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SUMMARY

of the Dissertation

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Doctor of Philosophy

Title:

**Religious Life in Pautalia and Serdica in the Roman
Period (Comparative Analysis)**

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The dissertation was discussed and proposed for defense for awarding the educational and scientific degree "Doctor of Philosophy" at an extended meeting of the Department of Archaeology at the Faculty of History of the University of Sofia "St. Kliment Ohridski" on June 23rd 2022.

The PhD thesis consists of an analytical text with appendices and a list of references used (458 pages in total), and a Catalogue of Finds, divided into two sections - Pautalia (P) and Serdica (S) - 262 pages in total. The analytical text consists of an introduction, five chapters, and a summary of religious life in the two cities, constituting the conclusion itself. Each of these parts is structured clearly and systematically into subparts. The appendices include 7 tables and 13 maps, commented on thoroughly in the conclusion. The section with references contains a list of abbreviations, a bibliography, and a list of online resources.

The defense of the dissertation will take place on 2022 at ... p.m. in at a meeting of the Scholarly Jury, composed of:

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Introduction

So far, the religious life of the ancient cities of Pautalia and Serdica has not been subject of an independent study, although some scholarly publications are related to this topic. Newly discovered monuments determine the need for further research and the audit of some older observations and interpretations. In the course of work on this dissertation, a considerable number of monuments (coins, altars, statue pedestals, votive tablets, figurines, etc.) has been catalogued, described, and analysed. In the studies of some researchers dealing with the religious life of Pautalia and Serdica, there is an insufficient focus on the reverse images of the coins minted in the two cities. The present dissertation, therefore, devotes considerable space for analysis of these particular coins, whose images reflect, on the one hand, the general imperial trends and policies of the ruling emperors and, on the other hand, specific local features of the cults of Pautalia and Serdica. Significant elements of life in the two cities emerge from the in-depth modern numismatic analysis of the two provincial coinages; several similarities were found and, at the same time, many essential differences.

Objectives

The objective of the present study is to make a comparative analysis of the recorded cults in Pautalia and Serdica and to highlight trends in religious politics in terms of influences and traditions. In achieving the objective, specific tasks have emerged, the accomplishment of which is essential for the dissertation:

- The preparation of a detailed catalogue to serve as a source database.
- Clarification of the chronology of the existing cults.
- Supplementing information from older scholarly literature with new data and revising established opinions if necessary.
- Attempt to reconstruct the historical development where possible.
- In-depth analysis of the monuments included in the catalogue: a comprehensive analysis of the coins (coin denominations, dies, legends) and of the time of operation of the mints of Pautalia and Serdica; analysis of the epigraphic monuments, statues, statuettes, appliqués of a chariot, pottery, mosaics, etc., related to the religious life of Pautalia and Serdica; study of those monuments, found outside the urban centres of Pautalia and Serdica themselves, but associated with the Pautalians and Serdicans.

Unfortunately, a significant part of the monuments in question lack a clear archaeological context. Artefacts registered in a specific archaeological situation provide by far more information. Some monuments have been reused in later constructions; others have been located in structures that could be construed as temples or sanctuaries.

Due to the specificity of tombstones, the latter are not an object of this study, although it is entirely clear that eschatological ideas are part of the religious model, and any analysis of urban religion should feature notions of death, as well as the practices associated with them.

Used methods

The following methods are used to accomplish the objectives of this dissertation:

- Comparative analysis

For this analysis, a catalogue of the finds was prepared - 425 catalogue numbers in total (202 catalogue numbers from/about Pautalia; 223 catalogue numbers from/about Serdica). The gods and divine personalities in the catalogue, whose monuments are under scrutiny, are arranged in alphabetical order. Only the imperial cult and the goddess Roma are listed outside of this order; they were imposed as state cults throughout the Roman Empire and therefore had a leading position in the catalogue. Most of the artefacts are described, analysed, and photo-documented. Monuments that were not found in museum exhibitions and collections or access to which was not allowed, are presented on the basis of publications in the scholarly literature.

The catalogue scope is established by the attested types of monuments, which are arranged as follows: 1. Coins; 2. Altars 3. Stone blocks and slabs; 4. Columns; 5. Statuary pedestals; 6. Statues; 7. Votive tablets; 8. Statuettes; 9. Chariot appliqués; 10. Vessels; 11. Mosaics; 12. Sundials; 13. Bronze and lead plaques; 14. Jewellery; 15. Lamps; 16. Clay seals.

The in-depth comparative analysis allows detecting similarities and differences between the worshipped cults in Pautalia and Serdica. The study also includes comparisons with other cities in the province of Thrace and with such in other parts of the empire, mainly in Asia Minor.

- Handling numismatic material

Of primary importance for this dissertation is the work with the coinages of Pautalia and Serdica. The coins are the most abundant material from both cities, which preordains the need for a detailed analysis. The methods of studying the coins in the thesis are based on

current trends in numismatics and were developed as part of my work within the project No. KP-06 H50/3-30.11.2020 "Measuring Ancient Thrace: re-evaluating Antiquity in Digital Age", WP 1: Methodological Debate. The subject of the study is focused on the reverse dies, issues, nominals, legends, and in some cases, the portraits of the ruling emperors and their family members depicted on the obverses. The iconography of the coins was also analysed in detail, allowing corrections to be made to existing descriptions in the scholarly literature and alternative identifications to be proposed. Parallels with other mints from the province of Thrace and also with those from different parts of the empire¹ were searched for. The results prove that some reverse types, common mainly in Thrace, first appeared on the coins of Pautalia and only later on the issues of the other cities in the province. There clearly is a specific connection between Pautalia and the city mint of Nicaea in Bithynia (in Asia Minor); a connection with Nicaea is detected also for Serdica.

- **An iconographic and stylistic analysis** was carried out on the monuments with images (coins, votive tablets, statuettes, and others).
- **An analysis of the epigraphic monuments** related to religious life in the two cities is also achieved. The theonyms, the epithets of the respective god (functional and local), the names of the initiates and their origins, the positions of the initiates (priests, bouleutes, phylarchs, and others) et al. have been outlined from the inscriptions.
- **The available data was synthesized in table format**

The analysis of the monuments related to the religious life of Pautalia and Serdica allowed the creating of tables in which the information from both cities was synthesized. After incorporating the available data in tabular form, curious characteristics of the cults in Pautalia and Serdica during the Roman period emerged.

- **Cartographic method**

Monuments with a clear archaeological context or such with an approximate established location of discovery are noted on the map. The borders of the ancient cities of

¹ The parallels of the Pautalia and Serdica coins have been searched mainly in digital catalogues, for some of which I have received full access to the published materials as a result of my participation in the FNI project No. KP-06-H50/3-30.11.2020 "Measuring Ancient Thrace: re-evaluating Antiquity in Digital Age", supervised by Assoc. Prof. Dr. Julia Tzvetkova. I use this opportunity to express my gratitude to my colleagues from the project team!

