

REVIEW

by Mr. Totko Neykov Stoyanov, PhD, Professor, member of the Scientific Jury appointed by order of the Rector of Sofia University "St. Kl. Ohridski", (No. RD 38-407/ 14.07.2024), in the competition for the academic position of "Associate Professor" in the professional field 2.2. History and Archaeology (Archaeology - Thracian Archaeology), announced in State Gazette No. 55/28.06.2024.

1. In the announced competition, organized at the request of the FC of the Faculty of History for the needs of the Department of Archaeology, the only candidate is Assoc. Prof. Dr. **Nikola Petrov Theodosiev**. His documents have been accepted by the Commission appointed by the Order of Mr. Rector No. RD 38-515/ 06.08.2024, and the reason for his participation in the competition procedure is the submitted report that he fulfils the minimum national requirements under Article 2b of the Law on the Development of Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria.

H. Theodosiev graduated in History, with specialization in Archaeology, at the Faculty of History of the University of Veliko Tarnovo "St. St. Kiril and Methodius" in 1991. In 1992-1995 he was a full-time doctoral student at the Department of Archaeology of Sofia University "St. Kl. Ohridski" with the topic "*North-Western Thrace in the 5th - 1st centuries BC*" (defense 1998), and since 1995, the colleague has been a full-time lecturer at the Department of Archaeology (since 1998, Senior Assist. Prof.).

He participated in the competition with a habilitation thesis, published and submitted for evaluation under the title: *THE THOLOS TOMBS IN ANCIENT THRACY*. Sofia, University Press "St. St. Clair University Press, Sofia, Sofia. Ohridski, 2024. He also contributed one monograph and 7 studies and articles according to the attached list. The monograph is his doctoral dissertation, critically edited, expanded and adapted for monograph format and published in English in 2000 in the BAR International Series (859) by Archaeopress, Oxford. All other publications are not thematically related to the problems of the thesis.

2. Nikola Teodosiev is a graduate of the National High School for Ancient Languages and Cultures, a prerequisite for orientation towards a career in Thracian archaeology, for which his participation as a volunteer in the excavations of the team of G. Kitov as a schoolboy and a student.

As soon as he joined the department in 1995, colleague N. Theodosiev was entrusted with the seminar classes of the course *Thrace and Southeastern Europe in the 1st millennium BC* of the Bachelor's degree programme in Archaeology (until 2012). Since 2020 he has been the holder of this core course. Since 2001, he has been teaching the lecture course *Funerary Rites and Structures in the Late Iron Age of the 5th to 1st centuries BC* (45 hrs. elective), from the BA programme of the major. Since 2004, he has also taught the lecture course *Monumental Tomb Architecture in the Eastern Mediterranean in the 1st millennium BC* (45 hrs. elective) of the MA programme of the specialty. Since 2003 he has been teaching the course *Archaeology of Bulgaria* (45 hrs. compulsory) in the Bachelor's programme of the History specialty (part-time),

and since 2012 also in the Bachelor's programme of the History and Geography specialty (30 hrs. compulsory).

3. The monograph **The Tholos Tombs in Ancient Thrace**, with which N. Theodosiev participated in the competition, is dedicated to one of the most representative group of monuments from the period of the flowering of Thracian culture - the beehive tombs, a study directly related to the topic of the competition for Associate Professor in Thracian Archaeology. This subject is one of the main ones in his research and teaching work and in this sense the choice is not surprising. The proposed work has a classical structure - an introduction, three chapters and a conclusion, an analytical catalogue of 15 selected dome tombs, a list of 25 dome tombs (not included in the catalogue), a bibliography and a short summary in English (183 pp. in total).

The superlative *Introduction* outlines the group of monuments under study - the 40 domed tombs currently known from Thrace,¹ the contents of the three chapters, and explains the rationale for the presentation of 15 tombs in the analytical catalogue - "... which are less known to researchers or have not been analysed and published in detail, or for which more complete data are lacking to date", and the presentation of the remaining 25 in a list indicating their dating and the main literature, because the vast majority of them "... have been the subject of detailed publications or of numerous analytical studies".

