

REVIEW

of the dissertation on the topic "City necropolises from the era of the II Bulgarian Kingdom" for the awarding of the educational and scientific degree "Doctor" to Filip Bozhilov Petrunov, a doctoral student of independent training at the Department of Archeology at the New Bulgarian University. By Prof. D.Sc. Stanislav Stanilov, National Archaeological Institute with Museum at BAS.

The topic of the doctorate is successfully chosen, undeniably dissertable and has a sufficient empirical basis, which is the most important condition for successful implementation. It can even be said that its formulation and assignment is a bit late, as evidenced by the amount of accumulated material. It is part of the problem of the structure of the medieval Bulgarian city, part of the urban development of the Orthodox countries in the European Southeast. Here, one cannot fail to note that the archeology of the cities of our Second Kingdom has not yet successfully solved the problem of the structure of the medieval city, regardless of the attempts known so far. I'm talking about its purely archaeological, not its source history, nature. Thus, the doctoral student had to write down brief characteristics of the respective city centers, in which case he got carried away describing their monuments, which I consider unnecessary.

When "composing" the title for the chronological framework, the term "era" was used, which is incorrect. "Epoch" for broader frameworks of a cultural-historical or rather civilizational phenomenon, for example "Stone-Copper Age" or "Late Bronze Age"; feudal era, capitalist era, etc. These two centuries are simply a period of the age of feudalism with definite temporal and territorial boundaries. The expression "the period of..." or "the time of..." could have been used. The defense of the term "era" for the case has a weak argument.

The work is structured into an Introduction, four Chapters, a Conclusion, an illustrative part of five Appendices, which contain tables and a table of statistical data on urban necropolises. In my opinion, all that is missing here is a List of the illustrative part, which would contain the relevant information, as is done in any monographic study. Instead, captions are placed below each panel indicating who conducted the studies.

The introduction contains notes on the studies of the medieval Bulgarian city, in which the emphasis is on history and not on archaeology. The question is correctly posed in this introduction: What is a city? And the answer is in a short and not particularly critical review of the various opinions. In the introduction to the place is the question: What is a necropolis and what is its role? After which the goal is set - clearly formulated and understandable. Here, in my opinion, a characteristic of the empirical base is missing. The huge amount of graves was excavated by professionals with different qualifications, sometimes some of them could not even be called that. Such a section should indicate which information is authentic and which is questionable. This has a direct bearing on the development itself. It could also be noted the insufficient value of the publications in the AOR, which the author uses on an equal footing with the full-value ones, let's call them "standard" works. The heterogeneity of the archaeological

sources has forced him to offer an "uneven" exposition, and that in the essence of the material. For example, in some places he makes notes on the peculiarities of the funeral rite, and elsewhere there is no such thing, because it is not in the publication either. Thus, the systematicity was mainly expressed in the conscientious presentation of the factual material and, only if possible, the necessary analysis on the subject.

Chapter I. Review of studies. (p. 23-31, 9 p.)

The review begins with the explorations of the city, as such, and not of the necropolises. The description has an introductory nature to the topic and the main success of the author here is in the separation of all the questions related to the study of the city during this period into 5 groups. Only after these notes, the author offers a description of the studies of the necropolises of our 2nd kingdom. Weaknesses are hinted at in places, accurately captured, which is important for the quality of the doctorate. In general, this part makes a good impression in terms of grades, but against the background of the many monuments studied, it seems too short.

Chapter II. The city necropolises from the era of the Second Bulgarian Kingdom according to archaeological data. This is actually the title of the doctorate, expressed a little differently - there the "second" is in Roman numerals, and here it is in a word. This should be fixed for a future release, I think. The chapter contains information and notes about 40 monuments, which most often contain several necropolises, where it is difficult to formulate the measure of their definition - which are single graves and which are necropolises - for example, from one-two-three-four-five... are they separate graves or a necropolis?

The chapter offers the monuments relevant to the topic, with a full but brief description of their content. It is described, not only what is understood by the term necropolis, i.e. arrangement, plan, burial pits (device), arrangement of skeletons and grave goods as such. The descriptions of the finds, mainly the ornaments, are superfluous, in my opinion, which is the subject of another study. Perhaps the author should have looked for the differences between grave and funerary inventory, which in the studies of necropolises of this period represents a significant difficulty, due to the specifics of the Christian burial rite. It is true that he mentions cases where the finds are not grave goods, but funerary goods, but there is no formulating part in this case. Otherwise, the information is relatively complete and gives a relatively accurate picture of the "archeology of death" during the commented period. This part, which constitutes, no more, no less, the basis of the study, despite its weaknesses, it gives a general and relatively detailed picture of the empirical side of the problem.