Pautalia and Serdica are also marked. Thus, issues related to the topography of religious cults and festivals were commented on.

Territorial and chronological scope

The study is focused on monuments recorded both in the urban centres and within the equidistant of about 5 km (a principle introduced by V. Katsarova for Pautalia). Included are also artefacts from more distant areas, dedicated by Pautalians or Serdicans. For example, dedications of Pautalian and Serdican magistrates (bouleutai, phylarchs, et al.) have been found in sanctuaries, situated within the administrative territory of the cities, but also in regions laying remotely outside the cities' administrative domains. In the context of the issues related to the imperial cult, the present study also comments on monuments found outside the urban centres but containing specific information that they were erected by one of the two cities in honour of members of the imperial families.

The chronological scope of the dissertation generally covers the period from the first half of the 2nd century AD to the middle/second half of the 4th century. The lower limit of the period can be associated with the establishment of the two Roman cities in the early 2nd century, and the upper – with the declaration of Christianity as the only official/permitted religion in the Empire by the Edict of Thessalonica (February 380). The earliest epigraphic monuments from Pautalia and Serdica relating adoration of a particular personality or deity can be linked to the AD 130s and the reign of Emperor Hadrian. Most of the inscriptions found in Pautalia and Serdica are dated in the scholarly literature to the second half of the 2nd century and the first half of the 3rd century. From Pautalia and Serdica originate epigraphic monuments that can be precisely dated to the second and third quarter of the third century. In both cities, artefacts are recorded even from the first half of the 4th century AD. Such artefacts are often pedestals for statues of members of imperial families. The rapid spread of Christianity did not immediately liquidate the old cults, which is evident from some epigraphic monuments from the third quarter of the fourth century.

Coinage provides an extremely important chronological reference point. Both in Pautalia and Serdica, the respective provincial mint was functioning. Both mints were active within certain periods of time and minted their issues. In the introduction of the thesis the periods of activity of the two mints are described in detail. This information is briefly presented here. The opening of the Pautalian mint took place earlier, i.e. during the reign of Emperor Antoninus Pius (AD 138-161). The latest coins of Pautalia are attested for the sole

rule of Caracalla (AD 211/2-217). Several brief interruptions of the mint's activity are attested within the entire period from the reign of Antoninus Pius to the sole rule of Septimius Severus' elder son. Compared to other mints in the province of Thrace, the Pautalian mint functioned with great intensity and struck coins bearing the names of many provincial governors. In the period mentioned, coins of Pautalia were issued for Antoninus Pius, Marcus Aurelius, Lucius Verus, Faustina Minor, Commodus, Lucilla, Septimius Severus, Clodius Albinus, Julia Domna, Caracalla, Plautilla and Geta. The analysis of the coinage proves that Pautalia was a city imposing fashionable trends in the popularization of certain reverse types among other cities of the province of Thrace. Some specific for Thrace reverse images appear initially on Pautalian coins in particular and only subsequently on issues of Philippopolis and even later on those of Serdica.

The mint of Serdica began its activity later in comparison to Pautalia – in the second half of the joint rule of Marcus Aurelius and Lucius Verus. In addition to depictions of these two emperors, Faustina Minor was also portrayed on the coins of Serdica from that time. The mint functioned only briefly, and already during the joint rule of Marcus Aurelius and Lucius Verus or immediately after it, the minting was ceased. After a hiatus of several decades, Serdica re-started minting coins in the mid-190s, during the reign of Septimius Severus. The analysis of the coinage proves that from the beginning of the 3rd century until the death of Septimius Severus (February 211), the mint was not functioning. However, during the joint reign of Caracalla and Geta and especially during the sole rule of Septimius Severus' elder son, the mint of Serdica was exclusively active; it was at that time, when Serdica saw the peak of its coinage. At the end of Caracalla's reign, the Serdica mint ceased functioning. The development of the ancient city continued actively throughout the first half of the 3rd century. During the sole rule of Emperor Gallienus (AD 260-268), Serdica again, but only briefly, minted its own coins. Already at that time, probably at the very end of Gallienus' reign, the mint of Serdica came under the strict control of the Roman state and started issuing imperial coins; this activity continued until the early 4th century.

Chapter one: Roman state cults

In this chapter, the imperial cult is commented on in detail. In Pautalia and Serdica significant amounts of epigraphic monuments have been recorded testifying to the citizens' reverence for the reigning rulers and their families. Further information is derived from coins with their obverse and reverse images. The mints of both Pautalia and Serdica issued a

substantial number of coins with reverse depictions of the emperor or members of the imperial family. In the Roman Empire, the imperial cult was closely related to the cult of the goddess Roma. That is why special attention is also devoted here to this goddess.

In the early stages of the activity of the Pautalian mint, the presence of a large number of coins for Faustina the Younger makes a strong impression, indicating special attitude towards the daughter of Antoninus Pius, who was also the wife of Marcus Aurelius. Members of the early Antonine dynasty, especially Faustina Minor, may have visited Pautalia. For sure there were imperial visits to the city on the Strymon river during the reign of the early Severi when the mint issued a considerable amount of coins. The present analysis has confirmed earlier opinions formulated in the scholarly literature about several visits to Serdica by members of the family of Septimius Severus, and especially by Caracalla during his sole reign; it was for him that the mint of Serdica struck a colossal quantity of coins. Emperor Gallienus also visited Serdica, an event most likely connected with the resumption of coinage in the city, which had been interrupted at the end of Caracalla's sole reign.

The coins of Pautalia and Serdica depict also so-called divine iconography, by which an emperor or a member of the imperial family is represented as a particular god or goddess. In Pautalia such information is available for Augusta Faustina the Younger and her daughter Augusta Lucilla and in Serdica – for Caracalla and probably Gallienus.

Noteworthy is the fact that the goddess Roma is only depicted in the coinage of Pautalia and only on coins of Faustina the Younger. It is possible that in these depictions Faustina is identified as this goddess; however, the information is not sufficient to accept this possibility as a proven fact.

The coins of Pautalia are notable for the clear connection between the emperor and Asclepius, who was the main deity of the city. The epigraphic monuments complement the information about the probable relationship between the healing gods and the *domus divina* (Οἶκος θεῖος). The evidence comes from a pedestal for a statue of the emperors' high priestess, who is also a priestess of the saviour gods (σωτῆρες θεοί), identified with the healing gods. The coins provide information that in Pautalia the cult of the emperor was probably celebrated in the temple of Asclepius. So far, there is no definite evidence from Serdica of a possible connection between the emperor and a particular god of the city's pantheon. An official inscription related to sports games in honour of Antoninus Pius and his family mentions a priest of Olympian Zeus, and the name of Apollo appears also in the text; this priest was the organiser of the festival, but it is not clear in what connection Apollo is mentioned.