All the tombs in the *Analytical Catalogue* are presented according to a constant pattern, containing: - History of discovery and location; - Mound; - Tomb; - Burial; - Finds; - Dating; - Other ritual actions and finds (where available); - Bibliography. Illustrations, plans and sections (with general numbering) are presented after the text for 13 of the tombs, and for the first tomb from Akyoren, Prov. Karklareli, seven photographs of the dome chamber taken on the spot by the author. For the other six tombs it is stated that they were visited by the author between 2004 and 2006 and their condition was ascertained on the spot and photographs were taken. It can only be regretted that at least some of these are not appended to the catalogue, because it is likely that to date this too cannot be seen. It should be added that for the two tombs from Ravnogor the author had direct observations during the period of the studies as a member of G. Kitov's team (and for tomb No. 2 as a direct supervisor).

The acquisition and synthesis of optimum information on these components, including from publications directly or indirectly concerning the tombs represented, has resulted in an up-to-date "portrait" of each of the fifteen monuments. This part of the proposed monograph has, in my opinion, high scientific value with clear contributory elements.

Ch. I. *Origins of the Beehive Tombs in Thrace* (11-22) presents an up-to-date synthesis of the emergence and formulation of the question of the origins of the dome tombs with the discovery of the tombs at Mezek and Vulce Pole in the 1930s (the hypothesis that these monuments are a

¹ The author has not commented on the actuality of four dome tombs from the area of Kavarna and Kaliakra from publications of G. Kitov *The Dome Tombs of Cape Kaliakra and Cape Chirakman near Kavarna - Terra Antiqua Balcanika*, IV, 1990, 116-121; the same Notes of a Mound-Builder. Sofia, 2008, 7-8, one of which is also reported in his publication (No. 15, p. 111 of the list of Articles and Studies).

manifestation of a preserved Mycenaean tradition in the northern parts of the Balkan Peninsula) and the development of discussions over time with the discovery of new domed tombs in Thrace in the context of the development of research on Aegean and Mediterranean issues. I would note that the candidate has already published in-depth research on the topic (cf. nos. 37, 41 of the list of Articles and Studies) and the attention to research on the topic to date is evident here.

Pointing out that the studies of the rock tombs in Southeastern Thrace and some tombs from the Early Iron Age necropolises on the island of Thassos from the last decades of the 20th century have fed the ideas of counter-nuitance, Theodosiev is of the opinion that they "can hardly be accepted as direct predecessors of the monumental beehive tombs that appeared in Thrace around the middle of the 4th century BC, since the latter are distinguished by precise construction and design in the style of Greek architecture and their architectural features indicate external influences". With the idea of tracing the origins and development of tholoi and their spread and preservation of tradition, the author looks from their appearance in Crete in the Early Bronze Age and their preservation as an archetypal form to the Late Bronze Age and the first centuries of the Iron Age, the development of this form in continental Hellas and the reminiscences in some areas up to the Geometric period, as well as the documented archaeological and source evidence of ritual action at Mycenaean tombs until very late. The spread of the tholoi in Anatolia and the preservation of the tradition in some areas up to the 7th-7th centuries B.C. is traced, as is the appearance of dome tombs in northwestern Anatolia in the Classical and Early Hellenistic periods, which could be associated with the possibility of borrowing the forms in Thrace. H. Theodosiev is of the opinion that probably the region in which the continuity from the Late Bronze Age to the Classical Age can be most clearly traced is Thessaly (with comparisons of specific monuments with those in Thrace). Additionally, after a thorough review of the data from Thessaly, in support of this idea, he points to the emergence of new research data in recent decades from the territory of ancient Macedonia - of domed tombs from the early necropolis of Pydna (on the north side of Olympus), of rather primitive similar structures from the area of Almopia (Constadia and Prodromos [not near Pella, pp. 19]) in the north (conquered by the Macedonians later, cf. Delev 2014, 71), and finally, a late 4th-early 3rd-century BC domed tomb at Derveni (ant. Lethe), alongside the typical Macedonian tombs with semicircular vaults and massive sarcophagus-like tombs with rich inventories. In the search for possible forms of contacts and transfer and/or reciprocity of ideas for the tombs commented on, contacts due to Greek colonization on the coast of Thrace or the residence of Thracians in Hellas are also discussed. Attention is also paid to the appearance of domed tombs in the Bosporan kingdom, as well as to similar forms of tholoi in Etruria, which are not necessarily associated with processes in Thrace. In this case, the candidate is inclined to assume "that Mycenaean tholos tombs, as well as the domed tombs of the Dark Ages in Hellas, were the main influences in the emergence of both Etruscan and Thracian domed tombs" (p. 22).