Chapter III. Necropolises in the structure of the medieval city p. 125-132, 8 p.

With this chapter begins the analytical part of the dissertation, in which the main question must be answered - are there rules, is there a system for the placement of graves and the formation of necropolises.

Here, the necropolises are successfully classified into three groups with the corresponding characteristics:

- 1 Around the temples.
- 2 In the citadels.

3 In the suburbs.

This distinction, although conditional, best serves to summarize the monuments. Otherwise, in principle, individual monuments can be correlated, for example, graves around temples can be in suburbs, or temples with graves can be found in citadels. The classification proposed by the doctoral student, however, allows to operate with the material, assuming deviations in explanatory texts. Finally, I am left with the impression that, after all, the doctoral student manages to bring the matter into a framework that allows for further operation with it, and this is definitely a blessing.

Chapter IV. Elite burial practices and burial facilities of the high aristocracy from the era of the Second Bulgarian Kingdom (pp. 133-166, 33 pp.).

The chapter begins with a relatively long passage on imperial porphyry sarcophagi from the Roman-Byzantine era. It refers to the tombs of the Byzantine emperors of the early Christian period and has no direct bearing on the subject of the dissertation. It is known that porphyry sarcophagi in the 12-14 century were no longer used...

Here we find a classification of elite burial facilities:

- 1 niches,
- 2 Sarcophagi
- 3 Masonry tombs

My first impression of the presentation is that the database can be singled out as a separate topic. The unusually large number of publications devoted to the matter in question suggests a spurious or genuine interest, given the great scarcity of monuments. The author is faced with a growing number of hypotheses, sometimes absurdly contradictory, but from another point of view - all too likely. The main feature of the discussion is the difficult applicability of Occam's principle that the most likely is the most obvious.

One of the merits of the fourth chapter is the text with which Filip Petrunov tries, in my opinion quite objectively, to trace the sacralization of aristocratic graves, connecting it to a large extent with the veneration of the relics of Orthodox saints, especially the supply of relics to the new capital of the Bulgarian monarchy after its restoration. The hypothesis was "drawn" from his knowledge of the discussion about the ruler's graves in Tsarevgrad Tarnov. This part of the fourth chapter is not singled out and widely developed, but it should be, because at least I do not know of a publication devoted entirely to this phenomenon.

Before starting to comment on the empirical material, the author mentions graves of Bulgarian aristocrats outside the territory of medieval Bulgaria: of Tsar Michael Shishman in the church in Staro Nagorichane, of Vatsa Lascaris great-granddaughter of Ivan Asen II in Coimbra (Portugal), of Ana Neda, wife of Michael III Shishman I in Decani monastery in Kosovo. After this, in a certain sense, attractive part of Chapter IV, comes the turn of archaeology. A comprehensive description of the monuments is given in the text, but it is somehow embedded in the history of research and discussion I mentioned above. Representatives of all generations of archaeologists participate in it, which very often go beyond the scope of the research analysis, i.e. they detach themselves from matter and reason mainly on the basis of logic. The author

knows the discussion well, he has quoted almost all the authors and in some cases takes quite definite positions. At the same time, he uses metrical information, in the sense that he cites dimensions of grave goods in the course of the commentary, which I think is helpful to the reader, even if he is well versed in the subject. The exposition of the discussion itself is quite tight, ie the author has not been tempted to stretch this part due to the volume of the work.

The state of tomb research is given in sufficient detail, along with the usual differing opinions. Here the text is clear enough and the achievement of the doctoral student is that it is useful enough and in one edition of the work, it will be one of the "working" parts. It becomes clear that the author masters this matter in detail, being biased and critical in places, but after all, that is his right. The question here is whether this has been done with sufficient academic measure, which in my judgment it has been done. The real possibilities to identify as tombs all the facilities in the respective churches with the determinable chronology have been carefully followed. Each monument has received special attention and even in places the text is overloaded with the mentioned metrics. This stems from Filip Petrunov's effort to use all the information presented in the discussion with the reconstructive considerations of the participants, without which the monuments could not have been identified. Here, quite rightly, the most attention is paid to the church "St. Forty martyrs", the assessment of which is as objective as possible. Now, my note is that in the analysis of the discussion about its nature and significance, little attention has been paid to the information about the constructions at this place before the erection of the Great Lavra by Ivan Asen II. This refers to the context of the topic in the section on the sacralization of aristocratic (ruling) graves. Special attention was also paid to the palace chapel, (as the author calls it) "Saint Paraskeva (Petka) Tarnovska" chapel with the remains of graves discovered during excavations.

