



**University of Sofia „St. Kliment Ohridski”**

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## **Summary**

**of dissertation for the award of educational and scientific degree  
“Doctor of Philosophy”**

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**Weapons as Votive Offerings in Ancient  
Thrace and Neighboring Cultures – I  
Millennium BC.**

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The PhD thesis consists of I. Introduction; four chapters with subsections (II. Historiography; III. The Ceremonial Context of Weapons in Ancient Thrace; IV. The Ceremonial Context of Weapons in Ancient Thrace’s Neighboring Regions; V. Weapons-Related Ceremonial Practices). VI. Conclusion; Bibliography; Appendix; Catalog; Diagrams and Maps (10 diagrams and 15 maps); (Total pages: 415).

The public defense of the dissertation will take place on 31.05.2023 in auditorium 41A at 3:00 p.m. in a meeting with the following Scholarly Jury:

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## **I. INTRODUCTION TO THE TOPIC**

At a certain point in human history, war became a permanent part of people's life. This elevated the importance of the warrior within societies, leading to the creation of different ceremonial practices related to the worship of warriors. Most commonly, these ceremonial practices had to do with the warrior's central attribute – his weapon. Because of this, a weapon buried with its owner to accompany the warrior in the beyond, or placed as a votive offering in a sanctuary honoring a specific deity, loses its utilitarian function and becomes an insignia, an object of high ceremonial value.

### ***Goals and objectives***

The main goal of this study is the examination of votive weaponry and its role as offerings in different ceremonial contexts. The dissertation's main objective is the examination of the presence of votive weaponry and the usage of weapons in a ceremonial/cult context on the territory of Ancient Thrace.

The objective of this work is the creation of a database containing weapons from the different ceremonial complexes in Ancient Thrace. Another important objective is the comparison of these weapons with those found in various regions of Europe and the Mediterranean, where much better documented sites exist related to the topic. The idea is that through the comparison of regions with more substantive research, there can be creation a new selection of criteria within which to define the votive-weapons.

### ***Methods***

The main method is the comparison analysis, where the examples from Ancient Thrace are compared with these from Europe and the Mediterranean. In that way the characteristics of the weapons-votives in Thrace is done by comprising base of neighboring and more distant regions, which have more and

better documented examples for the currently observed phenomenon. Another used method is the statistic and cartographic analysis and accompanying diagrams and maps were created.

### *Source Material*

The source material informing this research is, on the one hand, comprised from archaeological materials – elements of armament, found in various ceremonial contexts. Included also are examples of sites in which the ritual interpretation is certain as well as others which are open to interpretation. Examples from burials are used to clarify the complete ceremonial function of the weapons from Thrace. Aside from the archaeological materials examined, there is analysis of various historical sources and evidence from images (tomb fresco, vase painting), which give additional information about weapons usage in different ceremonial circumstances.

### *Territorial Scope*

The territorial scope includes three expansive regions. The first is the entire territory of Ancient Thrace – the lands between the Carpathian Mountains and the Dniester River to the north and the Aegean Sea to the south. The line west-east spreads from the Morava and Vardar rivers to the western coast of the Black Sea.

The second territorial grouping covers the neighboring regions of Thrace. This includes the Western coast of Asia Minor, Balkan Peninsula, Apennine Peninsula, Central and Western Europe and the Northpontic region. Even if some of the regions (like Western Europe of the Celtic cultural circle as well the Apennine Peninsula) might not geographically border Ancient Thrace, the influence and the similarities with Thrace makes them a crucial part of this chapter.

The third territorial grouping consists of a wide spectrum of different regions in Europe and the Mediterranean – Asia Minor, Sardinia, Iberia, Britannia,

the North-European cultural circle. The examples from the abovementioned zones include essential sites for the study of this topic and strongly influence the development of research in these types of phenomena.

The examples used in the second and third territorial grouping are not meant to be exhaustive. The objective is to show well researched standalone examples which can serve as a basis of comparison with the finds and complexes in Trace.

### ***Chronological Scope***

The chronological scope of the dissertation is the period of the I Millennium BC, or the Iron Age in Thrace. Therefore, we can accept the transition from the Bronze to the Iron Age as a starting point, and the period of incorporation of the Thracian provinces under the Roman Empire as an end point.

### ***Concept Set***

***Votives*** are offerings given to a specific deity or another supernatural being. The word “votive” or “ex-voto” comes from Latin as an abbreviation of “ex-voto suscepto”. The votive offering is always a result of a promise (vow), materializing the spiritual exchange between the people and the gods worshiped by them.

Every single votive offering is symbolic in its own way, and weapons are no exception. According to most research, votive-weapons are related to the spoils of arms, gathered from defeated enemies and their offering is interpreted as a sign of thanksgiving to the gods for the victory. Research in regions with more written sources, like Ancient Greece, shows that votive weaponry includes not only spoils of arms, but sometimes even the arms of the victors.