Theodosiev concludes, "...that the origin of Thracian beehive tombs around the mid-fourth century BCE represents a complex and multifaceted process, influenced by diverse and asynchronous factors situated in an extremely dynamic cultural and political environment. It is undeniable, however, that the influence of Greek tomb architecture from the Late Neo-Latin period onwards emerged as the leading factor in this dynamic process" (p. 22).

Ch. II. *Typology, chronology and distribution*, presents an updated typology of the beehive tombs in Thrace and a discussion of their chronology and distribution in the context of the

monuments discovered in the last two or three decades. Considering the typologies proposed so far by M. Ruseva (2002) and J. Valeva (2013), Theodosiev proposes a typology close to that of M. Ruseva, consisting of two main types - *Single-chambered* and *Multi-chambered* [tombs], subdivided into subtypes, depending on the presence or not of additional components.

Single chamber: - with burial chamber without additional rooms; - with burial chamber and dromos; - with burial chamber, dromos and anteroom. Multi-chamber: - two-chamber with domed burial chamber and antechamber; - two-chamber with domed burial chamber, antechamber and dromos; - two-chamber with domed burial chamber, antechamber and vestibule; - two-chambered with domed burial chamber, open antechamber and vestibule; - two-chambered with domed burial chamber, antechamber, vestibule and staircase with landings (*Cetinova mound*); - three-chambered with a domed burial chamber, two ante-burial chambers and a dromos (*Mezek*); - three-chambered with a sarcophagus-like burial chamber, two ante-burial chambers (one domed) and a dromos (*Golyama Kosmatka*) - *hybrid variant*; - four-chambered with two domed burial chambers, an ante-burial chamber, a side chamber and an anteroom (*Gagovo*). - Eight-chambered with a sarcophagus-like burial chamber, anterior burial chamber, six side chambers (one domed) and a rectangular plan of the whole structure (*Ostrusha*) - *hybrid variant*. There should be a correction here. The complex contains a total of six chambers, with five side chambers.

This typology introduces four unique tombs, whose names I have deliberately indicated in brackets. It is flexible and open-ended, especially if minor additions can be arranged. 1. The idea of variants should apply to all subtypes, because future discoveries are likely to confront us with new complexes with hitherto unknown elements, some of which are also likely to bear *hybridity*. In fact, it is likely that the stairways and landings of the Chetiniova Mound tomb should also bear the mark of *hybridity*. 2. In terms of precision of content number of chambers, in my opinion, the second type instead of Multi-chambered would be more accurate as a designation *Multi-compound* (because one, two and three chambers are still numerical), and four or more as Multi-chambered. Then the complexes at Gagovo and Ostrusha would be variants of the Multi-chambered subtype and designated variant, describing their features with or without hybridity, as would future Multi-chambered complexes. In both cases, in fact, there is a development of the complex from a primary variant with fewer elements, i.e., belonging to another primary subtype or variant, to the next one indicated in this typology.

