

REVIEW

from Assoc. Prof. Dr. Lyudmil Vagalinski (National Archaeological Institute with Museum – Bulgarian Academy of Sciences) on the dissertation of **Nikolay Dimitrov Dimitrov “Religious Life in *Pautalia* and *Serdica* in the Roman Period (Comparative Analysis)”** for awarding the educational and scientific degree “Doctor of Philosophy”

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The very idea of a comparative analysis of two Roman cities in the light of their religious life is attractive, but rare, for Bulgarian science practice. The wisely selected topic is the first step towards a successful scientific research.

The logical and comprehensive structure of the study presented in the contents arouses the same positive expectation. The analysis is classified in five chapters: state cults, cults of deities of the Greco-Roman pantheon, divine personifications, Eastern and local cults. Introduction, conclusion, catalog, list of literature used and illustrations are the usual elements for archeological, monographic, scientific research.

Introduction:

Introductory

The historical development of the two cities is outlined – briefly but informative. The latest summary studies have been taken into account (Кацарова 2005; Иванов 2020).

I lack an explanation why exactly *Pautalia* and *Serdica* were selected for comparison.

The place of the two last paragraphs (pp. 3-4) should be in the section "Historiography".

Objectives

The stated goal is to "make a comparative analysis of the registered cults in *Pautalia* and *Serdica*, which will stand out a more clearly picture ..." (p. 4). Comparative analysis is a method of achieving a goal, but not the goal itself. I have already shared during the internal/preliminary discussion of the thesis a possible formulation of the main aim: To highlight the similarities and differences in the religious life of these two neighboring cities in the Roman province of Thrace which to be explained in order to enrich our knowledge of their development in the 2nd – 4th c. AD.

Methods used

The comparative analysis is expected to be stated as a basic (p. 7). It is complemented by the stylistic analysis and the cartographic method.

The main part of this entry is occupied by the characteristic of the source base of the study. Its summarized presentation (main groups, partition, weaknesses, etc.) should stand in a separate section.

Territorial and chronological scope

Both parameters are clearly stated on p. 10. The reflections on the next seven pages on epigraphic monuments, and especially on the coinage of the two cities, should be read in the analysis.

Historiography

Nikolay Dimirov is very well aware of Bulgarian and foreign research on the topic. He tried to present this section both chronologically and thematically. It is desirable in the future publication to emphasize the critical analysis – the pros and cons of each publication compared to the previous ones. In this way, the reader will be able to trace how the scientific knowledge of the dissertation's subject develops, and the author will be able to ground the need for his own research.

The main part of the thesis, that is, the comparative analysis, are **Chapters I-V**. In these 366 pages, Nikolay Dimitrov makes a comprehensive and remarkably tight presentation of the cults in the two cities, outlining the

common and different in their practice. The PhD candidate has made sense of various information, transforming it to well-argued conclusions.

The **Conclusion** (pp. 391-416) presents summary of the practiced cults in the two cities, the temples in them, their priests (analyzed as sex, but not as ethnic origin), gerusia, holidays, epithets of deities and dedicators (studied as profession and ethnicity). The main conclusion relating to the overall development of the two cities is stated in the final words (pp. 414-416) – *Pautalia* was ahead of *Serdica* in the 2nd century, but lagged behind in the 3rd – 4th centuries. The advantage of the late Roman *Serdica* is explained by its location on *Via Diagonalis* as well as the increase in military clashes during the 3rd century between the Roman Empire and Parthian / Sasanian kingdoms – a contributive author's hypothesis.

The **Supplement** starts with seven laborious for the author, but very useful for the reader, tables. They are the support of the conclusions. Thirteen maps justify the spatial characteristics of the cults in the two cities.

The **Bibliography** contains the necessary titles and they are cited in the text.

The items in the **Catalog** are grouped successfully into two parts - for *Pautalia* and *Serdica*. They, in turn, are arranged thematically. This excellent structure provides the catalog with the expected role – to support the author's analysis as much as possible and to allow testing of his conclusions. The illustrations are located to the corresponding catalog numbers, which greatly facilitates the reader.

The manuscript is easily read. Its grammar is good as well.

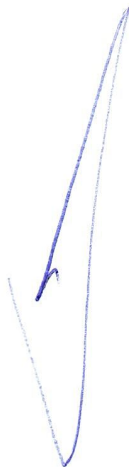
The honest indications of the authorship of foreign, unpublished ideas have to be highly appreciated.

The dissertation presented by Nikolay Dimitrov is an independent and contributive study. It fully meets the requirements of the Academic Staff Development Act in the Republic of Bulgaria for acquisition of the educational and scientific degree "Doctor of Philosophy".

The lapses mentioned above are technical and will easily be eliminated in future publication.

I suggest to the scientific jury to award Nikolay Dimitrov Dimitrov educational and scientific degree "Doctor of Philosophy".

Sofia, 14.09.2022

A handwritten signature in blue ink, consisting of a large, stylized letter 'D' with a small mark inside the loop.