In Pautalia, the the *domus divina* is also associated with other gods. Such information is available for the so-called (Pautalian) Olympian gods (Ὀλυμπίοις θεοῖς), as well as for the so-called imperial gods (θεοῖς βασιλικοῖς). So far, the characteristics of the deities in question have not been fully elucidated.

The imperial family was honoured often by erecting statues; more such evidence has survived from Serdica. A number of these statues was erected by the city, and was located on the main roadway *Via Diagonalis* – to the west where the road entered Serdica's territory at present day city of Pirot and to the east where the road exited Serdica's administrative domain (at the mountain pass known today as Trajan's Gate) to continue to Philippopolis. So far, no such monuments have been attested for Pautalia, being not located on a major highway. However, pedestals for statues have been found in very city of Pautalia. A typical example is the pedestal erected for the emperor Licinius in the early 4th century by a provincial governor.

Statues were also set up in Pautalia for prominent members of the Gerousia, the latter being probably related to the imperial cult. This important religious institution is documented in both cities and even called "sacred" in Pautalia. In Serdica the location of the Gerousia's seat is considered clarified – an inscription on a limestone architrave announces a construction carried out with the funds of the institution in question. In addition, a list of the names of the members of the Serdica's Gerousia is carved on a large marble slab.

Information about the existence of an imperial phyle originates from Serdica. The presence of such a phyle in the city reflects the veneration of the emperor. In Pautalia and Serdica, the worshipping of the emperor is also attested in building inscriptions, inscriptions on altars, et al.

Festivals, games and competitions related to the imperial cult were held in both cities. For now, more evidence of such events is attested in Serdica. The greatest number of records of gladiatorial games in worship of the emperors is documented for the Antonine era. The organization of sporting events continued in the 3rd century AD, and the Pythian Games were also held in the city of Serdica during the reign of Emperor Gordian III. In Pautalia, gladiatorial games were organized during the rule of Emperor Severus Alexander by the high priestess of the emperors, who was at the same time a priestess of the saviour gods (σωτήρες θεοί).

Chapter two: Cults of deities from the Graeco-Roman pantheon

The second chapter of the PhD thesis is the largest in volume, and it includes several cults of great importance for the religious life in both Pautalia and Serdica. The classification of the gods in this chapter is based on the number of monuments recorded, evidence for the existence of temples in both cities, and the presence of priests of certain cult.

The analysed artefacts from Pautalia and Serdica demonstrate that the largest amount of evidence is for the cult of **Asclepius**. The god of healing is commented on first, as he is the patron of the city of Pautalia, which is clearly perceptible from the reverse images of the coins. For Serdica it would be difficult to determine who was the main god of the city (if there was one at all), but the cult of Asclepius is definitely among the leading ones. The reverse types with deities of healing from Serdica are considerably fewer than those of Pautalia. Some of the reverse images on Pautalian coins are specific and show not only that the god was the patron of the city but also attest his connection to the imperial cult. Local specificities are represented on more than a few coins of Pautalia. Typical examples are the coins with a hill identified as Hisarlaka, covered with vegetation and temple buildings, among which the emphasis is on the temple of Asclepius. The god of healing is also depicted on coins with the Emperor, the City Goddess and others. Asclepius is depicted also on the only pseudo-autonomous type of Pautalia. Noteworthy, Hygieia and Telesphorus are also well attested in Pautalia, while in the city of Serdica the images of these deities of healing are almost absent.

In the historiography there is a controversy surrounding the possible identification of a deity on two specific Serdica coin types, with the majority of scholars interpreting the depicted figure as Apollo Healer. Todor Gerasimov, however, identifies this god as Asclepius. Correct identification of the figure on these coins is essential to clarify the religious life of Serdica, but there is still no definitive answer.

A temple to the healing god Asclepius existed in each of the two cities. In the coinage of both Pautalia and Serdica there are reverse types with an image of a temple, between the columns of which a statue of the god standing. Archaeological excavations have also attested the presence of a temple of the healing deity in both cities, the evidence from Pautalia being much more conclusive than from Serdica. The Pautalian Asclepeion was probably located at the northern slopes of the Hisarlaka hill. For Serdica, there are two assumptions regarding the location – immediately north of the city walls or near the mineral springs.

In Pautalia, the cult of the healing deities was worshipped together with the cult of the emperor. Epigraphic evidence from the time of Severus Alexander indicates that the city had a high priestess of the imperial cult, which was also a priestess of the saviour gods, identified with high probability with the healing gods. As already noted, the Pautalian coins indicate that the imperial cult was worshipped in the temple of Asclepius.

The popularity of the cult of the healing gods among the citizens of Pautalia and Serdica is also evidenced by the dedications found outside the city centres themselves. At the sanctuary of Asclepius at Glava Panega, situated to the north of the Balkan Range, dedicators from Pautalia have been documented, including one *bouleutes* and one *phylarchos*. Even at the famous sanctuary of Asclepius at Epidaurus (on the Peloponnese peninsula), a dedication to the Pautalian healing gods made by a priest is attested. Serdican citizens are documented in two large sanctuaries within the administrative territory of their city. One of them is at Slivnitsa, where dedications of a *bouleutes* and a *phylarch* are found. A substantial number of dedications in the sanctuary near Pernik is associated with Serdicans, most of them made by *bouleutai*.

The popularity of the Asclepius cult is, to a large extent, related to the presence of mineral springs in both cities. The evidence from Pautalia even presents the practise of rituals by deliberately throwing objects into the mineral waters. The healing waters may have even attracted foreigners and perhaps members of imperial families to visit Pautalia and Serdica in search for salvation for their health problems.

The cult of **Heracles** is presented second in this chapter. The hero was worshipped in both Pautalia and Serdica. The only certainly attested temple within the city walls of Serdica is most likely dedicated to Heracles or maybe to Heracles and Dionysus. The connection between Heracles and Dionysus is attested by an anepigraphic tablet depicting the two divine figures. The hero is well represented on the coinage of the two cities, and there are specific iconographic types, typical for the two urban centres in the province of Thrace. One such example from Pautalia is a reverse depiction of Heracles on a medallion of Emperor Antoninus Pius. The specific example from Serdica is a reverse type from the time of the early Severi and later of Gallienus with a reclining Heracles represented as a *symposiast*. It is assumed that the bust of the hero is also attested on pseudo-autonomous coins of Serdica.

