

## STATEMENT

from Assoc. Prof. Deyan Sashkov Rabovynov (NAIM-BAS)

concerning the discussion of PHD thesis of Philip Bozhilov Petrunov, PhD Student at

Department of Archaeology, New Bulgarian University

on the subject „**Urban cemeteries from the era of the Second Bulgarian Empire**”

Dear colleagues,

First of all, I would like to thank the Department of Archeology at NBU for the invitation. I am delighted having the opportunity to enounce on a completed dissertation on a topic that directly or indirectly affects my work as an archaeologist.

Undoubtedly, the proposed subject is a dissertable one, both because of its importance for Bulgarian Medieval archeology and because of the volume of studied (but generally poorly published) urban cmeteries from the period of the Second Bulgarian Empire. However, it is the latter that makes the topic almost impossible to develop at the PhD dissertation level. For me at personal, such a title should not have been provided for the thesis, but the dissertation should have been dedicated to the cemeteries of one of the urban centers, for example Kaliakra, to whose research the PhD student made a personal contribution. It is this difficulty that has largely determined the proposed dissertation to be of a generalizing and historiographic nature, but in most cases not to offer a contact analysis of the database, with the exception of some centers such as Kaliakra, Anevsko Kale, etc. The problem of choosing the subject would not be such one if the objectives of the study were directly reflected in the title, something that is no longer subject to comment.

Before expressing my final opinion about the dissertation, I will pay attention to the individual parts of the research and to some problematic and contributing moments in it . The Introduction begins with a lengthy exposition presenting various problems and features of the city of the Second Bulgarian Kingdom. Given the nature of the topic, I believe that it is unnecessarily long, and if the PhD student had the desire to present this necessary summary, in his opinion, it would be good if it was accompanied by a full use of the literature concerning the problem.

The goal presented in the introduction: "the organization and arrangement of the literature published so far" would hardly be accepted as the main one at first glance, until the further reading of the dissertation shows that the historiographical approach is indeed the main one for the research. The chronological scope is classically set within the framework of Bulgarian political history, although it is obvious that such punctuality is unattainable and I would say undesirable for an archaeological matter. The territorial scope of the topic is more vaguely formulated, where present Bulgarian territory is obviously taken as the leading one. This is not a problem as long as the emphasis is on the study of the problem in Bulgaria, but for some areas there is a lack of differentiation of the cemeteries as they are not only part of Bulgarian but also of Byzantine cities.

In general, the introduction also lacks a formulation of the tasks and methods that will be used to achieve the set of goals. The source base that was used is also not specified one. This leaves an impression of inadequacy and I would recommend these problems to be fixed in the future publication of research.

Traditionally, the First chapter presents an overview of the studies. Like the introduction, it begins again with the presentation of the problem about the medieval city in the native scientific literature, covering as many as five pages. Although I believe that this review has no place here, if the PhD student still insists that it should remain, it would be good for the future publication of thesis to be supplemented with research on the problem of the medieval city of the last twenty years. There are no shortage of good or bad publications.

The separation of the summaries in the Archaeological Discoveries and Excavations series (ADE) as a source background is justified one, although, in my opinion, Philip Petrunov has burdened them with too much importance, especially those, being published before 2006. In general, I may say that the survey of studies is a correct one, but it lacks a systematic presentation of research on the topic according to any guiding principle - chronological, territorial or otherwise. In addition, the chapter would definitely benefit if the literature cataloged by the PhD student were presented in full with the corresponding overall analysis here. It is possible that this is precisely why Ph. Petrunov preferred not to burden the text with information presented in the Catalogue.

The Second chapter is the largest one as it presents the empirical material - the urban cemeteries of the Second Bulgarian Empire as direct subjects of investigation. This implies the

inevitable identification of some gaps, with the indication of which I hope, I might help the PhD student in the future publication of his study.

Regarding the part about Veliko Tarnovo, there are no references in the descriptions of the city. In addition, the formulation that "the homes of the boyars and high clergy, as well as many churches and garrison buildings" have been located on Trapezitsa Hill is a reflection of old, almost Renaissance interpretations and does not correspond to the recent results of excavations during the last fifteen years. However, a more significant problem I see is that most of this section is a description of the city with its elements, and the summary information about the cemeteries is no more than ten (10) lines.

