

Sofia University „St. Kliment Ohridski“

Faculty of History

Department of Ancient History, Thracology and Medieval History

R E V I E W

of the PhD dissertation

Of

Lyudmila Zheleva Chakârova-Prisoeva

Topic of the dissertation: The Thracian lands in the juridical texts of the Roman Empire (212-249 CE)

Scientific area: 2. Humanities

Professional field: 2.2: History and Archeology

Specialty: Ancient History

by

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Information on the doctorate, dissertation, abstract and publications:

The dissertation of Lyudmila Zheleva Chakârova-Prisoeva has been discussed and proposed for public defense by the "Ancient History, Thracology and Medieval History" department at the Faculty of History of the Sofia University “ St. Kliment Ohridski”. The procedure for announcing the public defense is fully in accordance with the Regulations for the acquisition of scientific degrees of the Sofia University, as well as with the relevant provisions of

the RSARB and the Regulations for its implementation. The abstract (43 pages) fully meets the relevant requirements and gives a complete idea of the content of the dissertation. The results of the text authentication system convincingly prove the originality of the work. The text of the dissertation is accompanied by legal regulations and publications on the subject, which fully meet the requirements provided for in the law. Three articles are indicated, the content of which is undoubtedly related to the content of the dissertation. Of these, one article is in print, the others two have been published.

Dissertation content:

The dissertation consists of an introduction, four chapters, a conclusion, a bibliography of the sources and research used, and four appendices-catalogues. It contains a total of 300 standard pages.

The introduction reveals the goals and objectives of the dissertation, the methods used by the doctoral candidate, and some basic sources and historiographical works on the topic. The main goal of the research is the study of Roman legal texts from the first half of the 3rd century, related to the Thracian lands. Such a study has not been done to date, despite separate comments on individual, mainly epigraphic, monuments.

Of course, sources of a different nature are also cited and used, which complement the picture and allow the creation of a full-fledged description of the era to which the studied texts refer. The introduction also leads us in detail to the research methods and the structure of the dissertation, which has its own specifics, determined by the nature of the topic under study.

The first chapter, “Application of Roman Law in the Thracian Lands,” examines the history of the Thracian lands from their conquest by the Roman Empire to the period under consideration. Roman rule in the Thracian lands, which were mainly located in two provinces—Moesia and Thrace—was established relatively late, but during the heyday of the empire. Several Roman colonies were established here, and in general, the new provinces experienced times of prosperity, urbanization, and Romanization in a cultural and, to some extent, linguistic sense (primarily in Moesia). Towards the end of the 2nd century, elements of a crisis in the political system were noticeable, which would lead the entire empire to the turbulent era of the “soldier

emperors”, which was also fully manifested in the Thracian territories of Rome. There are signs of a decline in the municipal system, an increase in the “barbarian” pressure on the Danube Limes, and the transformation of Moesia and Thrace into zones, directly threatened by external attacks. After this introductory part, the dissertation presents the process of the application of Roman law in the new provinces. It focuses on the specifics of its penetration into territories where there was already a solid local tradition associated with Hellenistic civilization, especially in Thrace and along the Black Sea coast. Ultimately, a symbiosis between Roman legal norms and local traditions is reached, where this is possible and where Roman statesmanship creates conditions for the gradual and painless integration of local elites into the system of imperial provincial government. Her observations on the legal texts from the Justinian Code and on the Digests demonstrate that the Thracian lands were not particularly separated from the rest of the empire's territories, and the ethnonyms "Thracians" and "Mysians" are relatively rare. The famous epigraphic monuments from Lower Moesia and Thrace, which have a legal theme, are also examined: the inscriptions from Scaptopara, Pizos, Tyras and Nicopolis ad Istrum, as well as the so-called military diplomas, which shed additional light on the researched topic and have a closer connection with the Thracian lands and the legal practice in them.

Chapter Two "The Independent Rule of Caracalla and the Year After His Assassination (212-218 AD) focuses on an extremely important period in the history of the Roman Empire, which led to a cardinal change in the status of its population. This is the rule of Caracalla, which still bears the marks of the era of the principate, in terms of jurisprudence, i.e. the most productive period of development of Roman law, also associated with the issuance of the so-called imperial constitutions. The doctoral candidate focuses initially on the reforms of Septimius Severus, which gave the appearance of a new trend related to the militarization of the empire, arising from the growing need for reforms and an attempt to avoid some negative trends in political, social and economic life. The main focus of the chapter is on the independent rule of Caracalla and the promulgation of the *Constitutio Antoniniana* in 212. The extension of Roman citizenship to the majority of the free inhabitants of the empire had important consequences for society, leading to greater cohesion between the individual communities, which was the purpose of the act, but also to new social and political transformations that would further destroy the framework of the principate and clear the way for new reforms, leading to the emergence of the "dominate" at the end of the 3rd century. In this context, the rescripts of Caracalla are also examined, which refer to

the Thracian lands and their population, part of which received the new status of full-fledged "Romans". The doctoral candidate also addresses the issue of the short reign of Macrinus (217-218) and analyzes the lack of legal material related to his rule, which is due to his inability to cope with the divergent tendencies embodied by the factions in the Senate and the army and to the failure to consolidate his power for a longer period.