In Pautalia one of the city's *phyle* was named after Heracles, and two of its representatives were priests, perhaps associated with the cult of the hero. Unfortunately, no epigraphic evidence is known so far from Serdica that has any connection with Heracles. However, numerous anepigraphic monuments have been documented in the city of Serdica,

some of which are fragments of statues of the hero. A part of these artefacts is registered in a temple localized in Serdica, next to the western wall of the city. Large marble blocks have been discovered in Late Antique ruins in Serdica used as *spolia*. On these marble blocks scenes of a reclining Heracles are depicted, probably in his role as symposiast, as well as scenes of Dionysus' *thiasos*. It is possible that these *spolia* originate from the Temple of Heracles or Heracles and Dionysus, found near the western wall of Serdica. Probably there was also a temple of the hero in Pautalia, but no such building has been documented archaeologically. For the Pautalians, Heracles possibly has a connection with the athletic games in the city. The hero was also perceived as *Psychopomp*, the guide of the deceased in their journey to the afterlife, which is confirmed by depictions of Heracles on chariot appliques found in funerary contexts. Dionysus, who may also have been perceived in a similar way by the Pautalians, is also depicted on this type of monument. This is another link between the cults of Heracles and Dionysus, attested in the two Thracian cities.

The cult of **Dionysus** and the members of his *thiasos* definitely had a significant role in Pautalia and Serdica. Their images are popular in the coinage of both cities. Based on specific Pautalian reverse types, it can be assumed that there was a sanctuary of Pan on Hisarlaka hill. The worship of Dionysus in both cities is also attested by epigraphic evidence, albeit sparse. At Pautalia is attested a priest, most likely of Dionysus cult. Unfortunately, most monuments relating to Dionysus are anepigraphic. Currently, there is no definite evidence for the existence of a temple of Dionysus both in Pautalia and Serdica, but it can be supposed that each of the two cities had a sacred place where the god and his *thiasos* were worshipped. The popularity of Dionysus in Serdica is clearly evident due to the fact that one of the *phylai* in the city was named after the god.

As has already been indicated, in Serdica Dionysus may have been worshipped jointly with Heracles, possibly in a joint temple. Artefacts found in Pautalia refer to a connection between the two divine figures regarding the afterlife. The monuments discovered in a funerary context may relate to the idea of accompanying the deceased to the underworld. A glass "*vas diatretum*" with a Dionysian scene found in Serdica in a late antique mausoleum is also associated with a burial context. Of a high interest are two anepigraphic reliefs from Serdica, depicting Dionysus with a serpent raised above his head; this iconography has no clear explanation in the scholarly literature.

The research focuses also on the cult of **Zeus and Hera**. The pair is better documented in the city on the Strymon river, where a temple might have existed on the Hisarlaka hill dedicated to them; however no clear evidence is available to support such a

supposition. In Pautalia sacrifices are attested as well as a celebration of sporting games and equestrian competitions in honour of Zeus and Hera. The popularity of this cult in Pautalia may be due to the sanctuary of Zeus and Hera, located at the present-day village of Kopilovtsi, near Kyustendil. The evidence from Pautalia and its hinterland indicates clearly the worship of Zeus together with Hera, whereas no such relationship is documented in Serdica. In Serdica Hera appears only on coins, while Zeus was definitely worshipped, and an epigraphic monument from the time of Antoninus Pius even suggests the presence of a priest of Olympian Zeus; unfortunately, the inscription has survived in a fragmentary condition. Another Serdican epigraphic monument indicates the existence of a temple dedicated to Capitoline Zeus-Helios-Sarapis. The cults of Zeus and Hera (worshipped together or separately) are definitely better documented in the administrative territories of the two cities than in the urban centres themselves.

A well attested cult in both Pautalia and Serdica is the one of the god **Apollo**. It is possible that in each of the two cities a temple of the deity existed, as suggested by the reverse images of the coins issued by the city mints. It has been noted earlier that the scholarly literature is divided about the identification of the god in two particular reverse types of Serdica, with Apollo or Asclepius being possibilities. If the figure is that of Apollo, then it may be assumed that the deity had a prominent role in the city of Serdica. Further evidence for this assumption is provided by epigraphic monuments, some of which are of an official character. Apollo's name occurs on an inscription about the organization of a sports festival in honour of emperor Antoninus Pius. However, the inscription is fragmentary, and the connection in which Apollo is mentioned is uncertain. There is also evidence of Pythian games in Serdica which may have had a connection to the cult of Apollo.

The image of **Hermes** is also widespread in both cities, even though no epigraphic monuments from Pautalia have yet been found, and from Serdica there is only one inscription that is not well preserved. The god is mainly registered on coins and statuettes, with significantly more evidence from Pautalia, whose coins allow the assumption that there was a temple of Hermes in the city from the time of Emperor Commodus. Furthermore, some of the Pautalian reverses could be identified as specific, connected to actually existing statues of the god in this city. It is probable that such statues adorned there the public spaces. The deity was certainly worshipped, even though it was not among the leading cults in Pautalia and Serdica. Similarities between the two cities are definitely noticeable in the monuments of Hermes, whose image was typical in antiquity and particularly well represented throughout the Roman empire on coins and through small bronze sculpture.

Limited information is available for **Athena** in both cities. The goddess is known mainly from coins, and for Serdica it is assumed that pseudo-autonomous coins with her image were minted. A marble statue of the goddess has also been discovered within the supposed temple of Heracles in that city. Besides on coins, Athena is represented in Pautalia by a bronze statuette, but the context of its discovery is unclear. It is possible that a temple to Athena existed in each one of the two cities, although information on the goddess is relatively scarce in order to confirm such an assumption.

The goddess **Aphrodite** is represented in both Pautalia and Serdica, with evidence from the city on the Strymon river being considerably scarcer. The cult of Aphrodite apparently was practised in Serdica, as is suggested by the various monuments on which the image of the goddess is present. Certain Serdican artefacts suggest a possible association of the goddess with water, an idea reflected also on the coins with a depiction of bathing Aphrodite. In Serdica the goddess is often represented through statuettes. The most significant artefact showing the goddess is the famous Serdican relief of the circus games, on which Cybele is also represented. Images of Aphrodite in Pautalia are so far known only from coins. The name of the goddess is attested on an altar from the administrative territory of Pautalia, dedicated to Zeus, Hera and Aphrodite.

Artemis is also poorly evidenced in Pautalia, being known only from a single reverse type on the city's coins. However, the cult of the goddess is well attested in Serdica, where one can even assume the existence of a temple in her honour. Two altars dedicated to Artemis, one of which was erected by a priestess of the goddess, originate from Serdica. There has also been found a fragment of a small marble statuette, as well as a torso from a statue of Artemis. It remains a mystery why Artemis was not worshipped in Pautalia and its hinterland, although immediately to the south along the Middle Struma valley and to the north in Serdica, the cult of the goddess is richly documented.