Votive weaponry from Thrace bears mainly a secondary cult function, and that made specifically for the needs of the cult are rare. The interpretation of the examples from Thrace is made by the context in which they are found and their votive value is not underscored by the very finds. Defined under the term “votive weaponry” can be any such weaponry that was discovered in ritual or ceremonial

context or related to different ritual practices. Votive weaponry can be put into two categories: 1. Real weapons, in which the votive value is secondary; 2. Models/miniatures of weapons representing a real weapon or made from material which would make it unusable as a real weapon.

*The ritual* is a wide spectrum of actions, followed by sequence rules, which leave material trace. It is an expression of specific tradition, made by repeating sacral actions. With the ritual the people are connecting with the supernatural, which can be related with Beyond world or the Underworld.

*The cult* is characterized by the worship of specific deity or another supernatural being. Usually the cult is related to group of individuals, united by common spiritual, philosophical and political views. In people's idea the cult plays the role of connection between the world of the living and the world of the gods. This is happening with the help of different rituals serving the cult – libations, sacrifices and others.

*Ritual/cult site* – in the literature the terms “cult” and “ritual” site is usually used unequivocal. Probably the reason for this is because the cult is related with different rituals, which serve it. The main criteria, according to which some site can be defined as ritual, are the evidences for performed ritual practices. In the same time the definition of some site as “cult” should be made according to the existence of cult figure, that is worshiped. Even if the cemeteries are rarely described as ritual sites, they can be defined as one as well. Usually their space is sacred and there are performed different ritual activities.

*Ritual deposit* - this term defines object or group of objects, which with ritual act are taken out of the material life and are deposited in the earth or in the water. Groups of objects are usually called “hoards”. The distinction between the hoards buried with ritual and these buried with practical idea (treasuring) is difficult. Usually hoards buried with treasuring purpose, have the idea of being



found in time, while these buried with ritual purpose have the idea not be found again.

Similar to the burials, the ritual deposits represent the idea of burring treasures. The difference between them is that the riches in graves are demonstrating the personal wealth and the hoards are demonstrating the wealth of the community. The funeral personalizes the past of the deceased, while the ritual deposits represent the present and the future.

***Heroization*** - in the Greek conception, this is a cult act, where the deceased receives demi-god status. The idea of heroization is related with the conception of immortality. With glorifying the deeds of the hero (κλέος) he will live forever. Probably the idea of heroization exists in Thrace as well. Usually graves representing the idea of heroization are those with rich funeral inventory, not only with weapon, but as luxury items as drinking sets, jewelry and etc. The idea of the Thracian hero, especially the Heros from the roman age is to be a mediator between the world of the living and that of the gods.

## **II. HISTORIOGRAPHY**

In the literature there is no generalized analysis of the Thracian weapons-votives, which is one of the reasons for choosing the topic of this study. The creation of precise historiography is a hard task. The reason for that because excavations of different ritual sites continues more than two centuries, but the interest in weapons-votives is relatively recent for most of the regions included in this study. Because of that the historiography is divided in two parts – one part dedicated to the researches in Ancient Thrace and one dedicated to the other examined regions.

At the moment the researches in Europe and the Mediterranean are in a developed stage, product of the many years of examination of different

sanctuaries with many weapons dedicated in them. The lack of sites like this in Thrace is the reason why the level of research about this topic is still at a beginning stage.

### **III. WEAPONS IN A CEREMONIAL CONTEXT FROM ANCIENT THRACE**

#### ***1. Votive Weaponry from Ancient Thrace***

The first part of this chapter presents the data from the statistical analysis from the examples from Thrace. This part includes review of the different cult places in Ancient Thrace – mountain/rock sanctuaries, pit sanctuaries, ritual pits, cult ditches (viereckschanzen), burrows, temples, metallurgic and mining centers, sanctuaries related to water basins, cave-sanctuaries. All descriptions of the abovementioned types of cult places are accompanied by additional information about the presence of weapons. After an in-depth review of the cult places, there is a review of the presence of weapons used as offering in different ceremonial complexes included in the study. The categories of weapons are: short swords/daggers/knives; swords; axes; spears; helmets; armors/cuirasses; greaves; shields; belt buckles; riding gear.

From the analysis of the cult places in Ancient Thrace and the weapons found in them we can conclude that the major usage of weapons as votive offerings is by ritual deposition, deposited in the earth or in water basins (47% in total; 34 deposited in earth; 13% deposited in water). Another cult place where votive weaponry is found is in the mountain/rock sanctuaries (18%). This is not a surprise because this type of sanctuaries is one most popular in Ancient Thrace. Sites defined as pit sanctuaries take place in 10% from the places in which votive weaponry is found. On the other hand, ritual pits which are found in non-ritual environment takes 17% of the included examples. In all the other cases (caves-

sanctuaries, temples, cult ditches, ritual places related to the domestic fireplace) the examples are sporadic.

From the review of votive weaponry it is clear that the weapon used most in ritual purposes is the spear (19%). This is not a surprise because spears are one of the main weapons of the Thracian warriors and typically in rich burials at least several spears are present. Riding gear (bridles, spurs, applications for horse harness) are well represented as well. The reason for that is that the Thracians were exclusively mounted-warriors and the horse was really important for them. It is not a coincidence that burials and horse sacrifices existed in many different contexts in Thrace. It is notable that the offensive arms are more frequently used as offerings than were the protective weapons. The reason likely being that they had a higher material value and their procurement is harder than that of the offensive weapons. The only exception are the helmets, which are present relatively often in the ritual environment (13%).

