

## REVIEW

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of a dissertation towards gaining the educational and scientific degree Doctor (PhD) in Scientific field: 2.1. Philology, PhD programme: Classical languages, on the topic: “*Ignis sacer* across the literary and medical traditions (1 st century BC – 11th century AD). Study of the Term’s Semantic Transformations; Identification of Associated Diseases and Therapeutic Methods”, by Kalina Yulieva Boseva, PhD candidate (Independent form) at the Department of Classics, Sofia University “St. Kliment Ohridski”

Kalina Boseva graduated from National Classical Lyceum, and obtained bachelor’s and master’s degrees in Classical Philology at Sofia University. She is currently an Assistant Professor of Medical Latin at the SU Faculty of Medicine. The scientific supervisors of the dissertation are Assoc. Dr. Elia Marinova and Assoc. Dr. Desislava Dimitrova Petkova-Varadinova. All the requirements of Law on the Development of the Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria and the regulations for its application, relating to the course of the doctoral studies, the dismissal of the PhD student, the referral of her work to external defense and the appointment of a scientific jury have been complied with.

Kalina Boseva’s dissertation is an impressive study with a serious interdisciplinary character and contribution. Interdisciplinarity in this case goes far beyond the boundaries not only of philology, but also of humanities. The main object of study itself, the phrase / term *ignis sacer*, considered through its uses in literature and medicine, and that for 12 centuries, requires the attraction of the natural sciences. The PhD candidate convincingly shows that she has serious interests in philology, and in particular in the Latin language and its development, Medical Latin, in semantics, phraseology, sociolinguistics..., as well as in the history of medicine, medical terminology, but also in medical practice, in botany and pharmacy... Indeed, neither

the chosen problematic can be studied in any way, except in an interdisciplinary way, as Kalina Boseva also states, nor could such a study be realized by a scientist who is not versed in both the main fields in which the uses and transformations of *ignis sacer*. We cannot fail to mention a third field, that contributed significantly to reaching the results, namely the use, even the upgrading, of special digital tools for the implementation of statistical research and systematization in support of the analysis of the sources. Such a good combination of author and subject makes an even stronger impression on a young scientist. At first glance, the topic seems very large, but as the title of the work indicates, Kalina Boseva has set clear boundaries of her goals and tasks, which she strictly adheres to.

The dissertation has a total volume of 470 pages, which includes: Contents (pp. 3 – 6), Main text – 351 pages (pp. 9 – 362), Bibliography (pp. 363 – 395), four Appendices (pp. 396 – 470). I specifically mention here the contents (displayed abbreviated in the abstract) as an autonomous element of the work, because it is extremely well segmented and clearly represents not only the structure of the entire text, but also of the sub-chapters of the three main chapters, namely: II. *Terminological and methodological foundations of the research* (45 – 74); III. *Transformations in the development of the term ignis sacer in the studied sources* (75 – 226); IV. *Identification of the substances and analysis of the therapy associated with ignis sacer* (227 – 346). Even here, through the Introduction, the methodical, precise and consistent manner with which the PhD candidate has dealt with the topic for a long time is evident. In my opinion, the Introduction, too, is not just an (important) metatext and not only introduces the topic and the approach to it with certain research goals, but is an essential element of the study itself, which also has a serious methodological aspect – with a topic of such scope, precisely the careful and detailed specification and description of the methods and principles of work in itself is a contribution and could serve as a model for other investigations of a similar type.

Part II continues this methodological perspective with observations and conclusions focused on the philosophical and social concepts of illness and its diagnosis on the one hand, and on the role of identifying relevant passages / lexical items in databases on

the other. Here, the created by Kalina Boseva for the purposes of the research Ignis Sacer Data Base (ISDB) for “diachronic and multifactorial tracking of medical terminology in ancient and medieval sources” (p. 54) is most extensively presented (pp. 54 – 74, and in Appendix 3, fig. 3 – 34). This presentation may seem too detailed, but it shows how it was possible to carry out the analysis of the vast source material at all, and proves the need of constant juxtapositions of its single uses as well as attempts to identify of the authors’ sources in order to trace the semantic transformations of *ignis sacer*. This also applies to the classification and commentary on medicinal plants, other therapeutic agents and therapeutic procedures for (retrospectively) identified diseases. And last but not least, the detailed description of the ISDB creation procedures is also a form of collegial sharing of academic experience.

Part III moves on to trace and comment on the uses and transformations of *ignis sacer*. The more theoretical opening section comments on the very status of *ignis sacer* between free phraseology, phraseology, and the two-component medical term, as well as its “extremely complex history of terminologizing” (74). The intermediate conclusion was also made, based on the studied corpus, about the different role of the two components of the word combination: “the substantive part *ignis* covers the semantic range that is related to what we observe – the symptoms and manifestations of the disease. On the other hand, the attributive part *sacer* covers what remains outside the sensory field – the aetiology of the disease, but not in the modern sense of a causative agent that can be isolated and observed under a microscope, but in the sense of a cause of the disease as a religious/moral concept” (82). And also: “The adjective is the more unstable of the two elements in the phrase, which is why most of the variations seen over the centuries affect *sacer* and not *ignis*” (83). The aim of specifying the lexical status is to consider “whether we can really speak of two separate, albeit intertwined, lines of development, insofar as we have two groups of texts with different expression, different target group and ultimately with different authorial purpose” ( 88).