The images of **Ares** appear only on coins in both cities. Significantly more iconographic types of the god are present in the coinage of Serdica. On one of the Serdican coin types even a divine iconography can be presumed, through which the emperor Caracalla is identified with Ares. Only one reverse type with the God of war is registered in Pautalia, but in the nearby village of Dolna Koznitsa a sanctuary of Ares existed. A marble stele with a list of members of a religious association of Ares, some of whom were *bouleuitai* probably from Pautalia, was found there. It remains unknown in what way the Pautalian citizens were involved with this sanctuary of Ares. Remarkable is the discrepancy between the numismatic material from Pautalia related to Ares and the epigraphic data, showing the need for profound

caution when using provincial coinage as a source of information about the religious life of a relevant city. The answer in this case may reside in the essence of the cult of Ares in Dolna Koznitsa, which probably reflected specific local religious concepts.

Demeter is also documented only on coins, and both cities minted issues with various iconographic types of the goddess. Demeter is noticeably more often represented on the coins of Pautalia than on the coins of Serdica. The popularity of the goddess in Pautalia may have been largely related to the fertility and wealth of the region along the valley of the Strymon river. The reverse types, in which the goddess holds a torch with a serpent entwined around it, are typical images for Pautalia and Serdica and for the province of Thrace in general. This specificity may refer to the chthonic functions of the serpent or confer also health-giving functions on Demeter. When it comes to Pautalia it can be assumed that Faustina the Younger, as well as her daughter Lucilla, are represented in divine iconography as Demeter. No such evidence exists for Serdica. It should be noted that the Serdica mint struck coins with reverse images of **Triptolemus**, while no such images are attested in Pautalia. The reason for the appearance of the image of the Eleusinian hero on the coins of Serdica is still unknown. Nevertheless, the data available so far does not allow assumptions about the existence of a cult of Triptolemus in the city.

Only on coins of Serdica minted under the reign of Caracalla and of Gallienus an image identified as a **Dioskoros** is documented. However, the existence of such a reverse type raises questions as to the correct identification of the figure. It seems possible that the reverse type believed to depict just one of the divine twins may have another meaning, recreating in fact divine iconography.

In the village of Ivanyane in the administrative territory of Serdica a monument has been discovered testifying to the worship of **Pluto**. The dedication to the god was made by a *bouleutes* who was at the same time a *gerousiast*, probably of Serdica. In Pautalia and its hinterland no monuments related to the god Pluto have been recorded.

Chapter three: Divine personifications

The dissertation's third chapter is devoted to the so-called divine personifications. They can be divided into two groups, respectively entitled "Personifications of public notions" and "Personifications of nature". Divine personifications are known mainly from the coinage of the cities. Often in Pautalia and Serdica, such personages are depicted in conventional iconography, but there are also reverse types which can be categorically defined

as specific and reflecting local features. Some personifications – the City Goddess, the Nymphs and the River God – had a substantial part in the life of the two cities. The local character of these deities is particularly apparent in the coins of Pautalia.

I. Personifications of public notions

The **City Goddess** has an important status in Pautalia and is represented along with the city's patron god Asclepius. Within the reverse images on Serdican coins, one can also notice local features specific for this city. In both Pautalia and Serdica, reverse depictions of the City Goddess appear alongside the figure of the/an Emperor. The images of the City Goddess respectively in Pautalia and Serdica have certain similarities, but the significant differences, probably due to local specificities, cannot be overlooked. The data from both cities concerning the construction of fortification wall at approximately the same time is of considerable importance.

In Pautalia and Serdica the goddess of retribution **Nemesis** is mainly known from coins. Monuments with the so-called Danubian Riders, in whose iconography a characteristic element is a female figure with a raised hand in front of the face, interpreted as Nemesis, are found in both cities. There is scant evidence of dedications to the goddess of retribution in the administrative territories of Pautalia and Serdica. The practice of an individual cult to Nemesis has not been documented so far in neither of the urban centres.

The image of **Nike** is also known primarily from the coinage of both cities. The Goddess of victory is often associated with military activities and the propaganda of the emperors. In Pautalia, Nike is only registered on coins and possibly on a monument associated with the so-called Danubian Riders, while in Serdica the goddess is also represented by a bronze statuette. For now, one can presume the possible presence of the cult of Nike in Serdica, more likely related to private practices.

Tyche is also attested in both cities. The iconography of the goddess is very similar to that of the City Goddess/Tyche Poleos. For this reason, the exact identification of the deity is often uncertain. In Pautalia, where Tyche is only known from the coinage, a very particular reverse type has been issued with a goddess. She has been identified in the scholarly literature as the "Tyche of Pautalia". However, it is possible that the coins in question actually represent the City Goddess. In Serdica, Tyche does appear not only on coins but also on other monuments – two votive tablets, one statuette and one ring. These artefacts could provide evidence of the existence of a cult of Tyche among the Serdicans, although the identification of the depicted goddess is not fully certain.

Homonia is part of the conventional iconography only on the coins of the two cities. The appearance of this goddess in the coinages of Pautalia and Serdica can probably be associated with the imperial policy.

II. Personifications of Nature

The Nymphs and the River God, whose monuments largely reflect local features of both cities, are first to be considered in this group of personifications. Specific examples in Pautalia are coins bearing the region's riches, analogues of which have so far been documented only in Philippopolis.

From Pautalia's immediate hinterland originates a dedication to the **Three Nymphs** that indicates the existence of a cult; unfortunately, the relief has no archaeological context. The cult of the Three Nymphs is well attested in Serdica; several dedications are documented, one of which indicates the worship of the Three Nymphs along with Apollo. Furthermore, one of the Serdica's *phylai* was probably dedicated to the nymphs.

The reverse types with the riches of the region are specific to the coinage of Pautalia. These coins feature a figure identified by researchers as a **nymph**. The female figure can be assumed to personify a natural characteristic, incorporating in its essence a number of qualities of the Pautalian region, from where the population draws its wealth (gold, silver, wheat, grapes, etc.).

In Serdica, the River God is attested only on coins and considering the reverse types, he does not seem to have had any significant meaning for the local population. The situation is rather different in Pautalia, where the River God Strymon is often represented on coins, and some of the types can be characterized as specific and of local importance, depicting the riches of the region. The god, like the City Goddess, was depicted also together with the patron deity of Pautalia, Asclepius. Numismatists offer two possible identifications of this male god – a personification of the Strymon river, as traditionally assumed, or of the healing spring in Pautalia, as T. Gerassimov suggests.

Helios and Selene are also mostly known from the coinage. Helios is depicted on coins of both Pautalia and Serdica, while Selene's image appears on coins of Serdica, but not on those of Pautalia. Helios/Sol and Selene/Luna are also typical in the iconography of Mithraic monuments, where mythological scenes are often depicted. Helios/Sol and Selene/Luna are also represented on the monuments with the so-called Danubian Riders, the number of which is greater in Serdica than in Pautalia.