In general, the weapons are not a typical offering found in the Thracian sanctuaries. The majority of votive weaponry is from ritual/ceremonial contexts, which in and of itself is not part of a ritual environment – ritual pits, parts of settlements, ritual deposits, etc.

The Thracian sanctuaries likely had gender separation – areas intended for the women and ones intended for the men (warriors). Another explanation could be that there were different worshiping areas in a sanctuary related to different deities. At the moment the only example for such allocation is the sanctuary of Babyak. In the majority of the cases the weapons are found together with other types of objects – loom weights, spindles, adornments and others, which proves that there probably weren't sanctuaries dedicated specifically to warriors or warrior deities. Unfortunately, the relation between votive offering and the worshiper is not entirely clear, which makes the interpretation of the votive weaponry harder to understand.

The analysis of this chapter is done through the catalog and is dedicated to the different ritual contexts, with the types of weapons found in them. The catalog consists of 61 sites from the territory of Ancient Thrace, divided in three geographical areas – A) Thrace south of the Balkan mountain; B) Thrace between the Balkan mountain and Danube River C) Thrace north of the Danube River. The annotations in the catalog includes the researches, location, chronology, structure and the votive offerings in the different cult sites. The used examples are mainly from Bulgaria and Romania, but there are some from Ukraine, Moldova and Serbia, from their territories which can be included of the region of Ancient Thrace. Sites from the southernmost lands of Thrace, modern North Greece and European parts of Turkey are not included, because of the lack of clear examples related to this. The catalog includes sites, which are classified as cult places, based on long-term excavations and others classified just according to terrain detours, but with information about weapons found in them. Another category are contexts with evidence for deposited weapons-votives, but it is done in non-ritual environment. These are mainly the ritual deposits of one or more artefacts. The uniting element in all the examples are that the weapons are taken out from their utilitarian function turning them into an offering. In the study are included items with primary function as weapons (swords, helmets, spears and so on) and others which may have utilitarian or cult primary function (models of weapons, tools and others). There are also included artifacts which are not technically weapons but are related to warfare – riding gear, belt buckles and etc. Examples with questionable weapon function (like some of the knives) are not included in the statistical analysis.

## ***2. Warrior Burials in Ancient Thrace***

This part is a review of the weapons used as a burial offering in Ancient Thrace during the I millennium BC. The complexes are reviewed chronologically, starting with the earliest ones, from the beginning of the Iron Age, ending with

the ones from the period of the end of the pre-Roman Age. The idea here is to point out important examples from the different regions of Thrace, showing the evolution of the practice of depositing weapons in graves. The burrows discovered in the different territories of Thrace play an important part in the religious life in Thrace. Usually they are related with the funerals in the region. Examples are most of the rich cemeteries from the second part of the I millennium BC, like these from Kazanlak Valley, Mezek, Sbornyanovo but rich burials which are not part of cemeteries as well. Like, for example, the funerals from Zlatinitza-Malomirovo, Golemanite. The proven ritual activity in some of the burial tumulus is a testimony to the fact they had ritual importance, with some of the rich burials related to the idea of heroization.

The weapons are important items, marking the high hierarchical status of the deceased. They represent the idea of the man-warrior and accompany him unto the Other world. The buried warrior is sent to the underworld from his closest people, accompanied with the items representing him the best.

In Thrace burials with weapons begin to appear as an established practice during the Late Bronze Age, even if there are rare earlier examples. In the time of end of the bronze age and the early stage of the early iron age, warrior burials lack luxury items.

During the second stage of the early iron age, for first time in Thrace, there are warrior burials, not only with weapons but adornments, banquet vessels, horse gear as well. This appearance in this particular time is not accidental, because that is the time the Homeric epos spread. In that time, the first cults related to heroes in the Greek world appeared. There is no doubt that the heroization in Ancient Greece is totally different than that in Thrace. In the Hellenic world honoring the heroes is done by rising tolos-type tombs and heroons, while in Thrace this is related with mound burials and later the creation of tombs. It is likely the burrows (and later the tombs) symbolize the place, where the hero will take his place as

mediator between the people and the gods. Conversely, it should be noted that in Ancient Greece those heroized are soldiers, athletes and so forth, while in Thrace the heroization is related to the local aristocracy, as a way of inheriting the royal power.

The peak for rich warrior burials idealizing heroization takes place during the late classical and early Hellenistic age. This is proved by the tomb frescos of some of the Thracian tombs like those from Kazanlak, Sveshtari, Alexadrovo. With the beginning of the middle and late Hellenistic age, there is a decrease of the creation of rich warrior burials and the beginning of warrior burials without luxury items. Maybe this is influence by the Celts and their mobile war elite, which they represent.