In addition to the typology, the author draws attention to the variety of building materials and the different construction techniques used in the construction of Thracian tombs, including the domed ones, which also determine the specific characteristics of each monument. Certainly an important addition are the three variants distinguished in the case of the domed chambers, conditioned by their construction: - 1. a beehive-shaped dome, built of segmented blocks or of broken stones and slabs, documented in a large number of tombs. - 2. Combination of beehive and bell sections, applied, so far, only at the Kazanlak tomb - 3. Tholos-tombs in which a tall cylindrical section is built over the base, followed by a dome of cantilevered rows of segmental blocks or a combination of such and radially stacked trapezoidal blocks. While the first solution was applied in nine tombs, the second one is present only in the tomb in Shushmanets mound.

Other important architectural elements that give quality to the respective domed tombs are the monumental facades, in some of them, with pediments and acroteria, often combined with Doric or Ionic door frames, and stone or metal doors with modelled or real structural elements. The presence of pictorial decoration, so far only in the tombs from Kazanlak and Alexandrovo, is also an indication of the high status of the members of the high elite buried in them. The author draws attention to the fact that domed tombs are found in close proximity to tombs with rectangular burial chambers, in the same necropolis or even in the same mound (Frog Mound), which perhaps testifies "that in Ancient Thrace there were no strictly defined rules, traditions or even strict religious canons that required the construction of only domed or only rectangular tombs in a given necropolis". So far it is not clear "for what reasons certain Thracian kings and aristocrats were buried in domed tombs in some cases and in rectangular tombs in others." He assumes that a variety of factors probably determined specific decisions-"specific religious beliefs of a particular individual, family traditions, ... current trends in architectural design, or ... simply personal choice and preference as to what type of tomb to build" (26-27). This is an occasion to point out that the Kazanlak valley has "the greatest concentration of extremely diverse types of tombs ... of unique architectural design ... and those that appear to be the most remarkable in size and decoration tombs in Ancient Thrace" (27)

As expected, attention is also paid to the question (problem) of the chronology of the tombs in Thrace. Tedossiev points out that despite the presence of the tombs at Ruzhitsa (ca. first half of the 5th century) and the one at Ruets (last quarter of the 5th century), both with a rectangular burial chamber (the tomb at Tatarevo, also from the 5th century, is omitted), the construction of monumental tombs in Thrace in the 5th century BC remains a sporadic phenomenon; so far, the earliest beehive tomb, found at Eriklisje near Karklareli, dates from ca. mid-4th century BC. This fact leads him to conclude that the time of the appearance of the domed tombs in Thrace coincides with the last one or two decades of the existence of the Odrysian kingdom, before its conquest by Philip of Macedon (27). The heyday of dome tomb construction in Thrace was short, about 60-70 years, from the last decades of the fourth to the first decades of the third century BC, which coincides with the period of the establishment of independent Thracian kingdoms after 323 BC, the most significant of which was that of Seuthes III. A large number of Thracian domed tombs date from this time, the bulk of them concentrated in the area of Seutopolis" (27-28). Outside comment, however, remain the dome tombs of Southeastern Thrace.

After the mentioned period, dome tombs were built in Thrace occasionally, so far known only in the Rhodopes - the tomb at Borovitsa (second half of the 3rd - first half of the 2nd century BC) and the two tombs at Ravnogor (second half of the 2nd - first decades of the 1st century AD). "These late domed tombs in the Rhodope Mountains are a regional phenomenon, which shows sporadic continuity in the construction of such monuments during the Late Hellenistic period."

According to the author, the two tholos tombs found at Malko Tarnovo, dated to the 2nd - early 3rd century AD, represent a kind of regional renaissance of architectural traditions from pre-Roman Thrace in Strandzha, which "was probably due not only to the economic potential of the local Thracian aristocracy in the Roman period, but also represented a kind of political manifestation, suggesting a desire to emphasize a link with the period of the independent Thracian kingdoms of the Late Classical and Hellenistic times."(28).