Chapter Three, "The Late Severi (218-235 AD)," focuses in detail on the reign of the last representatives of the dynasty: Elagabalus and Severus Alexander and the legal texts related to their rule. Elagabalus, an extravagant worshiper of the eponymous Syrian deity, relied on his grandmother Julia Maesa, who sought by all means to continue the power of the Severi. However, he managed to turn significant circles of the Roman elite and the army against himself and was ultimately removed by her, since his reckless and absurd policies threatened the very existence of the dynasty. Elagabalus visited the Thracian provinces and even gave honorary titles to Philippopolis and Perinthus, but in general his interests in statecraft and lawmaking were minimal. This also explains the scarce material from the era of his rule. After the removal of Elagabalus, Severus Alexander came to power, supported by the two influential women - Julia Maesa and his mother Julia Mamaea. With their support, he managed to consolidate himself on the throne and made significant attempts to preserve the existing state structure and legal order. In this connection is the turbulent legislative activity of this period, his personal increased interest in the administration of justice and lawmaking and the policy of preserving the supremacy of civil power over the military. This is also evident from the significant legal material related to his rule, analyzed by the doctoral candidate. However, the looming threats to the empire forced him to pay increasing attention to the border provinces along the Rhine and Danube limes. However, the underestimation of the changed realities and the increasing role of the army led both Severus Alexander and the entire dynasty to a tragic end, despite the testaments of the founder of the dynasty, Septimius Severus.

The fourth chapter, "The Soldiers Emperors in the Period 235-249 AD," focuses on the most turbulent period in the history of the early Roman Empire – the apogee of a rising political, economic and social crisis, the outlines of which can be observed as early as the end of the 2nd century. Here, the doctoral candidate examines in detail the rescripts issued by Maximinus Thrax, the so-called "senate emperors," in particular the "two Gordians," Gordian III and Philip the Arab. All of this material has been scrupulously analyzed by Lyudmila Prisoeva, taking into

account the general trends and the inevitable differences in the texts. The final part summarizes the main outcomes of the dissertation text in a completely appropriate and convincing way. The last two emperors - Gordian III and Philip the Arab - leave a certain mark on the legal tradition, although their reigns are also associated with increasing instability, military conflicts on the borders and unrest within the empire itself. The rulers who preceded them, in fact, fought among themselves for power - a struggle that also reflected the attempts of the Senate to impose itself on the military and achieve the restoration of some status quo. It is no coincidence that most of these rulers met their deaths violently.

The conclusion introduces us to the main conclusions from the studied material. The dissertation is categorical that the main source of law in this period were the imperial constitutions, although older legislative practices existed and were preserved through imperial rescripts. The general trends in the development of the empire also affected the lands of Lower Moesia and Thrace, which throughout the period under consideration were in the emperors' field of vision as important areas for the defense of the empire. All of them resided for some time in the Thracian lands and part of their legislation also addressed the "Thracian" issues, following the trends of the general development of provincial government and the legal framework in the turbulent times of the first half of the 3rd century.

Scientific contributions:

I will focus on the contributions made by the doctoral candidate:

1. She has studied in detail the available legal texts from the Justinian Code and the Digests relating to the Thracian lands.
2. She has also studied the available epigraphic monuments from Lower Moesia and Thrace with legal content.
3. She has placed and classified the legal material according to its type, origin and chronology, in the context of the rule of the emperors and provincial governors of the era in question.
4. She has presented a full-fledged picture of the era, in the aspects related to the topic of the dissertation.

Non-essential notes may be made to the text regarding the unification of terms and names, but this will inevitably be done in the preparation of a possible future monograph, the publication of which I would recommend.

Conclusion:

Based on what has been said so far, I strongly recommend that the esteemed committee award the scientific and educational degree "doctor" to Lyudmila Zheleva Chakârova-Prisoeva. Personally, I vote with conviction "yes" and extend my congratulations to the doctoral candidate for the excellent work she has done.

09.06.2025

Sofia

Reviewer:

/Prof. Alexandar Nikolov, PhD/