When Roman provinces were created in Thrace, there is a “renaissance” of the aristocratic burials, which demonstrates that the old beliefs remains even in the later period. It is likely that this perception of the warrior-hero is related to the cult of the Thracian horseman, common for the Roman Age. It is interesting to note that during the Roman Age there are burial mounds, with sanctuaries of the Thracian horseman, raised nearby them.

The Thracian lands north of Danube have a different development. Rich warrior burials, similar to these found south of the river are rare. On one hand, this could be explained with the weaker Hellenization of the North-Thracian tribes, but on the other hand it could be result of the different political models followed by populations on opposite sides of the river.

With the following examples there are few stages that can be concluded:

**Stage 1:** Includes the periods of the late bronze age and the first stage of the iron age. It is characterized by flat and mound burials with one or two weapons in them. There are no traces of luxury finds.

**Stage 2a:** Includes the period of the second stage of the Iron Age and stands out with rich mound funerals with finds of banquet vessels, horse gear, adornments, horse burials and etc. It is characterized with more funerals north of Balkan mountain.

**Stage 2b:** Includes the period of classical and early Hellenistic age. It comes as development of the previous stage and is characterized with the increase of such type of complexes. It is important to note during this stage there are more rich burials south of the Balkan mountain. Innovation in this period is the appearance of protective and parade armors in the burials, and the erection of monumental tombs as well.

**Stage 3:** Includes the period of the middle and late Hellenistic age and the gradual abandoning of the rich burials, common for stage 2. This period stands out with warrior burials, in flat or mound graves, with new types of arms, but without opulence elements. As exception it could be pointed out the burial in Sashova mogila.

**Stage 4:** Includes the period around the creation of the Roman provinces in Thrace. It is characterized with the strong Roman influence in the weapons, with gradual decrease of the warrior burials. It is important to note examples such as the burials near Karanovo, Catalka and later one near Silistra, which confirm that the old ideas of heroizations remain even during the roman age.

#### **IV. WEAPONS FROM CEREMONIAL CONTEXT FROM THRACE NEIGHBOURING REGIONS**

In this chapter are presented the main examples from Thrace's neighboring regions. They are the data base of comparisons, helping to put the weapons-votives in the common context of the current study.

In all the examined areas there are evidences for weapons found in both funeral and sacral contexts. The different areas are reviewed chronologically, starting with the earliest examples for votive.

### *1. Ancient Greece*

This part consists of two subparts – A). Continental Greece and B). Aegean and Asia Minor Greece. Examples for weapons in ritual/ceremonial contexts can be shown from the Bronze Age, related to the bloom of the Minoan and the later Mycenaean civilizations.

There are many changes in Continental Greece from the beginning of the Iron age. In that time the cremation comes as main burial practice, comes a new ceramic style and the appearance of many warrior burials. The period XI-VIII c. BC. is characterized with the increased number of warrior burials in Continental Greece. Attica is the region with the most representative warrior burials. Examples can be shown with the burials of Kerameikos cemetery, the Agora cemetery, the burial from Argos and others. In VI c. BC warrior burials gradually start to disappear. According to some scholars this is related with the reforms of Solon and Klisten. It is important to note that the decrease of warrior burials in the Greek world is already visible in 8th C. BC. This is likely related to the rising of the Polis system and the decreased influence of the aristocracy.

The examples of votive weaponry are known mainly from the excavations of the bigger and more important Greek sanctuaries, like the sanctuaries of Zeus in Olympia, of Poseidon in Isthmia, of Apollo in Delphi, of Zeus in Dodona, of Apollo and Artemis on island of Kythnos, of Athena in Smyrna and others. The historical sources are very important, because in some of them is mentioned the deposition of weapons. Examples for that are the 300 shields (or armors) deposited by Alexander III in the Parthenon in Athens, after the battle of Guagamela, the shields in Delphi deposited by Athenians after the battle of Marathon, decorating the north wall of the temple and these deposited by the



etolians after the victory over the Celtic army of Bren in 279 BC, which decorated the south and west wall of the temple.

## ***2. Ancient Macedonia***

The question of whether Macedonia is part of Ancient Greece is a long-standing debate in literature. There are plenty of scientists who don't include Macedonia in their studies about Greek culture. According to the fact that votive weaponry in Macedonia differs a lot from the reviewed sites in Ancient Greece, this region is in a different part of this chapter.

The weapons from ritual environment in Macedonia are coming mainly from rich burials. Examples for warrior-burials can be shown already from the late bronze age and the beginning of the iron age. During the archaic and the classical period rich warrior burials with luxury items spread in the Central Balkans. Examples for that are the cemeteries of Sindos, Archontiko, Trebenishte. Probably, just like in Thrace, these burials represent the idea of heroization of the warrior-aristocrat.

During the Hellenistic age, rich warrior burials continue to exist. During that time monumental tombs started to be risen, and the tomb fresco additionally increases the idea of heroization. Examples can be shown with tomb II in Vergina, tomb III in Agios Athanasios, Balla Tomb 2, tomb of Lyzon and Kalikles and others.

The examples of weapons in cult places are rare. Examples can be shown with the shields from the temples in Dion and Vegora, which according to some scholars are respectfully related to Demetrius I and Antigone II or Demetrius II.