Chapter four: Eastern cults

An essential part of the study is devoted to the Eastern cults, which are better attested in Serdica. They are divided into three subgroups: Egyptian cults, Anatolian-Balkan cults, Southwest Asian cults. The spread of the Eastern cults is most likely related to settlers from the East, whose presence is evidenced by epigraphic monuments from Serdica. The migration routes may have followed the main highways, in this case the Diagonal Road, which passed through Serdica. This is how migrants from the eastern provinces settled in the mentioned city, while Pautalia, which lies aside of the *via Diagonalis*, remained more isolated from eastern influence.

I. Egyptian cults

No evidence of the worship of Egyptian gods in Pautalia has been attested so far, whereas the artefacts from Serdica clearly indicate the existence of the cult of Sarapis and Isis. The Pautalian mint struck coins with the images of Sarapis and Harpocrates, but starting only in the time of the early Severi. The city mint of Serdica, where Egyptian cults were certainly venerated, began to issue coins with Sarapis, Isis and Harpocrates in the Antonine period. Egyptian cults probably made their way to Serdica with eastern migrants in the first half of the 2nd century. The appearance of these deities on Pautalian coins under the early Severi should be associated with imperial politics.

Apparently, the cult of **Sarapis** was an important part of the religious life of the Serdicans since the god was bound even to the Roman state cult of Capitoline Jupiter, called in Serdica Capitoline Zeus-Helios-Sarapis. The evidence derives from an inscription on a building pediment from AD 166-169, when Appius Claudius Martialis was provincial governor in Thrace. The epigraphic monument attests to the existence of a temple of Sarapis in Serdica, possibly as early as the Antonine period. Presumably, such a temple existed in the ancient city in a location situated now under the present-day Graf-Ignatiev-Str. and Garibaldi Square, where the pediment was found. However, the archaeological material does not conclusively prove that the temple was located precisely there; it is possible that the pediment was reused there in later constructions. Despite the conflicting evidence, it is certain that a temple of Sarapis existed in Serdica, as evidenced by coins from the time of Gallienus, under whom the city mint issued a reverse type with Hades-Sarapis depicted on a throne between the columns of a tetrastyle temple.

The **Isis** cult was also worshipped in Serdica, and the goddess is well represented on coins of the city; additional artefacts associated with the goddess are also attested. It has been suggested in the scholarly literature that the famous circus relief from Serdica depicts games in honour of Isis and probably Sarapis. The Aphrodite represented on the marble relief might actually represent Isis-Aphrodite. The popularity of Isis in Serdica is also confirmed by the name of a Serdican *phyle*, perhaps devoted to the Egyptian goddess. There is a possibility that Isis, as well as her son **Harpocrates**, are depicted on a specific coin type from the time of Gallienus, which would also indicate the special place of Egyptian cults in the pantheon of Serdica.

Noteworthy, Harpocrates appears on the coins of Pautalia, unlike Isis, for whom no images have been found on the coins of the city.

II. Anatolian-Balkan cults

Cybele was depicted on coins of Pautalia already during the rule of Antoninus Pius, but no monuments have been found to confirm the existence of a cult of the goddess in the city. The case is more intriguing in Serdica, where the goddess was definitely worshipped from the time of the Antonines, but her image seems to have been represented on coins of Serdica starting only under the early Severi. The epigraphic monuments from Serdica confirm that the cult of the Great Mother Goddess was practised in the city during the time of Emperor Hadrian, when there was also a cult organization in her honour. It is possible that a temple of Cybele existed in Serdica. The adoration of the goddess continued definitely into later times, evidenced by her depiction on the famous late-antique circus relief from Serdica.

A rare Pautalian reverse type minted for Caracalla with Cybele on the chariot, being drawn by two lions to the right, has parallels with coins of the city of Nicaea issued under Severus Alexander, i.e. later than in Pautalia. Both this type and other reverse dies of Pautalia, having later analogies within the coinage of Nicaea, probably indicate that after the closure of the mint at Pautalia, Pautalian engravers practised their profession in Nicaea at least under Severus Alexander. Some of the Pautalian engravers may have supported the coinage of Serdica during the sole rule of Caracalla when the mint of Serdica struck a colossal quantity of coins. Following the shutdown of the mint of Serdica, these engravers may have eventually settled in Nicaea, where some of the population of Serdica originated from. The Nicaean origin of some Serdicans is attested by tombstones from Serdica.

Another cult in Serdica, probably spread by eastern settlers, is that of **Hypsistos**, who has so far remained without fully clarified nature. His shrine was located north of the city

walls and is registered by a high concentration of altars, pedestals, statues, et al. Evidence for a priest of Hypsistos also originates from Serdica.

Quite different seem the circumstances connected with the cult of **Sabazios**, who should be traced back to the older traditions of the local Thracian population. The Sabazios cult is attested in Pautalia by two epigraphic monuments and in Serdica – by one. The god is called Zeus Sabazios in Pautalia, with no local epithet attested for him; in Serdica however Sabazios apparently had such an epithet. Several testimonies to the cult of Sabazios are registered in the administrative territory of both cities. The so-called Hands of Sabazios, distinctive for this cult and connected to cult associations and processions, have not been recorded yet in any of the two cities.

III. Southwest Asian cults

In both Pautalia and Serdica, the cult of **Mithras** is attested. Mithraism can be associated with soldiers, recruited from the territories of Pautalia and Serdica in antiquity. Mithras is perhaps better represented in Pautalia – an altar dedicated to the god by a distinguished Pautalian citizen was found there. The dedicator was Publius Antius Reginus, a διασημοτάτος/vir perfectissimus. Probably during the sole rule of the emperor Gallienus Antius Reginus was provincial governor. Several tablets depicting Mithras have also been found in Pautalia, unfortunately with no clear archaeological context.

In Serdica only one Mithras relief has been found, and to be noted is its considerable size. Some experts believe to have excavated archaeologically a Mithraeum in Serdica; however, the building in question does not contain any identifiable accompanying material linking it to Mithraism.