For example, the cemeteries of Anevsko Kale are presented in far more details and more rationally. i.e., there is an imbalance in the presentation of individual urban cemeteries, which does not correspond to the available information. Regarding Anevsko Kale, I should also point out that on Table III the necropolis around Church No. 3 is placed inside the fortress, but in reality it is situated within the suburb below.

Among other remarks, I can point out that at Anchialos no differentiation was made between the cemeteries studied. Without a doubt, Bdin is one of the most important centers of the Second Bulgarian Empire, but this does not explain why almost five pages are devoted to it, while in fact there is information on only a few graves mentioned in two lines. I also do not think it is right to unite two important and researched centers such as the fortress "Gradat" near Batoshevo and the one in the town of Prechista next to the village of Gradnitsa under the rubric "Gabrovo". There are published plans for both of them, so their presentation on the board with not particularly informative photos is superfluous, especially since for Gradnitsa it is the fortress itself, and not, as written below, Kazandzhyska luka, actually the suburb next to the river.

Among my notes is the lack of explanation for the "deposition" of flints on the deceased from the Kastritsi grave. It is appropriate to note whether it is a question of covering with tribulum (Grain threshing tool) or another rite. I am also surprised that Philip Petrunov did not use V. Grigorov's monograph about the Krasen Kale fortress. The identification of Kran with the fortress "Kaleta" next to the present city can hardly be accepted, and the presentation of the necropolis inside the fortress on the Plate is wrong one. It is again at the foot of the unfortified suburb. In the part concerning Shumen on p. 122 there are incorrectly inserted or unrelated paragraphs about Tarnovo and Cherven.

The Third Chapter examines cemeteries as part of the structure of the Medieval city. Obviously, it is the analytical one part of the dissertation. With regard to its introductory part, I will only add that the "separation according to social and professional principle" of neighborhoods in the cities of the Second Bulgarian Empire can hardly be defended and is rather a transfer of foreign models.

The chapter is short, a generally successful attempt has been made to synthesize information such as the state and processes of the appearance and development of cemeteries in the urban environment. However, the short narrative is dominated by the generalization of individual urban centers and no comprehensive analysis is attempted comparing them.

The Fourth Chapter of the work examines elite graves and the associated burial facilities. I consider the introductory part presenting the practices of royal graves to be too long, especially since it largely reflects the work of A. Vassiliev from 1948. Otherwise, the idea of examining this problem in its entirety is appropriate. The observations about Tarnovo and its role in the spread of these practices are also correct.

With its thirty three pages, this chapter betrays Ph. Petrunov's purposeful interest in the problem. The knowledge of the subject and related literature is good, and I can say that this is the most complete informative compilation on the graves of the elite up to date. The analysis of the data on similar burials from Kaliakra also makes a significant contribution. However, the exposition is rather descriptive, lacks a clear conclusion, and lacks an analysis of some certain aristocratic graves, such as those from Church No. 2 in Drastar. That is, the chapter is a contribution, but needs some reworking before future publication.

The Conclusion, despite some iteration with the text as a whole, has successfully summarized the issues presented and the conclusions of the PhD student in dissertation. Its ending is a statement of contributions, which I'm not sure if that's the best place or if it should be presented in a different way.

The bibliography attached to the dissertation is probably the most complete one on this subject in Bulgarian scientific literature and shows a good knowledge of the issues and a very careful use of the ADE series. It is noteworthy that there is a lack of publications on urban cemeteries from the Byzantine Commonwealth, the analysis of which would place the Bulgarian monuments within the background of their development and influences and would contribute to the contribution of the work.

The Catalog is undoubtedly the most voluminous part of the dissertation. The presentation in it of systematized data on study, ritual and scientific bibliography concerning very large circle of monuments from Bulgaria makes its character a contributive one. Apparently, it complements the Second Chapter, which explains some gaps in it, as well as partial overlaps for some sites. However, some problematic points should be pointed out in relation to it. The unbalanced presentation of informative characteristic of the Second Chapter is also observed here. The chronological presentation of studies concerning the cemeteries makes it difficult to summarize the data, which necessitated the creation of a separate Table - Appendix 5. That is, a historiographical approach is applied in the catalog. At some sites such as Trapezitsa, for example, the presentation of the studies over years does not allow to separate the cemeteries, which, for example, in the Northern sector are three in number. Some minor errors and omissions have been made. Thus, one of the cemeteries on the slope of Momina's fortress in Tarnovo is not included, and the Northern sector of Trapezitsa is unclear why it is divided into two - I.7.4 and I.7.7. The same can be said for Church No. 8 and Monastery "St. Yoan Rilski" on Trapezitsa. It is also not clear why a mixed approach was chosen when presenting Tarnovo - first the suburbs, then Trapezitsa and Tsarevets and finally the suburbs again.