### ***3. Magna Grecia and Italia (Apennine peninsula)***

This part comprises the lands of Central and South Italy, where the first subpart includes the examples related to the Greek colonization of and the other two are dedicated to the local cultures of the Apennine peninsula.

In the section about Magna Grecia are shown different sanctuaries from the region, such as Punta Stilo and Manella, which such as the examples from Continental Greece, have a big amount of weapons dedicated in them.

In the other subparts, dedicated to the local italic cultures, the examples for weapons from cult sites are rare. No matter that, there are plenty of examples of weapons found in burials. Warrior-burials are found already from the Bronze Age and they continue to exist during the iron age. During the late archaic age there are rich warrior burials starting to appear with weapons and luxury items. Just like Macedonia, these rich burials represent the idea of heroization. A clue for this hypothesis by the images from the tomb frescos and vase-paintings.

### ***4. Illyria***

Together with Macedonia, this is the region with smallest geographical scope, but that does not make the examples here less important. In this subpart are reviewed the lands of the modern countries in South part of the Balkan peninsula – Albania, Montenegro, Bosnia & Herzegovina.

The examples from here are mainly from burials and weapons from cult contexts are rare. Important are the burials from the Glasinac culture, like those from the cemeteries of Liljak, Donja Dolja, Budava and others.

## *5. Celtic cultural circle*

The formation of the Celtic culture is debatable and there is no unanimous opinion. Probably the most accepted theory, based on archaeological and historical evidence, is that according to whom, the appearance of the Celtic culture happened on the upper flow of Rein river, Eastern France to Czech Republic (on the line west-east) and from the Alps to the Pannonian Plane (South to North). During the different ages there were different archaeological cultures related to this territory – culture of the burial mounds in the early bronze age, followed by the Urnfield culture during the late bronze age, which passes to the Hallstat culture during the early iron age. During the late iron age, the region is connected with the La Tène culture, characterized by items with specific style and decoration.

In the peak of the Celtic might (during the III c. BC), their influence spreads on vast territory, to the Iberian Peninsula to the west and to the inner part of Anatolia to the east. The first historical evidences for Celtic invasions are from the IV c. BC, when Celtic tribes cross the Alp mountain and settle north of river Po in what is today North Italy (the so-called historical Celtic invasion). Despite that, there are plenty of scholars who believe there are even earlier Celtic migrations, when the territories of Western France, Iberian Peninsula and the British Isles were “Celticized”. In the end of the 4th c. BC and the beginning of the 3rd c. BC the Celtic expansion is directed to the Balkan Peninsula and in a certain stage it reaches the inner parts of Asia Minor. From the 2nd c. BC the Celts are gradually dispersed and absorbed by other migrating tribes. In the II c. BC there is a second migration of wave to the British Isles.

In the first subpart are reviewed the examples from the supposed Celtic ancestral home, covering territories from Central and Western Europe. The used examples are from the territory of the modern countries Austria, Czech Republic, Hungary, East part of Germany, East part of France and Switzerland.

Examples for weapons in both sacral and funeral environments can be shown already from the Bronze Age. Examples of votive weaponry come mainly from hoards. They are a very common feature for Central Europe, especially for the region of Hungary.

During the Iron age the number of rich warrior burials is relatively low and they appear in short period of time (VII-V c. BC.). Examples for this are the burials from Somme-Bionne, Gorge-Millet, Châlons-sur-Marne.

In the time of the Late Iron Age, burials with weapons continue to be found, but they lack luxury items. That is the time of the large Gaulish sanctuaries, with plenty of warrior panoplies deposited in them. Examples for that are sanctuaries like Gournay sur Aronde (Oise), Ribement sur Ancre, La Tène.

In this region, weapons-votives are found not only in the specific ditches sanctuaries with quadrangular plan (so called Vierekschanzen), but in other sacral context as well. In the fortified centers, usually there is a specific space, for ritual activities. In this sacral space, in some cases, there are found a big amount of weapons. Examples can be shown with the fortified settlements of Tilleberg in Luxembourg, Wilzenberg in Germany, Závist in Czech Republic and others.

In this region are found deposits of weapons in water basins. The most famous site from this type is La Tène, which becomes eponymous for the Celtic culture during the late Iron Age. There are known many mono-deposits of weapons in water basins. Example for that is the parade helmet in Amfreville, found in river Seine. Very similar to this helmet is the helmet from Argis, found in cave Perrats.

The next subsection is dedicated to one of the regions related to the first Celtic migration, neighboring Ancient Thrace. This includes the territory of the north part of the Western Balkans, with examples from Slovenia and Croatia.

Specific features are the hoards of metal objects, which are common for the late Bronze Age, but continues to be seen and during the early Iron Age. One impressive site is the cave-sanctuary Musje in Slovenia, where tremendous amount of weapons can be found from the end of the Bronze Age, until the Roman Age.

Here, just like the other territories related to the Celtic cultural circle, the deposition of weapons in water basins is common. There are amazing results from the excavations in the Lubljana River, with weapons from the pre-Roman and Roman period.