The observations made so far are operationally checked and confirmed in the course of the analysis of the sources. This analysis covers most of the same chapter (III). First,

the formation and development of *ignis sacer* in non-medical sources, poetry and prose, are presented. Already in the sub-chapter on Titus Lucretius Carus, in whose didactic poem “De rerum natura” the use of the word combination is attested for the first time in Lucretius’ interpretation of the plague epidemic of 430 BC described by Thucydides, impresses the brief presentation of the author and the reconstruction of the literary and non-literary context of the work, before proceeding to comment on the passage containing the phrase under study. Such notes are added in all the following sub-chapters by authors, and they, of course, differ in their volume, but Kalina Boseva has done more than possible for the discovery of information for the reconstruction of the context.

Closer commenting on quotations containing *ignis sacer*, or its variations, proceeds in an interdisciplinary manner, noting not only the semantic transformations of the phrase and examining the textual connections between the author and his sources, but also making a number of notes on possible diseases and therapies, associated with the *ignis sacer* symptom. An identification of the disease is offered at the end of the relevant subsection.

The studied authors of non-medical works are 12. In the next subchapter of the dissertation, 20 authors of specialized medical literature are presented.

It should be added again the precise work on the manuscript tradition and the problematic correlation of the manuscripts with more *varia lectiones* to the original of the corresponding work. Special attention is given to illustrated manuscripts, regardless of the time of addition of the illustrations therein, as an aid to the identification of medicinal plants used in *ignis sacer* therapy.

Part IV is dedicated to precisely this problem - identification of therapeutic substances and analysis of therapy of *ignis sacer*, and the largest share in it is occupied by the sub-chapter on substances of plant origin (227 – 315). And although, in general, this part of the work is devoted more to botanical and medical issues, the philological approach is not abandoned, since a number of lexical notes are made, and the study continues to adhere to the already presented sources and their specificities. New

methodological principles have also been proposed for the possible correlation of phytonyms (names of plants in the sources) to their modern names (taxa), as well as for the identification of other groups of substances. Closely related to this chapter is Appendix 2 (Glossary...), where the available Old Greek names of the substances are also included.

In the Conclusion, conclusions are presented, which again have a purely scientific and methodological character. Already at the beginning, the connection between the two main lines of work is emphasized: the linguistic study of the phrase *ignis sacer* and its development, on the one hand, and the identification of diagnoses and therapies related to *ignis sacer*: “The outlined retrospective diagnoses of the diseases or symptom complexes known as *ignis sacer* between the 1st century BC and the 11th century, proposed here based on the symptoms described or the combination of therapeutic ingredients applied in the sources examined, enable the tracing of different threads in the evolution of the phrase *ignis sacer* over nearly twelve centuries” (347). A summary is made of the character and contribution of the sources from the different sub-periods, emphasizing again the question of the boundaries between the literary and non-literary tradition, stating that some authors can be attributed to both (for example, Columella, 351), points out and for which periods loss can be assumed for important sources. Again, the steps and methods (including through databases and other digital tools) of research are briefly outlined.

In the second part of the Conclusion, 16 contributions are listed, both narrower and related to the work as a whole - this number is not surprising given the volume and interdisciplinary nature of the work, as well as the fact that Kalina Boseva's dissertation is the first such a large-scale and original study of *ignis sacer*. Throughout the work she refers to and comments on a large amount of secondary literature, which the author evidently knows in detail.

The bibliography consists of 485 titles, grouped into three sections – Editions of sources, Cited secondary literature, Online platforms with digitized resources, again very carefully and systematically laid out. I have doubts only about the following: 1. Would it not be more appropriate to indicate the order of publications by the same

author after the year (in the chosen format of internal references in parentheses), and not before the year, and with Roman numerals? 2. Do translations of ancient authors and other primary sources, if they are not bilingual, fall under the Secondary literature section, in the Sources section, or in a separate section?

The four Appendices also correspond to the scale and interdisciplinary nature of the work and complete its academic aspect. A list of abbreviations, other than those included in the other appendices, could be added to them, although they are specified in the presentation.

Kalina Boseva's style is academic in the best sense of this definition, especially considering such a wide range of interdisciplinary issues. The presentation is both specialized and clear and smooth. In some places, the language is even somewhat personal and uses more phraseology, but this is not a criticism of a momentary departure from scientific discourse, but rather testifies to research sincerity, as well as a concern for values and dialogue in development and transmission of knowledge today.

And the colored pages of Appendix 4 – to Part IV, containing mainly illustrations of medicinal plants, give me two reasons to add that the exposition in a number of places, while remaining academic, is also fascinating.

The abstract, in Bulgarian and in English, meets the requirements for a summarized presentation of a dissertation work and its contributions; it lists three publications and 10 participations in conferences on the topic of the dissertation (some of them I had the opportunity to listen in person and I would also praise the presentation skills of the PhD candidate).

The above gives me reason to confidently give a **positive assessment** and recommend to the Scientific Jury to award the educational and scientific degree “Doctor” in professional direction 2.1. Philology (Classical languages) by Kalina Yulieva Boseva.