The most space (7 p.) is devoted to the tomb in Church No. 4 in the fortress of Kaliakra. Here, the author (an active participant in recent studies) in an effort to build a convincing hypothesis for the identification of an aristocratic (ruling) grave in the remains of the temple, has presented all the information about the monument. He followed in detail the documentation of the previous studies with textual citations and then detailed the excavations with detailed metrical data, which this time had no bearing on the subject. In general, the text in places resembles an excavation report. I believe that this understandable preoccupation of the author should be curtailed in a future edition in consultation with the supervisor. As well as other texts, especially those that offer long verbatim quotations of various writings on the issue. As for the tomb in Church No. 4 of Kaliakra, it seems to me that by the logic with which other aristocratic tombs of the Second Kingdom are identified, this tomb can indeed be personified as the last abode of the despot Dobrotitsa.

At the end of chapter IV, a summary is made of the sarcophagi of the Bulgarian aristocratic graves. It is negligible, apparently the author relied on the exposition in the second chapter. There, indeed, these eloquent, though too meager, remains have received more attention. But here, in the analytical part of the work, the specifics are completely missing. Again, regarding

the future edition, I recommend that the text on the sarcophagi be revised and the monuments presented in the text and illustrations receive more attention.

The conclusion (pp. 166-177, 11 p.).

As a volume it is entirely satisfactory, but if its character is appreciated some critical remarks may be made. As a content, it, in my opinion, quite legitimately, mainly presents the functioning, i.e. the "development" of necropolises in an urban environment. The author has correctly detected the trends and has evaluated them sufficiently fully. In places, repetitions of evaluations from the main texts are noticeable, but this is usual for this kind of composition, where the authors are confronted by a huge base in volume.

The catalog (pp. 237-406, 169 pp.) is a very good achievement of the doctoral student. Its content presents the monuments in sufficient detail, the arrangement of the information vertically is expediently done. It's not quite "uniform", but that's what the material offers ie. the way monuments are published. In general, the texts are completely satisfactory because they can be used easily and, together with the cited literature, constitute an accessible "competent" reference book. This evaluation is important because of the candidate's preparation for research work, which implies obtaining the educational and scientific degree in question.

Given the consideration that archeology is image and word, I pay special attention to the illustrative part. It consists of carefully crafted graphic panels and a small number of quality photographs. The structure divides the material into 5 applications, which contain:

Appendix 1. Contains 41 map plates and city plans where the locations of the necropolises are marked.

Appendix 2. Contains 8 panels with the graphic documentation of 188 graves from the Kaliakra Necropolis.

Appendix 3. Contains 4 panels with graphics and photography from the Kaliakra fortress surveys.

Appendix 4. Contains 14 panels with photographs and graphic reconstructions of sarcophagi and tombstones.

Appendix 5. Table (with catalog data) of burial facilities and inventory.

The illustrative material is excellently made and shows the responsible attitude of the author to the hypothesis that archeology is both an image and a word. I have a note only on the already mentioned *parti pri* to Kaliakra: Appendix 2 presents graphically medieval 188 graves from Kaliakra, which break the balance of the material and, moreover, are completely superfluous to the aims and objectives of the dissertation work. Appendix 2, which presents documentation from the excavations at Kaliakra, is also redundant for the same reason - the graphic illustration(s) should be in Appendix 1. Appendix 4 is in place, but Appendix 5 is also completely redundant because the data is there and in the catalog descriptions.

704 titles of specialized literature were used in the work. It is only in Cyrillic because, due to the large volume of the base material of 10,756 graves, the doctoral student and his supervisor have given up on a comparative analysis with necropolises from neighboring, related to Bulgarian,

medieval cultures. I find this correct, because due to the large number of necropolises and graves, an insurmountably large volume of research will result.

A careful reading of the work reveals minor weaknesses, which, nevertheless, must be taken into account and "corrected": When citing the literature used, the main source must be cited. For example, the author mentions the basilica of St. Achilles and quotes a work by Ovcharov, and the correct one is to quote Moutsopoulos himself, whose monograph was translated and published in Bulgarian. In academic writings, the cited researchers are not titled, but in the dissertation this happened - some are titled, others are not. The term "suburbs" is used in most cases in in other cases, however, "sub-towns". In specialized works, however, the second term has priority, although their contents, in my opinion, are the same. Finally, probably due to the haste usual in such cases, the author in places, though rarely, confuses the full and the incomplete article.

After everything stated up to here, I am obliged to state that the work proposed for defense, as volume and content, corresponds to the academic requirements for the successful implementation of the procedure for this defense. For this, I take the liberty of recommending to the honorable Scientific Jury to award Master Philip Bozhilov Petrunov the scientific and educational degree "Doctor".

Sofia 13.03.2024

Prof. D.Sc. Stanislav Stanilov