

STATEMENT

under a procedure for the defense of a dissertation on the topic
**“The Thracian lands and the legal texts of the Roman Empire
(AD 212–249)”**

for the acquisition of the educational and scientific degree “doctor” (PhD)
by the regular doctoral student **Lyudmila Jeleva Chakarova-Prisoeva**

Scientific area **2. Humanities**

Professional field **2.2. History and Archaeology**

Academic supervisor: **Prof. Dilyana Boteva-Boyanova**

Author of the statement:

Prof. Peter Nedelchev Delev, St. Kliment Ohridski University of Sofia (emeritus)
member of the scientific jury by order of the Rector No ПД-38-179/27.03.2025

The dissertation of Lyudmila Jeleva Chakarova-Prisoeva on “The Thracian Lands and the Legal Texts of the Roman Empire (AD 212–249)” presented to the scientific jury consists of an introduction, four chapters, a conclusion, a list of references and four appendices, a total of 299 numbered pages. The research topic is significant and relatively understudied, allowing for significant scholarly contributions to be made in this dissertation. The demarcation of the period chosen for investigation between the proclamation of the Constitutio Antoniniana by the emperor Caracalla in AD 212 and the end of the principate of Philip the Arab in 249 seems sufficiently justified by the argument put forward in the introduction – namely that this was an era of great jurists who left significant traces in the Roman legal tradition codified in the sixth century. The absence of a clear explanation of the territorial scope of the study should be appreciated as an omission: the title refers to “the Thracian lands”, the introduction contains ambiguous formulations such as “the Thracian lands within the Roman Empire”, “the provinces in the present Bulgarian territory” (p. 1) or “Thrace and Lower Moesia in the present Bulgarian lands” (p. 2). The Roman provinces of Thrace and Lower Moesia included vast territories that are today in Romania, Greece and Turkey; there was also a non-dominant Thracian population in the neighbouring provinces of Macedonia and Upper Moesia (small parts of which are today in the territory of

Bulgaria), and the main population of the provinces of Dacia and Bithynia (which however remain entirely outside the territory of Bulgaria) was also largely Thracian.

The first chapter of the dissertation is entitled “The Application of Roman Law in Thracian Lands” and consists of four parts: 1. The history of Thracian lands up to the early third century AD (pp. 17–31); 2. Roman jurisprudence in the first half of the third century AD (pp. 31–42); 3. The application of Roman substantive and procedural law in the Thracian lands (pp. 42–67); and 4. Legal texts in epigraphic monuments (pp. 68–98). The first three parts may be ascribed an introductory character (regarding the actual study of the subject in the following three chapters), but the presence here of the section commenting on five ancient inscriptions relevant to the study, the original text of which is given on pp. 281–295 in Appendix II, is puzzling; three of the inscriptions are from the time of Septimius Severus, one from the reign of Caracalla, and one from that of Gordianus III. It would have been more rational to place the analyses of these inscriptions in the relevant chapters (the first four in chapter 2, which contains a detached section on the heritage of Septimius Severus, and the last one – in chapter 4). At the end of this part, under No 6, is placed a general text on military diplomas and their significance as legal documents, both generally in the Roman Empire (pp. 90–94) and specifically in Lower Moesia and Thrace (pp. 94–98); the latter part is rather unsubstantial (two notes on pp. 94 contain references to published diplomas from the two provinces of the period under consideration, but there is no analysis of the specific diplomas, the text of which – unlike the inscriptions discussed above – is not adduced in the thesis). The author’s commentary here is based mainly on Ilian Boyanov’s 2008 book on Roman veterans in Lower Moesia and Thrace (duly cited), which, however, discusses military diplomas together with inscriptions on stone containing data on veterans – it is no coincidence that Lyudmila Chakarova also refers here more often to “epigraphic monuments” than to diplomas alone.

