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10.05.2026

To the
Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski"
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I have examined Plamena Georgieva Dakasheva's doctoral thesis entitled 'Architectural Decoration in Philippopolis, 1st–3rd Century,' supervised by Kostadin Rabadzhiev, and my scientific report on the thesis is presented below.

The PhD thesis consists of an introduction, four chapters, an abstract, and contributions, totalling 493 pages, followed by a list of abbreviations and bibliography (33 pages), a catalogue (260 pages), and illustrations (44 pages). The catalogue of a total of 440 architectural blocks (ornamented or simply profiled) belonging to the architectural structures of roman Philippopolis, both in the museum and in the field, has been compiled and scientifically evaluated by the PhD candidate. Excluding the Introduction, the doctoral dissertation consists of three main chapters and a catalogue. Following the Introduction, Chapter 2, *Complexes with Architectural Decoration from Philippopolis*, focuses on the architectural complexes of the city. Chapter 3, *Architectural Elements by Their Position in the Order*, examines architectural elements according to their position within the architectural order. Chapter 4, *Chronology, Parallels, and Influences in Architectural Decoration*, addresses the chronology, parallels, and influences reflected in the architectural decoration. Following Chapter 5, *Summary and Contributions*, the dissertation includes a *List of Abbreviations and Bibliography*, while Chapter 7 contains the *Catalogue* and Chapter 8 presents the *Illustrations*.

This dissertation by Plemena Georgieva Dakasheva presents a comprehensive study of the architectural decoration and monumental architecture of Roman Philippopolis, primarily dating from the 1st to the 3rd centuries AD. The research systematically compiles and analyses all available archaeological, architectural, and stylistic evidence related to public and residential complexes, including the agora, stadium, theatre, honorary arches, colonnaded streets, temples, baths, and domestic buildings. Particular emphasis is placed on distinguishing securely identified architectural contexts from reused or chance finds and reassessing previous scholarly interpretations.

The study contributes significant new data through measurements and observations from both long-studied and recently excavated sites. Previously unpublished information concerning structures such as the northern agora portico, the western propylaea, the theatre, and the honorary arches at the Eastern Gate enables revised reconstructions and improved understanding of architectural forms, dimensions, and construction phases. Monumental colonnaded streets are also reconsidered as integral elements of Philippopolis' urban planning, receiving systematic attention for the first time.

A major contribution of the dissertation lies in the reinterpretation of architectural decoration and its relationship to urban monuments. Through typological and stylistic analyses, architectural elements are grouped according to material, chronology, and function, allowing the identification of previously unknown or unrecognized structures. Earlier interpretations are critically reassessed, resulting in revised identifications of architectural orders and decorative forms, including the recognition of Tuscan bases as part of Roman Doric orders and the correction of misidentified Composite capitals in the theatre. Furthermore, the study refines the typology of Doric capitals in Roman Bulgaria and challenges prior assumptions concerning building façades and construction techniques.

The dissertation also critically evaluates earlier reconstructions of major monuments, proposing alternative restorations based on archaeological evidence and comparative architectural analysis. Reconstructions of the agora, theatre, stadium entrance, bouleuterion, treasury, and honorary arches are reassessed, often revealing inconsistencies in previous scholarship and emphasizing the fragmentary nature of the surviving evidence. New interpretations highlight changing architectural traditions, including the use of Roman Doric orders, wooden architraves, arches, and regional adaptations of monumental design within the Roman Empire.

Chronologically, the research traces the development of architectural decoration in Philippopolis from the Flavian through the Antonine and Severan periods. The earliest monumental phase is characterized by sandstone and tuff construction employing Doric and Ionic orders, while the Trajanic and Hadrianic periods witness the extensive introduction of marble and increasing use of Corinthian and Composite styles. Later phases demonstrate repairs, reuse of architectural materials (*spolia*), and continued monumental construction, particularly in public architecture. The study also identifies, for the first time, evidence for marble architectural decoration predating the formal establishment of the province of Thrace.

An extensive catalogue of 440 architectural elements—277 of them previously unpublished—forms the empirical foundation of the research. These include bases, capitals, shafts, pedestals, friezes, cornices, consoles, coffered ceiling slabs, and other architectural components. Detailed typological classifications are proposed, alongside analyses of materials, workmanship, decorative programs, tool marks, repairs, and reuse. Such evidence contributes to more precise dating and contextualization of architectural fragments within specific monuments.

Finally, the dissertation situates Philippopolis within broader artistic and architectural networks of the Roman Empire. Comparative analysis reveals strong influences from Asia Minor, particularly Bithynia, while also identifying stylistic connections with Continental Greece and western provinces. The study examines the role of imported marble, itinerant craftsmen, and local workshops, concluding that although Philippopolis largely followed broader imperial architectural trends, local adaptation, craftsmanship, and aesthetic preferences played a significant role in shaping the city's monumental environment.

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I would also like to address several issues that should be taken into consideration during the publication process. For example, the ancient names and/or commonly used names in the scholarly literature for white or coloured marble should be added to the *Catalogue*. Some technical issues in the *Catalogue* could also be revised. Cat. No. 1 Doric base: Not a good terminology. Normally the doric order has not a base. So it could be a capital (late date); Cat. No. 9, 42a,b, 65: The term "Tuscan-type toichobate" would be more appropriate than "Tuscan-type base element."; Instead of "marble of gray-white color," "Proconnesian marble" could be used; Cat. No. 160, 161, Instead of "fluted free-standing column" "digonal fluted column shaft" could be used; Cat. No. 175, 177: Instead of "Pilaster" "Scroll pilaster" / Rankenpilaster (in German) could be used; Cat. No. 340-345: Instead of "Frieze-architraves" "Architrave-Frieze" could be used; Cat. No. 426, instead of "Hyperthyrum" "door corniches" could be used and instead of "Frieze-architraves with garlands and bull heads" "Architraves with boukephalion frieze", could be used. Boukephalion or boukranion frieze have always garlands.

In sum, the dissertation substantially advances understanding of the architectural development of Roman Philippopolis by providing new archaeological data, revising established reconstructions and chronologies, refining typologies of architectural decoration, and situating the city within wider imperial artistic and architectural traditions.

This dissertation by Plamena Georgieva Dakasheva, which deals with the architectural development of Philippopolis during the Roman Imperial period, can be considered a success, as it is well-prepared and its conclusions are logical. I congratulate the candidate and am convinced that the publication of this important work, supplemented by better photographs, will greatly enrich Thracian archaeology.

Your sincerely,

Prof. Dr. Musa Kadıoğlu