H. Theodosiev draws attention to the fact that the vast majority of the domed tombs are located south of Hemus, on the territory of the Odrysian kingdom, and north of Hemus are known only three domed tombs on the territory of the Getae in northeastern Thrace. According to him, "this specific distribution is probably due to the fact that Hellenization in Southern Thrace was much stronger than in Northeastern Thrace, and ... south of the Haemus this process chronologically preceded the conquest from Macedonia. Many of the domed tombs in Thrace are clustered in particular areas, undoubtedly associated with the existence of local dynastic centres, and so far only the tombs in the area of Seuthopolis can certainly be linked to a specific dynastic centre, ... well attested in written sources and epigraphic monuments. It is indicative of the political power and cultural flowering of Seuthes III's kingdom that it is in the region of Seuthopolis that the largest number of domed tombs in Thrace ... and the two hybrid tombs with domed chambers have been discovered" (28-29). The thesis of Hellenization as a determining factor in the construction of domed tombs is, I think, debatable, but there is no space for that here.

Ch. III. *Political, social and religious context.* The material subject to analysis and interpretation in this chapter is presumably of a more imaginary character. It is undeniable that the monumental Thracian tombs of the Late Classical and Hellenistic periods were intended for the burials of members of the tribal aristocracy and kings. Due to the fact that in Thracian burial practice the names of the deceased were not inscribed anywhere, there is rarely a source for the secure identification of the buried. The only tomb in Thrace, so far, that is certainly associated with a specific ruler attested in historical sources is the tomb in the mound of Golyama Kosmatka at Shipka.² Four objects from the rich inventory - a bronze helmet, silver jug and calyx-bowl with the inscription "of Seuthes", a golden wreath with oak leaves and the bronze head from a statue of a man found in front of the tomb, with the portrait features of Seuthes III, known from coin issues, testify that the tomb is associated with the king of Odrysians. The lack of physical remains of an adult male and the dating of some of the artefacts to c. late first quarter of the 3rd century lead to the hypothesis that there was probably a symbolic burial (a *cenotaph*) carried out twenty years after the king's supposed death. This scenario is also accepted in the full publication of the complex by the deputy excavation manager D. Dimitrova (2015). A dispute exists about the date of the cenotaph. My colleague Theodosiev has presented another, not very clear and well argued version.

Another case with probable written information about burials is the tomb at Alexandrovo, resplendent with scenes of heroic banqueting and boar and deer hunting in the burial chamber and battle scenes in the dromos, also the subject of lively discussion. In the burial chamber there is a graffito - a male head in profile and above it the name *Kozimases* and the epithet *chrestos*. H. Theodosiev accepts the interpretation of G. Kitov that this is the aristocrat buried here. For the reading of the name he cites a publication of N. Sharankov, an erudite specialist in Greek epigraphy, in whose argumentation this could not be the name of the deceased, nor even of the painter, but is that of the author of the graffito, but he ignores his opinion.

² The author's claim that the tomb is located in the necropolis of Seutopolis is inaccurate. The tomb of Golyama Kosmatka stands at ca. 9 km from the town.

Another interesting example of an inscription with the name of the probable tomb's burial has been found near Smyadovo. On the façade, above the entrance, is a two-line inscription *Gonimasedze, wife of Seuthes*. In this case it is interesting that we know that this noble Thracian woman was buried in the tomb, but we do not know what status her husband had with the popular (royal?) name Seuthes.

