

## STATEMENT

done by: *Kostadin Kostadinov Rabadjiev*, Dr.Sc., Professor in Classical archaeology, member of the Scientific Jury according to the Order of the Rector of St. Kliment Ohridski University of Sofia No. PД 38-103/ 24.02.2023,

concerning the defence of the dissertation of **Kaloyan Ivanov Petkov** for obtaining the educational and scientific degree “Doctor”, with the title: *“Weapons as a Votive Gift in Thrace and Neighbouring Areas in the 1st Millennium BC”*, supervised by: Prof. Dr. Totko Stoyanov (Sofia University, Department of Archaeology).

The dissertation proposed for defence and reviewed here, consists of an Introduction, four parts, and a Conclusion, followed by a lengthy bibliographical list of cited literature (44 pp.), 272 pp. of main text. An appendix to the text of the doctoral thesis summarizes information on ritual weapon deposition in several cultural zones, also a Catalogue of Thracian sanctuaries and ritual structures with weapons found in them, as well as chance finds/ treasures with elements of deposited weaponry or military equipment, is also included. At the end are the diagrams used in the analysis of the artefacts (10 p.) and maps of the distribution of weapons by type, time, and context (15 p.), in all 411 pp.

The subject of the dissertation is the weapons found in the Thracian lands, which are discussed in ritual context, a real challenge for the young researcher. Mostly because this approach is new for the native historiography and the documentation of the research is very scarce. This has placed the emphasis on comparison with neighbouring and more distant cultural spaces where this role of the weapon has been well studied and defined. Thus, the research is problematic by design, it presupposes accumulated knowledge, but also experience, a difficult approach to the discussion of problems that requires longer reflection. And above all an uncertain final outcome, therefore unusual for a first doctoral thesis (PhD). What has been done is reason enough for Kaloyan Petkov to be congratulated for his ambition and courage, and I can clearly state that the topic is dissertable and the tasks he has set himself – achieved. Here I would like to emphasize the role of his scientific supervisor – prof. Totko Stoyanov, his knowledge of Thracian weaponry, sites and contexts in Thrace and his experience were the sure support that the result would be successful.

The structure is simple and a result of the objectives and the approach. Expectedly, after the Introduction (Part I) with the obligatory clarification of the aims and intentions of the research, the chronology and the territory covered in the analysis, the specification of the methods and the conceptual apparatus, there follows a historiographical overview of the problem of weapons (Part II), focused on the Thracian lands in the first part, mainly in relation to the sacral structures under study. In the second part, the European and Mediterranean studies are presented, and here the interest is on the unearthed deposits of weapons for which ritual bury is assumed.

The research part begins with the weapons in ritual context in Thrace (Part III). The approach is extensive, first defining the different types of sacred sites in Thrace and the weapons found there, also the collective finds of weapons. Weapons from burial complexes are also included in the analysis, the rationale being a manifestation of the heroic status of the deceased. This has its logic, but the study had to justify the difference with the functioning of the heroic cult, which is post-mortem and continuous (not one-time). Unfortunately, this is difficult to establish, since the tumuli has in only a few cases been thoroughly studied, and duly published, something of which Kaloyan Petkov has also made clear (see p. 223). The author has tried to overcome the lack of information and research in the Thracian environment by reviewing examples and evidence of ritual context of weapons from neighbouring regions and cultural circles (Part IV): these are the Greek world, Macedonia, Magna Graecia and Italy with Etruria, Illyria, the Celtic cultural circle in Western and Central Europe and in Western Balkans, the North Black Sea region. This analysis has a second part, which is placed in the appendices, as it includes areas and zones that are distant from the lands of the Thracians or the interaction with them is difficult to establish and trace. These are evidence from Asia Minor, Sardinia, Iberia, Brittany, and the Northern European cultural circle, which convincingly complete the picture for Thrace, in a really successful way to overcome the lack of quite adequate evidence in the Thracian environment.

As an omission, I would mention the absence in the analysis of the scenes with weapons on the painted coffered ceiling of the sarcophagus-like tomb in Ostrusha, which would have added to the idea of the heroic status of the dead laid in tombs. In this trend, I would also add an interesting detail discussed in the literature on tomb no. 2 in

the Great Tumulus at Vergina, the inventory in which is known and used by the author, but some of it, especially the weapons, are attributed to Alexander the Great in a tomb that belonged to his half-brother Philip III Arrhidaeus – an opinion of E. Borza (1987), discussed by N. G. L. Hammond (1989) and further argued by E. Borza and O. Palagia (2007). And this interestingly complements to the idea of the heroization of the deceased by means of weapons, and in this case by means of the weapons of an already heroized sovereign.

The analytical part concludes with a kind of summary of ritual practices with weapons (Part V) by discussing the two most popular in the ancient world – the making of trophies and the removal of weapons from their functional use through so-called “killing”, which is traced in votive offerings and in grave deposits, again in Thracian lands and in nearby cultural spaces.

The work is complemented by a Catalogue of sacred sites where weapons and war-gear were found, arranged in three zones of the Thracian lands: south of the Balkan Mountains, between the Danube and the Balkan Mountains, and north of the Danube. The text is richly illustrated, the work is written in good language, the expression is clear and concrete, professional. The abstract is written as required and clearly reflects the structure and achievements of the thesis. The list of publications on the dissertation topic includes 4 papers, all of them from conferences, two of them are in press. I have not detected any elements of plagiarism in the texts.

The dissertation has its clearly defined contributions. They are well outlined by the author in the abstract (p. 33) and correctly reflect his achievements. However, I am convinced that the merits of such a study do not lie in the answers provided, but rather in the problems posed for discussion. The author has proceeded with a necessary amount of scepticism to analyse situations and artifacts, thus, to outline the possible interpretation. Therefore, I would describe the dissertation proposed for review as a successful endeavour to discuss issues important to our understanding of Ancient Thrace and the Thracians, enquired by the artefacts discovered. What has been done here promises an effort to look beyond the horizon of material evidence, but also with the obligatory scepticism of what we can read today, influenced, of course, by our modern views.

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In conclusion, I would like to re-emphasize the contribution of the proposed text, seen by me in the interesting approach to the reconstruction of the ideological world, in the cautious reading of artifacts and situations, in the accumulated knowledge and voluminous literature on similar processes in the ancient world, which have made possible the comparison and understanding of what happened in Thrace. All these are the reasons for me to vote positively for the Doctor's degree was conferred on Kaloyan Petkov.

*30<sup>th</sup> of April, 2023*



*Kostadin Rabadjiev*