Similar to the other parts related to the Celtic influence, here there aren't any examples of rich warrior burials. There are only examples for graves with weapons, but without any traces of luxury.

### ***6. North Pontic Cultural Circle***

The region of the Northern Black sea is connected with different nomadic tribes. According to Herodotus, this region is controlled first by the Cimmerians and then by the Scythians, who defeated the Cimmerians, probably during the 7th c. BC. The 3rd c. BC is defined by drastic political changes and gradually the Scythians are absorbed by different migrating tribes.

Weapons found in ritual/ceremonial context are mainly from burials. Similar to Thrace and most of its neighboring regions, here the rich warrior burials are common. Examples can be shown with the complexes of Shlugovka, Solokha, Chertomlik, Fettersfalde.

Weapons found in sacral context are rare. We know from Herodotus, that the Scythians rise big mountains of bushes (mounds), on top of which they made a rectangle platform on which they struck inside a sword, who plays the role of Scythian god of war. There no archaeological proves of that, but usually on the

Scythian burial mounds there is a stone statue put on top of them. Some scholars suggest that was the thing mentioned by Herodotus.

Similar to these in Thrace, here there are ritual pits and there are weapons found in some of them. Chronologically they spread in the between VI-III c. BC. and the weapons found in them are arrowheads, spearheads and horse hear. Usually there are no more than one or two weapons found in a pit. Examples for ritual pits with weapons are known from “Semilutskogo gorodishte”.

Interesting phenomenon for the region of the Northpontic steppe are the so-called “weird complexes”. They are hoard of artifacts of weapons and/or riding gear deposited in the embankments of mounds or the space between the burial mounds. The chronological spread of this complexes is during the time between III-I c. BC, which can be divided in two stages – earlier during the time III to II c. BC and later II-I c. BC. The interpretation of these complexes is not entirely clear to the present moment. Some scholars suggest that this complexes are related with rites connected with caravan routes. Examples for this complexes are the finds Kings burrow, Turbuta III and others.

### ***ADJUNCTION TO THE TEXT***

This part is technically the third geographical group, part of the current study and logically it follows the examples of chapter IV. Here, the regions reviewed are more distant from Thrace. The review of sites with high importance for the topic is important for the creation of criteria for votive weaponry from Thrace and showing parallels from more distant lands.

## ***1. Asia Minor.***

In the Asia Minor region, the presence of both sacral and funeral context can be tracked as early as by the end of the IV millennium and the beginning of the III millennium BC. Evidence for that is found with the so-called Royal tomb from Arslantepe. In the inventory there, found are 1 sword, 9 spearheads, 4 flat axes, 1 dagger and 3 knives. All the weapons are made of bronze. Similar weapons are found and from the cult places from the palaces of Arslantepe.

In Anatolia, weapons in ritual context are more often found during the Bronze Age, than from the Iron Age. One of the rare examples for votive weaponry from the Iron Age are the finds from the temple in Ayanis and the cemetery of Gordion.

## ***2. Sardinia***

Sardinia is a specific example, representing the ancient culture related to the island. Here, during the middle of the second millennium BC., the typical well-sanctuaries started to be erected. A usual votive offering is the so-called “ritual swords”. They are defined as ritual because they are made specifically for cult practices. The chemical analysis shows that they are made mainly from copper and their handles are too small compared to their long blades, which makes them ineffective as weapons. Real weapons, like axes, swords, daggers, are found as well. With the beginning of the iron age in Sardinia, around the mid X c., there are changes in different aspects, including the religious life. Most of the old sacred places are abandoned and new one are created – megarons. In the new sanctuaries weapons and other warrior related items continue to be used as votive offering. From the VIII c. BC. there are many changes happening on the island. After that period weapons are known mainly from non-ritual sites.

### ***3. (Celt)Iberia***

There two main ethnic groups on the Iberian Peninsula – *Celts*, who inhabited the northwestern part of the peninsula and the *Iberians*, who were dwelling in the south part of the peninsula. There is also a population inhabiting the inner parts and it is defined as celticized local population – the so called *Celtiberians*. The distinguishing between the different groups is done by the evidences from the historical sources and linguistic analysis of local personal names and ethnonyms. It is suggested that the tribes on the Mediterranean seacoast spoke a non-Indo-European language (Iberian), and those from the other parts of the peninsula spoke an Indo-European one (Celtic).

On the Iberian Peninsula weapons are found in both sacral and funeral contexts. With high importance are the deposits of weapons buried in the ground or deposited in the water. Interesting example is the deposit from Aranda de Moncayo with 20 Hispano-halcidic types helmets. It is interesting that from the 4th c. BC, the defensive armors disappear as burial offering and the shields in many cases are found in child graves.

### ***4. Britannia***

This region is really important for the distribution of the ritual practices related to weapons. Weapons from different ritual contexts are known from the end of the III millennium BC. With high importance are deposits found in water basins, like Duddingston Lock deposit, the shield Battersea, the helmet Waterloo and others.

