

OPINION

by assoc. prof. Stoyan Yordanov Popov, PhD,
Department of History and Archaeology, Faculty of Philosophy and History,
Plovdiv University "Paisii Hilendarski",
professional field 2.2. History and Archaeology,
member of the scientific jury according to Order No. 3 - RK - 9 / 05. 10. 2023
of the rector of the New Bulgarian University

about a dissertation for the conferring of the educational and scientific degree "**doctor**" by
professional field 2.2. History and archaeology

on the topic: "**Town necropolises from the era of the 2nd Bulgarian Tzardom**"
with candidate **Filip Bojilov Petrunov**,
a PhD student at the Department of Archeology of the New Bulgarian University

The dissertation presented to me for expressing an opinion is an analysis and generalization of the information accumulated over more than a hundred years of archaeological and historical research on the necropolises of medieval Bulgarian towns. The significant amount of data on the issue determines the ripe need in the Bulgarian archaeological science for the creation of such a study and accordingly presupposes the right choice of topic made by the doctoral student and his scientific supervisor!

The text of the dissertation occupies a total volume of 394 pages, separately of which 78 pages of appendices are included. Structurally, the work consists of an Introduction; four chapters entitled: Review of studies, Town necropolises from the era of the Second Bulgarian Tzardom according to archaeological data, Necropolises in the structure of the medieval town, Elite funeral practices and burial facilities of the high aristocracy from the era of the Second Bulgarian Tzardom; Conclusion; Catalogue. The five appendices are located at the end of the text. The individual structural units are well balanced, with a readable and concise presentation.

In the Introduction, a brief critical analysis of the results of the research of historians and archaeologists concerning the medieval Bulgarian town is made – terminological formulations, typologies, urban planning, architectural, administrative-political and economic characteristics. The doctoral student comes to the conclusion that despite the progress in the research of medieval Bulgarian urban centers, the scholars have not paid enough attention to the subject of necropolises as an integral part of them. Brief attention is paid to some features of the necropolis as such, its place in the urban environment and in the worldview of medieval man. The tasks have been identified and the objectives of the research have been formulated, namely an analysis and summary of the data on the necropolises in the medieval towns of the present

Bulgarian lands from the Bulgarian Liberation to 2020, the chronological and territorial frameworks of the dissertation work have been determined.

The first chapter is devoted to the review of studies on the topic of the dissertation. An overview of the publications studying the problems of the Bulgarian medieval town with the methods of history and archeology was made. Special attention is paid to the archaeological researches of the medieval town necropolises. In developing the dissertation, the doctoral student used 705 publications. Regardless of the omission of some developments (e.g. information about the necropolises around the fortress near the village of Iskra, Parvomai district and about part of the necropolis in the Voden fortress), the significant number of publications together with the review of the research in this chapter present the author as a connoisseur of the scientific literature on the problem at an excellent level.

In the second chapter of the dissertation, the data from the archaeological researches of the medieval necropolises in the Bulgarian urban centers from the period 12th – 14th centuries are presented in detail. The towns are examined separately, with a brief presentation of their role in historical events. The data on the archaeologically studied necropolises in the town territory are presented. Along with the results of foreign, previous studies, the author presents data and results of field studies of urban necropolises, where the doctoral student was in the leading scientific team.

In the third chapter of the dissertation, the necropolises are examined on the background of the urban environment. According to their location, the author singles out three groups of necropolises. The first group of necropolises is located around the temples. The author comes to the conclusion that necropolises in towns arise around a church. The second group is the necropolises located in the town citadels. According to the dissertation, these necropolises are connected with the previous one. The first necropolises arose in the town around the newly built temples immediately after their construction, and after the expansion of the town territory. The last group of urban necropolises according to their location, identified by the author, is located in the suburbs.

The fourth chapter is dedicated to the funeral practices and burial facilities of the aristocratic strata of the Bulgarian medieval society. The author distinguishes two types of burial practices in urban necropolises attributed to the aristocracy. The first is related to the laying of the dead under the arcosolia of the temple and has Asian roots. The second is associated with the construction of royal tombs in churches. The author of the dissertation distinguished three variants of aristocratic burial practices – in niches, in sarcophagi and masonry graves, and in tomb churches.

The final chapter of the dissertation contains a summary of the conclusions reached by the author of the study.

In the Catalog, the empirical information that the doctoral student works with when writing the dissertation is presented in sufficient detail and with a neat

arrangement. It includes the data for the 153 necropolises under consideration. In itself, the Catalog also has a contribution character, as it provides a system for representing necropolises that is open and can be refined and supplemented in future research.

As already mentioned, four illustrative appendices are placed after the Catalogue. The first one contains the planning schemes of the examined city centers from the time of the Second Bulgarian Tzardom with the locations of the studied necropolises indicated. The second and third appendices are dedicated to the necropolises and burial facilities registered on the territory of medieval Kaliakra. The fourth appendix presents the fragments of sarcophagi known to science from the 12th – 14th centuries from today's Bulgarian lands. The last appendix presents statistics on urban necropolises in a summarized tabular form. Here I must share that I believe that the work would only enrich the picture of the urban necropolises of the Second Bulgarian Empire if the statistical data well presented in the table receive a more detailed analysis. Created and presented in this way, the appendices complement the main text of the dissertation to the maximum extent.

The scientific contributions of the dissertation are: the summarization of the information available to the doctoral student about the medieval city necropolises from the 12th – 14th centuries; analyzing the topographical location of the studied necropolises; the inclusion in scientific circulation of studied but unpublished monuments in their entirety; the analysis and summary of information on medieval Bulgarian "royal burials"; the creation of a database of medieval town necropolises from the 12th – 14th centuries, which will serve as a basis for further research on this important for clarifying the social and spiritual characteristics of the society of the Second Bulgarian Tzardom; the creation of graphic materials illustrating the issues discussed in the work.

In the process of working on the dissertation, F. Petrunov made a total of 11 scientific publications – 1 study, 4 articles and 5 short reports related to its subject. Among them is a monograph in which he is one of the two co-authors.

The considerable amount of empirical material analyzed and summarized by the author of the dissertation produces big impression. Along with conducting own field archaeological research, this fact speaks of excellent scientific grounding of the doctoral student.

Given the merits of the dissertation work, regardless of the minor remarks of a recommendatory nature, I propose to the respected scientific jury to award Philip Bozhilov Petrunov the educational and scientific degree "Doctor".

Sofia,
22. 12. 2023

Respectfully:

(Assoc.prof. Stoyan Popov, PhD)