Theodosius refers to some written records concerning the eschatological notions of the Thracian nobility and kings, mainly related to Thracian mythological characters, which "clearly testify that some Thracian kings were deified after their death and were worshipped as immortal heroes and anthropodaemons who would be reborn from the underworld in the form of deities" (35). One of these was Zalmoxis, a Getic mythical king and priest worshipped as a supreme deity. Zalmoxis founded mysteries among the Getae and taught them that the initiates were immortal. He built an underground dwelling where he hid and from where he returned in his fourth year. The Getae thus believed him that the dead were immortal if they joined Zalmoxis, and would return. Herodotus adds further details concerning the cult of the deity, and particularly the human sacrifices, in which the sacrificed were regarded as messengers going to Zalmoxis. According to Strabo, Zalmoxis was a priest who became a god among the Getae. He inhabited a cave located in the sacred mountain of Kogaionon. These written records could be associated with the symbolic death and rebirth of the deity, and the subterranean dwelling or cave of Zalmoxis as the symbolic equivalent of the monumental royal tombs. Kogaionon could be associated with the Thracian burial mounds, perceived as a sacred mountain (35-36).

Another set of evidence relates to the mythical king of the Aedonians, Rhesus, who, according to Pseudo-Euripides, would not go to the dark earth, but, hidden in the caves of Mount Pangaios, would lie as an anthropodaemon, gazing at the sunlight as Orpheus (?), the soothsayer of Bacchus, who inhabited Pangaios, being worshiped by the initiates. Eschatological notions related to death and rebirth can also be detected in the literary evidence describing the descent of the mythical Thracian king, priest and singer Orpheus into the underworld in search of his wife, and his return from the world of the dead. The ancient written information about the tomb of Orpheus shows that it was a sacred place and even a hero and a shrine connected with the cult of the late mythical Thracian king, accompanied by prophecies (36-38).

The author also examines other ancient historical data relating to heroic burials of Thracian aristocrats and noble Greeks in Thrace. – of Miltiades the Elder, associated with the colonization of the Thracian Chersonesus, of the hero of the Trojan War Protesilaus, buried at Eleusis of the Thracian Chersonesus, of the Spartan general Brasidas, buried near the agora of Amphipolis. From these data it is clear that the described Thracian funerary rites, in particular the sacrifices and memorial games, show that some Thracian aristocrats were heroized in a manner similar to Hellenic heroic rites. At the same time, Herodotus' description of the tomb of Protesilaios, which was a temple and sanctuary with impressive gifts, recalls the monumental Thracian tomb tombs, although they were not temples. According to the author, these similar elements in the burial customs of Thracians and Hellenes are undoubtedly the result of active and multifaceted interactions in the contact zones of the North Aegean and West Pontic coasts, where the two ethnic groups often lived in mixed communities. (39)

Teodosiev comments on some clear iconographic evidence in Thracian tomb painting, representing the heroization of the buried Thracian kings and aristocrats. A leading example is the scene of heroization depicted in the lunette of the central burial chamber of the tomb in Ginina's mound at Sveshtari, (c. 275 BC), where the Great Goddess offers a wreath to the head of the Getic ruler, represented as a horseman. According to the author, there is clear evidence of heroization in the central frieze in the domed burial chamber of the Kazanlak tomb (80s - 70s of the 3rd century BC). (40)