The appendixes are clear and usable ones. The drawings of Appendix No. 2 representing the cemetery of Church No. 2 in Kaliakra can also be considered a personal contribution. The structuring of the Catalog in the chosen way also makes necessary the table of Appendix No. 5, which I would otherwise consider redundant.

At the end of my statement, I am obliged to make some general remarks on the dissertation. First of all, from a stylistic point of view, I do not consider the writing in the title, but also in the work, "II Bulgarian Empire" to be appropriate one. In this sense, the expression "Era of the Second Bulgarian Empire" is also incorrectly used. This is a period of the medieval era according to historical nomenclature, and while it may be a way for Philip Petrunov to show his commitment, the use of the correct terminology is a required one.

Among the important notes that I will repeat from the text above is that the presentation of the cemeteries in the catalog and in the text of the second chapter should have as a guiding principle the topography and the connection with a certain church or part of the city, and not be based on the chronology of their study, although the latter fits the historiographical approach to the subject.

The second chapter lacks direct references to the Plates and Tables, but for me it is more important in future publication one to shift the emphasis to the cemeteries themselves and not to their environment - the cities. In addition, the whole focus of the dissertation is in the examination of the cemeteries in the city, and not so much as funerary ritual and burial facilities. In addition, the whole focus of the dissertation is in the examination of the cemeteries in the city, and not so much as funerary ritual and burial facilities. There is nothing wrong with that, but this line of research should have been better articulated in the introduction. The mix between historiographical emphasis and contact material is at times highly uneven and contradicts the title. This creates a certain bipolarity in the dissertation and prevents it from achieving not structural (which it has), but semantic integrity.

A few specific errors and omissions should also be pointed out. The inclusion of the Pernik cemeteries as "urban" is largely unacceptable. Philip Petrunov himself indicated that they were "dug in" in the already abandoned city and date from the period when the fortress was abandoned. In fact, they are related to the settlement displaced at the foot of the hill, which has already lost its urban status, at least because it is unfortified.

The inclusion of the cemetery next to the village of Trudovets, district of Botevgrad, as one of the cemeteries of Bozhenishki Urvich fortress is unacceptable. It stands 6.2 km in a straight line from this generally small fortress and obviously could not have been used for its graveyard. The PhD student also made such a mistake by mentioning in the text that the so-called "Yantren cemeteries" had a similar function in relation to the Ryakhovets fortress to the present day Gorna Oryahovitsa, and that they were only 800 m from it. He probably meant 8000 m, as they are at least 7.2 km away in a straight line.

The cemetery in the fortress in the locality of Vitata stena next to the village of Zdravkovets, is also omitted one, and I will consider it unimportant, since information about it is difficult to access. However, this is not the case with the necropolis of Debnevo, part of which is obviously from the period of the Second Bulgarian Empire and was published by Ivan Zahariev.

The comments and criticisms made in the text above are largely aimed at improving the dissertation for its future publication. They do not belittle the contributions of the PhD student, whose work is the most complete examination of this issue so far with a mainly historiographic focus. Along with this, however, the study also made contributions regarding the contact

archaeological material, especially regarding the examination of aristocratic graves and the obvious scientific contribution with the analysis of the cemetery of Kaliakra.

The abstract of the dissertation corresponds to its content and presents it fully. I consider part of the nine contributions mentioned at the end to be completed tasks related to the achievement of the set goals and therefore I find them redundant. The specified publications meet the requirements for obtaining the educational and scientific degree of doctor. From them, I have excluded the messages presented in the ADE series, which I accept only as a reflection of the PhD student's personal participation in the field research of the topic.

In its current form, the proposed work is complete and usable. It is distinguished by informativeness and has appropriate visual representation. The contributions of the dissertation are also visible. On this basis, I propose to the respected scientific commission that Philip Bozhilov Petrunov be awarded the educational and scientific degree "PhD" in professional direction 2.2. History and Archaeology, field of higher education 2. Humanities.

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With high respect

/Assoc. Prof. D. Rabovyanov, PhD/