

# STATEMENT

by Prof. Dr. Anelia Bozhkova (NAIM-BAS)

on the doctoral thesis of Kaloyan Petkov, a full-time PhD student  
at the Department of Archaeology, “St. Kliment Ohridski” University of Sofia,

on the subject of “Weapons as a votive gift in Thrace  
and in neighbouring cultures – 1st millennium BC”

for the award of the educational and scientific degree “Doctor” (PhD)

in the professional field 2.2. History and Archaeology

The topic of the evaluated doctoral thesis is as unexpected as it is provocative. Unexpected, because Bulgarian historiography has no serious tradition in the study of such issues and its development within a doctoral thesis carries certain risks. Provocative, because of the difficulties involved in the objective study of the Thracian mytho-ritual environment (legendary or material) and the absence of an accepted view on its existence and characterization. I will recall here only the discussion on “Pit complexes” that still remains postponed in order to highlight the courage and responsibility of the PhD student and his supervisor Prof. Dr. Totko Stoyanov to engage with this topic – and, I would also add, the evident efforts needed to bring its development to a successful conclusion.

The PhD thesis is structured in six parts, the first and the last being the introduction and the conclusion respectively. It also contains a catalogue of contexts with votive objects and other textual and graphical appendices.

In the introduction, according to the traditional practice, the aims and the objectives of the work are formulated, the methods used are disclosed (not all the methods actually used in the analysis are fully articulated), and the territorial scope of the study is substantiated. The importance of documented scholarly facts from more distant areas of the ancient world is explicitly emphasized, bringing needed evidentiary arguments to the analysis. An

attempt is also made to clearly define the conceptual apparatus of the study in order to understand the issues objectively. However, in his desire to frame the diversity of the contextual environments, Kaloyan Petkov has allowed for certain ambiguities in the terminology, which, by the way, is used most inconsistently in scientific publications all over the world. His attempt, for example, to differentiate between a ritual deposit (a ritual pit) and a pit complex is not convincing insofar as the overall settlement environment and the number of negative structures found within it remain unknown. I recommend that the PhD student should develop and explicate a more refined definitional scheme in his further work on ritual and cult contexts.

The historiographical chapter is divided into two logical but rather asymmetrical parts, insofar as the one on native research focuses on studies of cult sites in general, while the review of foreign research results focuses on deposits with weapons in ritual settings. Such dissonance, as already mentioned, stems from the state of the source base and proves once again the feasibility of researching this topic in the realm of the Thracian ritual world.

Kaloyan Petkov has intertwined the problematics of ritual deposits with that of funerary contexts of a certain type already in the historiographical overview, defending the thesis that the process of heroization of aristocratic warriors is also relevant to the ritual deposits of armaments. And, while the PhD student has an excellent grasp of the distinctions in the two ritual behavioural models, that of votive practices and that of the ceremonies connected with the transition to afterlife, these are often conflated in the exposition and leave the impression of unstudied contextual aspects.

The third chapter is central to the analysis and examines the ritual sites in Thrace (in typological order) and the weaponry documented in their various environments (again with the presence of a typological order). The ritual deposits associated with metallurgical centres and activities are discussed here among others, which is highly commendable and a promising field for future research. In this chapter, Kaloyan Petkov is comprehensive, demonstrates knowledge of the results of the primary research, and manages to construct a

convincing conceptual framework for the various types of deposits and practices and to offer a formal characterization of the objects used secondarily as ex-votos. The data on the funerary contexts of Thracian warriors are systematized in a separate section, and this distinction is necessary and fully justified.

The fourth part contains data on weaponry as a ritual gift in other cultural-geographical regions of the ancient world, and although it is very voluminous and fact-laden, it has a rather cognitive and comparative role in relation to the main task of the PhD thesis.

The fifth chapter is interesting in its overview of ritual practices related to the elements of weaponry. The raising of trophies and the ritual homicides are examined here, of only the latter have left material evidence on the territory of ancient Thrace.

The conclusion summarizes the author's main conclusions and contributions to the problems of the topic under consideration.

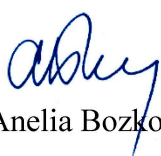
The appendices, as well as the catalogue, are professionally produced, with the necessary knowledge and critical insight into the evidence and artefacts used.

My overall impression of the work of Kaloyan Petkov is that of a successful beginning in the investigation of this topic which is new for Thracian studies, and of an original personal research with an undoubted contribution to the study of the ritual environment of the ancient Thracians.

On the basis of my overall assessment of the dissertation, I vote with conviction for the award of the educational and scientific degree of "Doctor" (PhD) to Kaloyan Petkov.

May 12, 2023

Sofia

  
Prof. Dr. Anelia Bozkova