A number of archaeological evidences clearly show that some monumental Thracian tombs were used for a relatively long time, during which additional rites were performed, and in some cases secondary burials took place in the tombs and they became family grave monuments of the local Thracians dynasties. There is clear evidence of such long-term use in the beehive tomb from Mezek, built in the last decades of the 4th century BC. for the burial of an unknown Thracian ruler and functioned until the 70s of the 3rd century BC, including secondary burials. Another funerary monument in use for a long time is the tomb at Maglzh, which had two stages of construction, the second of which the dromos was extended and a vestibule flanked by two chambers was built, and the old frescoes were replaced by new ones, dated around the middle of 3rd century BC. According to Theodosius, this makes it possible to assume "that some of the Thracian monumental tombs, used for a long time for ritual activities, including secondary burials, were heroes and even sanctuaries associated with the cult of deified noble ancestors who were worshiped as heroes and anthropodaemons"(41). The author draws attention to the fact that after the burial was carried out in the dome tomb in Zaba-mound near Strelcha, a chariot with two sacrificial harnessed horses was left in front of the facade, oriented to the southeast as if coming out of the tomb, and in front of another horse was laid on her. Undoubtedly the chariot was used for the funeral procession (ekphora) of the deceased Thracian aristocrat. A large number of secondary excavated ritual pits with hearths were found in the barrow, probably "related to the cult of the deceased Thracian aristocrats laid in the two tombs, who may have been worshiped as heroes and anthropo-demons" (42). The complex in the Ostrusha Mound also has characteristics that suggest it is a hero. After Teodosiev, "in support of such an interpretation is the fact that the tomb complex in Ostrusha in terms of plan, size and location in the mound embankment is similar to the so-called heroon found in the southern periphery of the Megali Tumba mound near Vergina" (42-43). Of great value as evidence of funerary beliefs and rituals are the remains of horse sacrifices and chariots left behind in some of the monumental tombs. "Undoubtedly, in Ancient Thrace, horses and chariots demonstrated the power and prestige of aristocrats and kings, but at the same time they also had a symbolic meaning in the afterlife, where they indicated the high social status of burials and ensured his revival" (44). Important evidence bearing the idea of heroization of the buried (real or symbolic) in Mal-tepe near Mezek and Goliamata Kosmatka near Shipka are the parts of bronze statuary groups (?). I do not share the interpretations held by the author that in both cases the late dynast was represented as a mounted hunter. (45)

In conclusion, according to Teodosiev, "even with the current state of the source base, it is clear that the available written information and archaeological data testify to the cult of the deified late Thracian aristocrats and kings, revered as heroes and anthropodaemons" (46). It seems to me that there is a need to clarify whether the concepts of heros, anthropo-demon and god are semantically equivalent or are part of a gradation of phenomena, in what context, etc.

The peer-reviewed monograph is an in-depth scientific work investigating and interpreting the complex problematic of monumental tomb architecture in Thrace, based on the rich archaeological data from the surveys and ancient sources in the context of the overall cultural development of the country.

4. Nikola Tezhdosiev also participated in the competition with 8 scientific publications - a monograph and 7 studies and articles, out of a total of 73 publications and 11 reviews. All publications from the competition list and a large part of the rest have been published in English in authoritative journals, series, collective editions and monographs (a significant part in refereed and indexed editions - see the reference). A review of his entire output shows a broad thematic range of interests, going beyond the confines of Thracian archaeology. From the competition list, I would single out the revised and published as a monograph candidate's dissertation (No. 2). Regarding its scientific value, I would only point out that to this day, there is no more serious study related to Northwest Thrace (as a whole or for some period from the 1st millennium BC) in which this work is not cited. The two parts of his studies on the gold funerary masks from the rich archaic necropolises of the area of the Termaic Gulf and Trebenishte (Nos. 3-4) also have a place even now in current scientific discussions on the issue. For me, his study of the silver rhyton-jug from the Borovo treasure and the silver skyphos from Stara Zagora, published in an authoritative British academic journal, is an example of the combination of professional tereutical analysis of the two vessels, with very good photo and graphic illustrations for the needs of the analysis , and the interpretation of the iconographic schemes and associated sources to arrive at the overall interpretation of the two vessels.

Among his publications from the general list, I would single out one of his last studies, published in a renowned collection (No. 59), dedicated to a new comprehensive analysis of the two domed tombs near the village of Ravnogor, of their stratigraphy and artefacts, in order to propose a new, later date - from the end of the 4th - the beginning of the 3rd century BC in the 2nd-1st centuries BC.

In conclusion and as a consequence of the above, confirming the indicated qualities of Nikola Teodosiev as a trained in-depth researcher in the field of the archeology of Ancient Thrace (1st millennium BC), a teacher of Thracian and general archeology, a correct colleague, I declare my confidence to vote positively for the award of ch. senior assistant professor **Nikola Petrov Teodosiev**, PhD, in the academic position of "**associate professor**".

October 20, 2024

Totko Stoyanov