### ***5. Northeuropean cultural circle***

In this region are reviewed the examples from Scandinavian peninsula, the Baltic region, Poland and North of Germany. Especially important are the cult sites with enormous amount of weapons deposited in water basins. Such examples



are known from the end of the bronze age, but their peak is during the pre-Roman and Roman ages. In that period are dated the sites of Hjortspring, Denmark, Throsberg, Germany, Nydam, Denmark, Czaszkowo, Poland and others.

Weapons are found in burials as well. Similar to the regions related with the Celts and their expansion, here are missing rich warrior burials with luxury items.

Northern Europe is the region where weapons-votives have longest time of usage. Examples can be shown even during the Medieval period.

## **V. CEREMONIAL PRACTICES WITH WEAPONS**

Probably in the past there were different ritual practices related to the weapons, but archaeologically and historically there can be traced only two – rising trophies and ritual “killing” of weapons. In this chapter are reviewed both of the practices and is commented their existence in Thrace.

### ***1) Trophies***

Trophies are anthropomorphic monuments, made mainly from wood, decorated with weapons. They are adorned with the spoils of arms taken from the defeated enemies, symbolizing the victory. The earliest evidences for rising trophies come from Ancient Greece. The origins of the word “trophy” (τρόπαιον/tropaeum) comes from the verb tropein – to turn in Greek. The reason for that is because at the beginning these monuments were erected on the spot where the enemy line was turned to flee. There are two types of trophies known in the ancient world. First are called primary or temporary. This type is usually created on the battlefields on the place where the enemies turned and fled. Most often they are made of wood and this is the reason why there aren't many archaeological finds of this type. One of the few exceptions is the trophy from Munich.

Secondary or permanent trophies are made of durable material and look like a monument building. During the Hellenistic Age trophies continue to be a victory symbol, but in that time they are a personal motif, representing the ruler's might, which is propagated with images on monuments and items with wide social-spectrum, like sanctuaries, coins and etc.

Rising of trophies is related with the practice of striping enemy's armors. In the roman world this is clearly demonstrated with the practice of *spolia opima*. This is the highest military award which a roman general can receive and there are only three persons in the entire roman history, that managed to receive it. This practice is an act where the general can strip the enemy's warlord armors if he managed to defeat him in a duel.

Just like the Hellenistic rulers, the roman generals and later the roman emperors, demonstrate their victories with images of trophies on monuments and coins. The roman trophies are also primary and secondary and mark the victory over the fallen enemies. Usually the first one are involved in triumphs and the second are monument buildings with political character.

Trophies in the Celtic world are the most uncertain ones. The reason for that is that there are no images of trophies like in Greece and Rome. There some evidence for rising trophies by Celts, which partly confirmed by the archaeological excavations of different sanctuaries in Gaul.

It is hard to accept the existence of trophies in Thrace. There is no mention of erecting such a monument, nor any images of it. In his article about the Celtic presence in Thrace, J. Anastasoff suggested a possible interpretation of the complex of Kalново, as a trophy. There are some analogies between the set of arms from Kalново and similar finds interpreted as trophies from different gaulish sanctuaries, but what can be the possible explanation about this. Kalново complex is dated in the second half of the 3rd c. BC., which means that there were not only settled Celts in Thrace, but probably some which were born there. Could it be

panoply of a local (Thracian?) warrior, which weapons were plundered by the settled in Thrace Celts and used as a trophy?

## ***2). Ritual killing of weapons.***

Ritual killing of weapons is the purposefully damaging of arms. It can be done by bending, slashing, braking or burning the object. This is one of the most ancient ritual practice related to weapons.

It is very hard to define why this practice started to be applied. One explanation could be that some of the weapons were too big to be put in graves. Another option could be that the ancient people didn't want the weapons to be re-used, by grave-robbers or some post-mortem belief of "vampirism" of the dead. According to some scholars this practice presents the idea of cleansing the warrior.

It can be summarized that the ritual killing of weapons is first seen in Asia Minor in the beginning of the III millennium BC., but these examples are rare and uncertain. It is clearly visible during the middle of the II millennium BC, when it is applied on wider geographical scope and there are more examples of ritually killed weapons. In that time most of the ritually killed arms are part of hoards. During the early stage of the Iron age there aren't many examples of ritually killed weapons, except in Ancient Greece and more specifically the region of Attica. Significant change is visible from the beginning of the second half of the 1st millennium BC, when there is bigger amount of ritually killed weapons and the practice started to be applied on defensive armors and riding gear as well. The peak of this rite is during the period from 3rd to 1st c. BC., when is the La tene culture is most widespread and so is the building of big sacral complexes with enormous deposits of weapons. Even not so often, examples of ritually killed weapons can be shown from the first centuries AD. Probably the decrease of this practice is the rising of the Christianity as main religion and probably this is the reason why it is seen in Northern Europe even during Medieval times.

There is no doubt that the weapons are just one of the many items, part of the ritual killing of objects. There are ritually killed many other types of objects as jewelry, metal or ceramic vessels and others.

The existence of ritually killed weapons in Thrace, already from the Late bronze age, proves the fast acceptance of the practice, probably during the trade systems with Central Europe. Influence from the Greek is less probable, because of the chronological difference and the specific type of ritual deforming applied in Greece.