Chapter five: Local cults and cults with unclear characteristics

A cult attested so far only in Pautalia is first commented on in this chapter. Dedications to the so-called **Olympian gods**, who were worshipped together with the *domus divina*, are recorded in the epigraphic monuments from the city and its administrative territory. In this case the notion of Olympic gods has probably a local meaning for the region of Pautalia. The existence of so-called Olympic gods in Pautalia is a phenomenon that has not been fully elucidated. These deities were probably worshipped by Pautalians and their temples were located on the hill, known today as Hisarlaka. The Pautalian coins of early Severan times clearly depict the hill, covered with vegetation and several temples, among

which the emphasis is placed on the temple of Asclepius. A further sanctuary probably existed on the top of Hisarlaka hill, although it is unclear to which deity/deities it was dedicated. Highly likely, on the hill was located a cult centre of all Pautalian gods (or at least of some of them), referred to by the general term Olympian gods, who were also worshipped jointly with the imperial cult. In Pautalia, the so-called imperial gods (whose features are not clarified) and the "saviour gods", probably identical to the healing gods, are also associated with the cult of the emperor. The (Pautalian) Olympian gods certainly had a prominent role in the religious life of Pautalia, clearly indicated by their connection to the imperial cult. The analysis of this cult is incorporated in this chapter because of the obvious impossibility of referring to it as the Greek Olympian gods, even just because of the presence of Asclepius among them. Two epigraphic monuments related to these deities were dedicated by a group of priests. The priests were probably representatives of separate cults (e.g., of Asclepius; Apollo; Heracles; Dionysus; Zeus and Hera; and other deities), that were part of the composition of the so-called (Pautalian) Olympian gods. Perhaps this explains the significant number of priests who dedicated monuments to the emperors and the gods they worshipped.

The sanctuary of Ares known from the administrative territory of Pautalia at the present-day village of Dolna Koznitsa was mentioned earlier. Epigraphic evidence proves the existence of a cult organisation dedicated to the god, the members of which were probably *bouleutai* from Pautalia. The cult of Ares at this sanctuary is rather connected with local religious traditions² than with the Greek aspect of worshiping the god of war.

Chapter five of the thesis also discusses god **Zbelsourdos**, for whom information is scarce from both cities. So far the cult of Zbelsourdos is not recorded in Pautalia. However, it has been supposed that a tablet with a dedication to Zbelsourdos found in the Republic of North Macedonia originates from the city of Pautalia (the tablet was seized by the Macedonian police from a private individual). The dedicator is a *gerousiast*, but it is unclear with the Gerosia of which city he was connected to. The cult of Zbelsourdos was definitely known in the administrative territory of Pautalia, where the sanctuary of the god is registered at the village of Golemo Selo.

Zbelsourdos was also venerated in Serdica, which is attested by an inscription on a column.

² I express my deep gratitude to Dr. Nicolay Sharankov for clarifying the specificities of the cult of Ares at the sanctuary in Dolna Koznitsa! I would also like to use this opportunity to thank him for the numerous other tips he shared for the elaboration of this PhD study.

The **Thracian Horseman** appears on a small number of monuments from both cities. The Heros is attested only on a tablet with a dedication to Asclepius in Pautalia, while in Serdica, he is documented on monuments with dedications to Apollo. The vast majority of dedications, connected with Pautalians and Serdicans and related to the Heros, have actually been found outside the urban centres, mainly in sanctuaries. Such artefacts dedicated by Pautalians were found at Glava Panega to the north of the Haemus Range; dedications by Serdicans are attested in the sanctuaries at Pernik and Slivnitsa. These dedications are made to Asclepius and by exception to Asclepius, Hygieia, and Telesphorus. A high concentration of artefacts depicting the Horseman was registered at the village of Slokostitsa near Kyustendil, where a sanctuary probably existed. Artefacts depicting the Thracian Horseman have been found in Serdica and its hinterland. These monuments originate from different locations, so it is impossible to link them to a particular cult site.

The last chapter of the thesis also comments on the monuments of the so-called **Danubian Riders**, whose origin is not fully clarified. A bronze roundel with images of the Danubian Riders and a short inscription, perhaps related to magical practices, has been found in Pautalia. This monument differs significantly from the majority artefacts associated with the so-called Danubian Riders, mostly lead plaques. Three such plaques have been discovered in Serdica. Two of them are absolutely identical, probably made in the same mould. It has been suggested that a workshop existed in Serdica, which produced such lead plaques. Artefacts similar to these have also been found in the locality Arbanas near Radomir and in the village of Rebro near Pernik. The date of the artefacts from Serdica is to be explicitly noted, as the archaeological context connects them with the period from the late 3rd century to the late 4th century.

Religious life in Pautalia and Serdica (as a conclusion)

The final part of the dissertation provides a brief synthesis of the researched emphases, with the analysis based on the elaborated tables and maps included in the supplement.

Essential information is provided by the tables that highlight the extent to which each cult is recorded. The uneven presence in Pautalia and Serdica of different cults (Graeco-Roman, Eastern and local) is remarkable, with the latter being surprisingly the least represented in both cities. The question is whether they actually had such a poor presence, or limited material manifestation of these cults has come down to us. The spread of the Eastern

cults (Isis, Cybele, Mithras, Sabazios, Sarapis, Harpocrates and Hypsistos) differs in the two cities - in Serdica they are well attested, while in Pautalia only the cults of Mithra and Sabazios are documented, and with a limited number of monuments. The Eastern cults are a significant part of Serdica's pantheon, related possibly to the attested presence of Eastern migrants in this city. The monuments connected with the Greco-Roman deities, both epigraphic and iconographic, are the most numerous in both cities, with Asclepius absolutely predominating. Thermal springs, closely associated with the cult of the healing deities, are definitely an essential factor in both cities.

The information about the potential existence of temples in Pautalia and Serdica is synthesized; in most cases the data for their existence is rather hypothetical with no definitive confirmation. The presence of an Asclepeion at Pautalia should be regarded as undoubted. It can be suggested that temples/shrines of Apollo, Hermes, Zeus and Hera, Heracles, Dionysus, Mithras, (the Pautalian) Olympian gods etc. also existed in the city of the Pautalians. In Serdica there is definite archaeological evidence for a temple of Heracles or Heracles and Dionysus. The city of Serdica also probably had temples/shrines of Asclepius, Apollo, Artemis, Sarapis, Cybele, Hypsistos et al.

A particularly interesting picture emerged regarding the priests and priestesses in Pautalia and Serdica. In both cities, high priestesses of the imperial cult are registered and in Serdica there are also male high priests documented. The ratio between male priests and female priestesses is especially remarkable. There is certainly a larger number of known priests in Pautalia and of them only one woman is attested. The situation in Serdica is quite different – the number of female priestesses is close to that of male priests. Pautalian priests are documented for the cults of the Emperor, Asclepius, Ares, Dionysus, Mithras, the Olympian gods and perhaps Heracles, as well as Zeus and Hera. In Pautalia two *gerousiasts* are also mentioned as priests. There is evidence in Serdica of priests/priestesses associated with the cults of the Emperor, Artemis, Zeus, Cybele, Sabazios and Hypsistos.

