to emphasize once again that in the Bulgarian scientific environment there has been no dense critical analysis of the topic of "Persia/Iran", especially on the issues addressed by the dissertation. Thus, in this scientific work, not only the cognitive argumentation should be sought, but it should also be perceived as a field of observation and a basis for future research in the direction of "Persia/Iran". Without studies such as the present one, this issue would have a very difficult time breaking through into Bulgarian scientific circles.

The analytical sections, with their interdisciplinary references, parallel readings, and the placement of one problem in the context of another, as well as in the context of more general social development, are of a contributing nature. The very hypothesis of the work for the existence of a "Conceptual Model for the Study of Contemporary Processes and Phenomena in the Countries of the Region", towards which the study is oriented, is a contributory one: first of all in the perspective of the general historical process, and then, and especially emphasized, in the dimensions of the contemporary perspective on these processes.

8. Assessment of dissertation publications

The dissertation work is accompanied by 3 (three) articles that reflect intermediate stages of the work of Nikolay Karamihov. The time of their publication is between 2021 and 2023. Two of the

articles (on the theories of the Islamic Revolution in Iran and on Persian nationalism) have been published in collections and specialized publications, whose editorial boards include prominent specialists. The third article "What we do not know about the socialists/communists in Iran" was published in the journal "Epohi" (refereed and indexed in world databases) . The context of the publications and their thematic orientations shows that the doctoral student is present in the scientific community. The publications accompanying the writing of the dissertation are closely related to the general issues and reflect an important part of the staged work and the overall implementation of the scientific project.

9. Personal participation of the doctoral student

The dissertation has all the signs of the personal participation and originality of the doctoral student in developing the problem and reveals to the necessary extent his professional qualities and skills to be realized in the chosen direction. A very serious and conscientious attitude towards the chosen issue, towards the studied sources and his own observations and conclusions is revealed. The doctoral student introduces for the first time into Bulgarian a large number of sources and historiographical studies, offering his own translation and definitions.

10. Autor's abstract

The abstract (30 pages) is precisely and correctly composed. It accurately traces the course of the dissertation research, its working hypotheses, the analyses conducted and the results. It is made according to the necessary requirements and standards. The contributions indicated in it from the author's point of view are also correct and correspond to the contributions that the dissertation has from the position of a side point of view.

11. Critical remarks and recommendations

I had some critical remarks about the dissertation text submitted for the preliminary discussion. The doctoral student complied with them and at the moment I have no serious remarks that need to be noted .

12. Personal impressions

My personal impressions of the doctoral student are based on his dissertation and publications, which present him as a thorough and promising researcher.

13. Recommendations for future use of the dissertation contributions and results

In view of the scientific and applied scientific contributions of the dissertation research, I would recommended to Nikolay Karamihov to promote his theses through future publications, which would support the study of "Persia/Iran" in Bulgaria .

CONCLUSION

The dissertation *contains scientific and applied scientific results that represent an original contribution to science* and **meet all** the requirements of the Act on the Development of Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria, the Regulations for the Implementation of the Act on the Development of Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria and the relevant Regulations of the University.

The dissertation "*Modernization through Archaization, Political Ideas in Iran in the 20th Century*" shows that doctoral student Nikolay Karamihov **possesses** in-depth theoretical knowledge and professional skills, **demonstrating** qualities and skills for independently conducting scientific research.

Due to the above, I confidently give my *positive assessment* of the conducted research and propose to the scientific jury to award *the educational and scientific degree of "Doctor"* to **Nikolay Valentinov Karamihov** in the field of higher education: 2. Humanities, professional field 2.2. History and archaeology, doctoral program "Historical Studies".

28/08/2025

Reviewer:

(Assoc. Prof. Dr. Simeon Katsarov)