

## STATEMENT OF OPINION

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Regarding: a doctoral thesis of **Kalina Yulieva Boseva** for awarding the educational and scientific degree of "Doctor" in the professional field 2.1. Philology,  
Doctoral programme "Classical Languages"

The biography of Kalina Boseva clearly shows consistent and systematic scientific interests in medical, pharmaceutical and botanical Ancient and Medieval literature and terminology. The PhD student started her research in the field of phytolinguistics and historical ethnobotany while working on her master's thesis. Since 2010 K. Boseva has been an assistant of Latin with medical terms at the Medical Faculty of Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski", where she deepened her interests in this field.

The dissertation consists of 470 pages, well-structured in an introduction, three chapters, conclusion, contributions, bibliography and appendices. The subject of the dissertation is the semantic transformations of the term *ignis sacer* from its first proven usage in the 1<sup>st</sup> century BC to its disintegration in the 11<sup>th</sup> century and its replacement by *ignis sancti Antonii* and other similar expressions in different languages. The identification of associated diseases and therapeutic practices, and of the healing substances is an important focus of the research conducted. This shows the new possibilities for critical analysis of the sources realized with the proposed methodology.

In contemporary scientific literature, the study of the terminological phrase *ignis sacer* and its variations is incomplete. Trends in the use of medicinal substances have not been sought. No attempt has been made to identify either the disease named with *ignis sacer* or the therapeutic substances from plants or other origin prescribed in the sources in which only the treatment is described. This doctoral thesis attempts to fill in the missing knowledge by applying the analysis of therapeutics for *ignis sacer* to more fully elucidate its semantic field.

The aims of the dissertation include: exploring the diachronic development of the term from the 1<sup>st</sup> century BC to its dissolution in the 11<sup>th</sup> century; identifying the diseases which are referred to by this name; analysing the therapies administered and identifying the medicinal ingredients. The tasks set are appropriate to achieve the objectives.

K. Boseva applied a precise and systematic approach along the process of formation of the corpus of sources by performing keyword searches in large databases to select only those passages where the phrase is related to a disease. The main works on medical subjects in the period 1<sup>st</sup> to 11<sup>th</sup> centuries were searched and all related references given in critical editions or as commentary to the translations that refer to other passages were traced. In the subsequent analysis of the sources, identification of pathological conditions and identification of therapeutic substances, the cumulative approach of confirming or rejecting a hypothesis is applied. In order to make possible the quantification and extraction of different patterns from the sources, a relational database was created to store and manage the vast amount of information collected. In the identification of therapeutic compounds, the information from the sources and the proposed identifications are compared with current reference literature.

In my opinion, the methods applied are appropriate, very carefully selected and allow the PhD student to reach the objectives set in the thesis, giving an adequate answer to the questions posed.

In addition, the dissertation provides an analysis of the therapeutics associated with *ignis sacer* and also identifies the substances used. The affiliation of plant therapeutic substances mentioned in the sources was updated and upgraded through a complex approach: all affiliations made so far were critically analysed, taking into account the available descriptions and characteristics of the plants in the sources, the distribution of the plant species, the pharmaceutical drugs used, the scientific evidence of the presence of biologically active substances and pharmacological effect, the scientific botanical names are updated according to the modern taxonomic nomenclature. It is noteworthy that every aspect has been carefully examined - for example, in the case of ingredients of animal origin, further scientific verification of the therapeutic effect has been traced to reject compounds with a purely ritualistic or apotropaic function from those that may have had genuine therapeutic value.



Trends in therapy are outlined in the dissertation which show that herbal substances predominate in number. Also recorded are the therapeutic procedures used, classified into several sections: surgical manipulations for the treatment of *ignis sacer*; therapies affecting the digestive system; physiotherapy; magical practices; and the application of transdermal therapeutic agents.

The dissertation employs an interdisciplinary approach to the topic and has made scientific contributions in several directions, both theoretical and methodological.

For the first time, the two distinct traditions of the development of the term in the period up to the 11<sup>th</sup> century are traced and analysed in detail. A main corpus of sources with the term *ignis sacer* has been compiled, and an additional corpus of citations has been compiled to identify the therapeutic remedies;

Methodological approaches to the identification of plant, mineral and animal substances have been developed. Models have been developed for the retrospective diagnosis of pathological conditions described as *ignis sacer*, and for determining the scope of the term based on the therapy prescribed if there is scant or no description of symptoms;

Based on a revision of all affiliations in the secondary literature, the taxonomic affiliation of the examined plant species was updated by identifying 100 plant taxa in a total of 467 medicinal uses in sources, and also 66 other products of diverse origins;

A custom relational database was created as a tool for the storage, processing, systematization and analysis of data related to the diachronic tracing of the medical term;

A glossary of 679 identified medicinal substance names is compiled, which includes 415 Latin lexemes and 263 of their Ancient Greek equivalents;

Over 20 pathological conditions have been identified that are likely to have fallen within the semantic field of *ignis sacer* at different times.

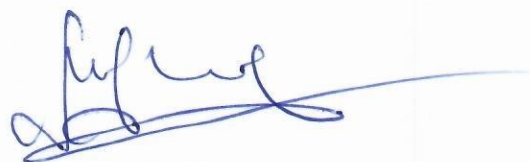
The list of publications includes two articles in proceedings and one in a scientific journal, eight section papers in conferences, and two posters on the subject of the dissertation, which is sufficient according to the minimum required for the PhD degree. The abstract meets the formal requirements and presents succinctly the studied problems as well as the achieved results and contributions.

The collected corpus of sources and the developed database are a good basis for the development of future multidisciplinary research in collaboration with specialists in history, botany, pharmacy, physiology, agronomy, etc.

The present dissertation fully meets all legal requirements and contains the necessary scientific contributions. Based on my highly positive evaluation of both the defended dissertation and the related scientific publications, I confidently recommend for awarding the educational and scientific degree of Doctor to Kalina Yulieva Boseva.

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Sofia



(Assoc. Prof. Milena Mihaylova)