The *Gerousia* had a special place in the religious life of both cities. So far, no record of the seat of this institution is known from Pautalia, although there is an altar dedicated by Lucius Domitius Abascantus, head of the *Gerousia* and a *gymnasiarch*. Also associated with the *Gerousia* in Pautalia is a pedestal for a statue of Domitius Alexander, defined as the son of the above mentioned head of the *Gerousia*, Domitius Abascantus. The epigraphic testimony provides essential information about the *Gerousia*, labelled as "sacred" in Pautalia. The two members of this Pautalian family were priests, the father being even a *Gerousia's* ambassador to the emperor. The inscription vividly highlights the prominent role of Pautalian

Gerousia in the life of the city³. Unlike Pautalia, in Serdica the location of the *Gerousia*'s seat is probably fixed in the western parts of the ancient city (today to the west of the Church of St. Nedelya in the very heart of Sofia). On the site a marble slab was found carved with a list of the members of the Serdican *Gerousia*. A limestone architrave with an inscription announcing a construction carried out with *Gerousia*'s funds was also found in this area, mentioning the members of the organization and the positions they held. An inscription on a column discovered in the nearby village of Ivanyane provides evidence of a *gerousiast*, who was also a *bouleutes*, probably from Serdica. There are several other monuments from the administrative territory of Serdica that can be linked to the *Gerousia* of the city.

The information on festivals in Pautalia and Serdica is also displayed in tabular form. In both cities there is data on the celebration of different sports festivals in honour of the ruling emperors. Data is scarce in Pautalia, but sacrifices were held for sure, as well as sports games and horse races in honour of Zeus and Hera. One can assume that sacrifices also took place for Asclepius. As already noted, Heracles may also have been associated with sporting games in the city. The epigraphic monuments from Serdica provide significantly more information about sporting festivals, hunting and gladiator games, games with animals, et al. Besides with the emperor, some of them can probably be associated with Apollo, Cybele, Aphrodite and probably Isis and Sarapis.

The available data on the functional and local epithets of the deities attested in the two cities is also commented on in the conclusion of the thesis. The analysis indicates that a local epithet in Pautalia is recorded only for Asclepius. Both Asclepius and Apollo were referred to with a local epithet in Serdica. Functional epithets are documented in a number of cases for various deities.

The names of the dedicators are also discussed, among which Greek predominate in both cities. Many dedicators bore Thracian and Roman names; oriental names are rare. The number of theophoric names of the inhabitants of the two cities is relatively large. In some of the inscriptions the profession/status of the dedicators is also mentioned. Many *bouleutai* from both Pautalia and Serdica are recorded. Other examples from the two cities include priests, archonts, phylarchs et al.

The analysis of the testimonies from both cities and especially the data from the coins proves that the development of Pautalia compared to Serdica was significantly more intense

³ I owe the information about the content of the inscriptions related to the *Gerousia* to Dr. Nicolay Sharankov, whom I would like to thank! His translation of the epigraphic monuments from Pautalia is displayed on the information boards of the Lapidarium of the Regional History Museum in Kyustendil.

during the reign of the Antonines and that of the early Severi. The rise of Serdica began only at the beginning of the sole rule of Caracalla, when the mint of Serdica started issuing a huge number of coins. By the end of the reign of Emperor Septimius Severus Pautalia was the city imposing the "fashion trends" in Thrace, which is again clearly evident from the coins and their obverse and reverse images. A significant part of the reverse types, generally typical within the coinage of Thrace, was minted first in Pautalia and only afterwards in other cities of the province. Following the sole reign of Caracalla, a comparable pattern can hardly emerge due to the closure of a number of Thracian mints. The development of the city of Serdica after the early Severi continued intensively, leading a few decades later to the reopening of the city mint during the sole rule of emperor Gallienus. Monuments have been found in Pautalia and Serdica that can be associated with religious practices even in the 4th century AD; it is clear that Serdica had the upper hand in the cultural growth of the 3rd-4th centuries. With the reign of Emperor Constantine the Great the more intensive spread of Christianity began but the old cults weren't eradicated immediately. Time was needed for the replacement of gods worshipped for centuries with the new monotheistic religion.

List of contributions of the PhD thesis:

1. A comparative analysis of the cults in Pautalia and Serdica is made: some similarities in religious life are outlined, but also significant differences. An in-depth study of all available source data on the subject is made.
2. Characteristic features in the historical development of Pautalia and Serdica are highlighted. An attempt at reconstructing specific historic events in the life of the two ancient cities is made. Possible visits of members of the imperial families to Pautalia and Serdica during the period from Antoninus Pius to Gallienus are reconstructed.
3. The chronology of the coinages of Pautalia and of Serdica is revealed.
4. A detailed catalogue of monuments related to the cults in the two cities has been elaborated as a database also for future research.
5. A number of opinions in the historiography regarding the cults in Pautalia and Serdica is reconsidered.
6. Alternative identifications of gods and divine personalities are reasoned for both coin images and stone sculpture.
7. The available material from the two cities has been synthesized in tabular form, allowing the highlighting of unexpected features of the religious life of Pautalia and Serdica.
8. Possible localizations of the potentially existing temples in Pautalia and Serdica were justified by consistently using the cartographic method and mapping all monuments with a clear or relatively obvious context of discovery.
9. An explanation of the wide spread of the Eastern cults in Serdica and their scarce representation in Pautalia is offered.
10. The connection between the cities of Pautalia and Nicaea (Asia Minor), proposed in the numismatic literature, has been confirmed by discovering additional parallels in the coinage of the two cities. Remarkable similarities between the coins of Nicaea and Serdica have been noticed; contacts between the two cities have also been discussed on the basis of epigraphic monuments.

List of the author's publications on the topic of the dissertation:

Димитров 2021а: Димитров, Н. Бележки към почитането на Асклепий в Пауталия през II-III в. – Jubilaeus VIII / 2: Завръщане към изворите. София, 2021, 71-80. / Dimitrov 2021a: Dimitrov, N. Notes on the Cult of Asclepius in Pautalia in the 2nd – 3rd century. – Jubilaeus VIII / 2: Back to the sources. Sofia, 2021, 71-80 (in Bulgarian with a summary in English).

Димитров 2021б: Димитров, Н. Божества и персонификации от Пауталия, свързани с водата. – Води и биоразнообразие. Интердисциплинарни четения 2. София, 2021, 9-17. / Dimitrov 2021b: Dimitrov, N. Deities and personifications from Pautalia, associated with water. – Water and Biodiversity. Sofia, 2021, 9-17 (in Bulgarian with a summary in English).

Димитров (под печат): Димитров, Н. Херакъл симпозиаст от монетите на Сердика – Сборник в чест на 65-тата годишнина на проф. К. Рабаджиев (SAUS Suppl. VIII). / Dimitrov (forthcoming): Dimitrov, N. Heracles symposiast on provincial coins minted by the city of Serdica. – SAUS Suppl. VIII. (in Bulgarian with a summary in English – forthcoming).