The following three chapters cover the main part of the dissertation both in terms of content and volume (a total of 149 pages). They are chronologically divided, the period under investigation being split into three parts. Chapter 2 (pp. 99–160) has the title “The independent rule of Caracalla and the year after his assassination (AD 212–218)”, which corresponds to the chronological scope stated in the introduction (with the *Constitutio Antoniniana* at the beginning), but contains a logical contradiction as the independent rule of Caracalla began as early as February 211. The main chronological divisions in these three chapters of the thesis are based on the reigns of contemporary Roman emperors, from Caracalla to Philip the Arab, and it seems more logical to place both the beginning of the whole period

under investigation and that of chapter 2 to the accession of Caracalla as sole emperor and to place it accordingly in 211. It would also be more appropriate to replace the phrase “the year after his assassination” in the title of this chapter with “the usurpation of Macrinus” or some similar formula. The third chapter, under the heading “The Late Severi (AD 218–235)”, deals with the reigns of Elagabalus and Severus Alexander (pp. 161–197). The fourth is devoted to “The soldier emperors in the period AD 235–249” and includes the principates of Maximinus the Thracian (235–238), the ephemeral emperors of 238 Gordian I and Gordian II, followed by Pupienus and Balbinus, Gordian III (238–244), and Philip the Arab (244–249). In addition to presenting the main political events and the characteristic features of the policies of each successive emperor, these chapters focus mainly on their legislative activities. A considerable space in the second chapter is understandably devoted to an analysis of the nature and historical impact of the *Constitutio Antoniniana* published by Caracalla in 212. A particular attention is given throughout these chapters to the imperial rescripts preserved in the *Corpus Iuris Civilis* that have some direct or indirect bearing on the Thracian provinces; these are not numerous, and from some of the emperors there are none extant at all (though it is suggested that they may have existed). The established examples are given in their original language in Appendices III (the passages from the *Codex Iustinianus*, pp. 296–298) and IV (two passages from the *Digesta*, p. 299). The analysis of this matter in the dissertation has been carried out thoroughly and the possible maximum of information has been extracted from the few specific texts, aptly fitted into the general perceptions of the historical development both of the empire in general and of its Balkan (and in particular Thracian) provinces in the respective periods.

The brief conclusion on p. 248–256 summarizes the main conclusions reached in the dissertation on the nature, role and evolution of Roman law in the first half of the third century, on the fusion of the general imperial (and traditional Roman) legal norms and practices with the local traditions in the provinces, on the tendencies towards a legal universalization after the publication of the *Constitutio Antoniniana*, and on the place of the Thracian provinces and their hardly distinguishable local specificities in this large-scale general evolution of practical Roman jurisprudence.

The list of editions of ancient sources and modern literature on pages 257–279 is extensive and the titles included are actually used and correctly cited in the dissertation.

Overall, the dissertation of Lyudmila Chakarova leaves definitely positive impressions. It shows a thorough penetration into a complex subject (insofar as it

is borderline between history and law and requires considerable special knowledge and language skills). The first study of its kind on this topic, the dissertation contains significant contributions both in the formulation of many of the issues addressed and in their elucidation to the extent possible on the basis of the scant sources available. It is not without some shortcomings, for example in the insufficiently concise and clear style of exposition or in some structural flaws. Minor errors and inaccuracies are also present: e. g., on p. 6 “The Law Roman Library” instead of “The Roman Law Library”; *ibidem*, “Coccianus” instead of “Cocceianus”; on p. 97 “cognonym” instead of “cognomen”; on p. 158 “Varias” instead of “Varius” in the expanded name of Elagabalus (also omitting the prenomens “Sextus”). Note 3 on p. 17 claims that the Sapaean king Rascuporis, brought to Rome in AD 19, was tried by the emperor (Tiberius) as the highest judicial authority – but both the author cited (David Braund) and the main source (*Tac. Ann.* 2.67) explicitly mention a trial *before the senate* at which the widow of his killed nephew Cotis, Antonia Tryphaena, personally denounced him as the murderer. Page 77 contains the inaccurate statement that Augusta Traiana was located on the Diagonal Road (which ran through the territory of the city, but quite far from the city itself). These and other similar shortcomings however are not able to spoil the positive general impression already noted. The reviewed dissertation convincingly presents its author, Lyudmila Chakarova, as a serious and well-prepared researcher, fully meeting the requirements for a PhD degree. The abstract corresponds to the contents of the dissertation. The candidate also meets all other legal requirements, including the necessary publications on the main topic. There are no traces of plagiarism in the dissertation.

Basing my decision on the above conclusions, I can confidently vote for the award of the educational and scientific degree “Doctor” (PhD) to Lyudmila Jeleva Chakarova-Prisoeva.

Sofia, June 15, 2025

Author of statement:


(prof. Peter Delev)