From the lands of Bulgaria are found 22 different contexts with ritually killed weapons, from the period of Late bronze age to the period of forming of the roman provinces.

## **VI. CONCLUSION**

Weapons from Thrace are seen in both funeral and sacral environments. Their appearance is simultaneous and their development parallel. Weapons are found in rich burials and in funerals related to the common people. Aristocratic warrior burials, in which are found not only weapons, but banquet vessels, riding gear and adornments, symbolize the idea of heroization and their one of the specific features in the region. This is likely the main difference between the Greeks and the surrounding barbarians, where panoplies and luxury items were first put in sanctuaries and in aristocratic graves. Probably the reason for that is in the different forms of rule – the limited of power aristocracy in the polis system of Greece and the powerful monarchic model in Thrace and the other neighboring barbarian cultures.

Certain change can be seen during the middle and late Hellenistic period, when graves with weapons but without luxury items started to appear. These types of warrior burials are similar to the ones in the Celtic and the Germanic world,

representing the model of mobile war elite of these societies. It is important to note that the decrease of rich warrior burials during the middle and late Hellenistic age, doesn't mean their complete absence.

About the weapons found in sacral contexts, they can already be observed from the late Bronze Age, likely the beginning of weapons being used in rituals. There is a decrease of votive weaponry during the period of the early Iron Age. The peak is during the late Iron Age, where the most surely dated examples are known from the period between 3<sup>rd</sup> and 1st c. BC. After the creation of the Roman provinces in Thrace, weapons continue to be an offering in different ritual places, even in to a lesser extent.

In the cult places of Thrace, there are weapons that can be related with aristocrats and weapons that maybe belonged to people with lower hierarchical status. While the idea of depositing weapons in graves is more or less clear, the motives for the weapons in sacred environment are not. Are these weapons deposited in cult context because the burial of the warrior was impossible? Is it possible that these weapons were spoils from defeated enemies? Because the lack of written evidence about the worshipers in Thrace, this questions won't find their proper answer soon.

Many white spots in the source base and literature were challenging the clarification to many of the main questions discussed in the current study:

- Lack of entirely clear written evidences about the religious life in Thrace and more specifically the character of the different cult place the offerings in them;
- lack of complete excavated and published cult sites from Thrace.;
- incomplete discussion and controversial opinions about the criteria for defining a site as a cult place and the finds in them.;
- small or no information about the single "strange" or "occasional" finds or deposits, which predetermines publications with scarce information.
- huge amount of unpublished or poorly published burial complexes from the Iron age in Thrace, which deprives

reviewing analysis.; • treasure hunter innervations, which effects the cult sites in the region and the metal finds from them.

The created review about the ritual practices, related to the weapons-votives shows that the researches in Ancient Greece, Western, Central and Northern Europe in advance stage, while these in Thrace are still at the beginning. This is understandable because the fact, that there aren't sites like La Tène, Gournay-sur Aronde, Hjortspiring, or the sanctuaries in Greece, where are deposited enormous amounts of weapons.

The overcoming of these problems (except the ancient sources) could contribute to knowledge about this topic and help votive weaponry to find its visible place in the academic literature for this common for Europe and the Mediterranean topic.

### **List of contributions of the PhD thesis:**

1. For a first time in the Bulgarian bibliography there are gathered and analyzed weapon-votives in Ancient Thrace
2. Creation of criteria for defining a weapon as a votive offering
3. Attempt for interpretation of the warrior burials in Ancient Thrace and their overgrowth into a specific cult (heroization?)
4. Analysis of the weapons from different ritual contexts found across Europe and the Mediterranean, with the idea of being used as comparative base for the finds in Thrace
5. For a first time in the Bulgarian bibliography has been paid attention of specific ritual practices related to weapons (rising of trophies and ritual killing of weapons) and their presence in Thrace
6. Placement of the weapons-votives from Ancient Thrace in the common context of researches, dedicated to a topic common for Europe and the Mediterranean

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

**Петков 2022:** Петков, К. Практиката ритуално „убити“ оръжия в Древна Тракия. – В: Кризите като катарзис – политически, социални, стопански и културни измерения на екстремните ситуации в историята, сборник с доклади от научна конференция, 15-16 окт. 2021. Плевен, 9-29.

**Petkov 2022:** Petkov, K. The case of Kalnovo, Shumen region, Bulgaria. – In: Field of conflicts 2022, School of history, classics and archaeology at university of Edinburg, Scotland (online). - <http://fieldsofconflict.com/>

**Петков 2023:** Петков, К. Шлемове открити в ритуален контекст от територията на Отвъддунавска Тракия. – В: Сборник от конференция в памет на Ст. Ангелова, Bulgarian e-Journal of Archaeology (под печат).

**Петков 2023:** Петков, К. Шлемове открити в ритуален контекст от територията на Българските земи. – Сборник от научна конференция „Революции и еволюции – политически, икономически, технологични, културни и социални измерения на „прогреса“, 11-12 ноем. Плевен (под печат)