

**СОФИЙСКИ УНИВЕРСИТЕТ
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КАТЕДРА ПО АРХЕОЛОГИЯ**
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STATEMENT

of Assoc. Prof. Dr. Daniela Stefanova Stoyanova, from the Department of Archeology at the Faculty of History of SU "St. Kliment Ohridski", member of the Scientific Jury, approved by order of the Rector of the Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski" (RD-38-443/23.07.2022), for awarding the educational and scientific degree "doctor" in professional field 2.2. History and Archaeology/ Archaeology/ Classical Archaeology: Rome

for the dissertation of Nikolay Dimitrov Dimitrov, PhD student at the Department of Archaeology, Faculty of History, Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski", on the topic: Religious life in Pautalia and Serdika during the Roman period (Comparative analysis), with academic supervisor Prof. Dr. Sc. Kostadin Rabadjiev.

Undoubtedly, the topic of religious life in the urban centers of Thrace has a long history in scientific historiography and is the focus of Bulgarian and foreign scholars. I find Nikolay Dimitrov's choice to compare the religious life of two neighboring centers, Pautalia and Serdika, to be very appropriate. In the course of the research, it is evident that such an approach, in addition to highlighting general and/or specific phenomena, protects against distortion of the picture in the analysis of monuments that are heterogeneous in terms of their nature and informativeness. With the research done, Nikolay Dimitrov not only continues the work of the generations of scientists before him, but also significantly improves it.

The dissertation consists of 458 pages of text, with a bibliography included here, 262 pages of catalog and appendices: 7 tables and 13 maps.

The structure of the study includes: an introduction, five chapters and a conclusion. In the introduction, the topic is substantiated, with the main goals and objectives set, as well as methods for achieving them. The historiography on religious life in Pautalia and Serdika is examined in detail, as well as the territorial and chronological scope of the work.

The next five chapters are devoted to the study of cults, divided into: state cults, cults of deities from the Greco-Roman pantheon, divine personifications, eastern and local cults, cults with unclear characteristics. The structure of each chapter is similar, with the monuments from Pautalia discussed first, followed by those from Serdica. After the examination of the individual deities, as well as at the end of each chapter, a detailed comparative analysis of the information about the two cities is made.

In the dissertation of Nikolay Dimitrov, numerous monuments of various categories were collected and analyzed, which were used for the purposes of the work with impressive competence. In addition to monuments known to science, where possible, information on unpublished ones was also used. Also included are data from new archaeological investigations of Pautalia and Serdika. The systematic and in-depth work with the individual groups has allowed the PhD student to present a believable picture of the religious life in the two cities. A picture in which there is no lack of criticism towards previously expressed theses, new reasoned interpretations and chronology of the monuments. Consulting the epigraphic monuments with leading specialists in epigraphy makes an extremely good impression, which gives confidence in the conclusions drawn. Here the author's knowledge of research on the subject, from the earliest to modern publications, as well as familiarity with the monuments in the museum collections, is evident.

In all cult groups, the main material that has been systematically analyzed is numismatic. For the reader of the work, there is no doubt that the author handles this material freely and expertly, using to the maximum extent the possibilities for achieving the goals set at the beginning of the work. The depth of Nikolay Dimitrov's knowledge of numismatic material allows him to express doubts about previously expressed ones and to express new interpretations and hypotheses. The detailed study of the reverse images is essentially a systematized new and essential database for the study of the topic of religious life in Pautalia and Serdica. And this was achieved through a thorough knowledge of Roman provincial coinage.

Another important group of monuments - the epigraphic ones, are also collected in the work of Nikolay Dimitrov, and they successfully complete the outlined picture. Combining numismatic and epigraphic data allows for a more complete reconstruction of religious life in Pautalia and Serdika.

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The limited number of documented monuments of sculpture that can relate to the subject are also considered in the work. The peculiarities of the iconographic types are commented and their parallels are sought, including those discussed on coins. The information provided by the individual categories of finds is supplemented with data on the archaeological context.

The conclusion is actually a comprehensive summary of what has been achieved in the individual chapters. The synthesis is supplemented by the attached tables and maps. The tables gather information on the number of artefacts associated with the individual cults, as well as their concentration in Pautalia and Serdika, as far as data on the presence of temples, known priests, festivals and epithets for the deities can be deduced. The maps give an idea of the territorial distribution and concentration of finds within the cities and their immediate territory.

In order to achieve the synthesis in the main text, the attached catalog undoubtedly plays a role, which includes a detailed description, a complete bibliographic reference and illustrations of each of the artifacts analyzed.

As a result of the work of Nikolay Dimitrov, despite the heterogeneous monuments with which he worked, a complete reconstruction of the religious life in Pautalia and Serdika was created. A comparison between the two cities highlights common trends and differences in the popularity of some cults and the lesser prevalence of others.

Based on the in-depth analysis, conclusions are also offered about the historical development of the two cities during the Roman period. The pre-emptive development of Pautalia in the 2nd century until the beginning of the 3rd century compared to Serdika and the subsequent change in the 3rd century, when Serdika comes to the fore, is substantiated. The changed situation in the empire and the location of Serdika on the Diagonal Road lead to new phenomena in the religion and culture of the city.

The abstract accurately reflects what was achieved in the dissertation work. Nikolay Dimitrov is the author of three publications directly related to the topic of the dissertation. Two of them are in print.

In conclusion, I can confirm that the submitted text is original and contributed. The minimum national requirements for obtaining the educational and scientific degree "Doctor" according to the ZRASRB have also been met.

Everything commented so far allows me to vote positively for the awarding of the educational and scientific degree "doctor" to Nikolay Dimitrov Dimitrov.

15.10.2022 г.



доц. д-р Даниела Стоянова