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**Reliquaries in Bulgaria from the Late
Medieval and the Revival Period**

Summary

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PHILOSOPHY

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The materials are available to those who may be interested at the Administrative Services Department of the Institute of the Art Studies on the 21 Krakra Str.

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RELIQUARIES IN BULGARIA FROM THE LATE MEDIEVAL AND THE REVIVAL PERIOD

I. GENERAL CHARACTERISTICS OF THE DISSERTATION

1. Actuality of the topic and literature review

In recent years, scholars in the various fields of the humanities have focused on issues related to the functioning of the relics, but the “material” aspect of their veneration in Bulgarian Late Medieval and Revival society still remains out of the scope and misunderstood. There is no attempt so far in the scientific literature to collect exhaustively and study the holy remains of saints on the Bulgarian lands from the aforementioned periods, despite the varied data on the cult of the relics and the artifacts related to them. During the Ottoman period in the Bulgarian lands the holy remains of the saints, enshrined more often in small containers from precious metals, were an important element in the religious life of Orthodox communities. The variety of evidences and a number of preserved reliquaries, which are known nowadays, are the base of this dissertation. The main goal is to examine the role of relics by focusing on reliquaries, their artistic features and the Bulgarians’ attitude to them after the fall of the Second Bulgarian Kingdom at the very end of the fourteenth century until the end of the nineteenth century.

In modern Bulgarian studies special attention is paid to important theoretical issues related to the terminology and the role of the relics in forming the liturgical practices, church architecture and sacred topography in the urban space. Among the Bulgarian scholars, the interest in the reliquaries dates back to the very beginning of the twenty century, but in the 1980s the first specific studies appeared on their shape, decoration and semantic features. It was Elena Genova who raised the questions about the function of artifacts, introduced a huge number of reliquaries in scientific circulation, and most importantly, outlined basic principles

in their decoration and form. She dedicated special studies to individual sacred objects such as the reliquary kept in the German Monastery near Sofia and the one of unknown origin kept in the Regional museum of History in Pernik. Particularly interesting are the studies on the icon-reliquary of the Virgin and the coffin with the relics of St John of Rila, to which Elka Bakalova and Ivanka Gergova dedicated their own studies. A particular place in the Bulgarian scientific literature have the reliquaries that were stored into the museum collections in Bulgaria after the First World War that have been studied by Ralitsa Rousseva. For this dissertation of particular importance are also the recently discovered and published archaeological materials, which highlight the veneration of relics during the Second Bulgarian Kingdom, published by Konstantin Totev, Nadezhda Boteva, Lyudmila Doncheva-Petkanova.

It should be emphasized here that in the last few years the interest in this problematic field has been raised also among the art historians from other Balkan countries neighboring Bulgaria. Their research has helped build a broader context for the functioning and popularity of the Balkans' relics. Nenad Makulević and Vuk Dautović focus on this type of cult objects in Serbia, and Eli Lucesca in Macedonia, while Anna Balian and Yota Ikonomaki – Papadopoulos pay special attention to the reliquaries in the monastery and museum collections in Greece.

Recent studies on the cult of relics and reliquaries in Byzantium and Western Europe have important role for building the methodology of the study. In them the scholars emphasize on the “material” aspect of relics' veneration and reliquaries as shown in the studies of Holger Klein and Cynthia Hahn. PhD theses focusing on Byzantine reliquaries are also written by Bradley Hostletter and Mabi Angar.

2. Subject, object and scope of research

The subject of this study are the reliquaries kept in the monastery collections, the treasures of the parish churches and the museum collections spread on the territory of modern Bulgaria. It is necessary to clarify that the attention is focused only on those of them, which can

be defined as local production or have proven to have functioned on the Bulgarian lands, and we will not consider the artifacts brought from abroad after the end of the nineteenth century, stored in some museum or private collections in Bulgaria. The latter would be used only as comparative materials. The highlighted geographical frame is imposed for practical reasons related to the accessibility of the studied objects, which allows a better opportunity for a precise analysis. Without being exhaustive, the thesis includes all reliquaries available for investigation known from publications, written sources and archives as well as field studies.

The chronological framework of the study is defined by the nature of the material itself. Indeed, some written sources and publications give information about reliquaries located in different parts of the Bulgarian lands until the seventeenth century. However, among them are preserved the miniature reliquary of St George the New martyr from Sofia dated in 1593 and the coffin with the relics of St John of Rila, made at the beginning of the fifteenth century but with significant interventions in the nineteenth century. Most of the known reliquaries and written sources, showing various aspects of the cult of relics among the Bulgarians, however, have been attested for the Revival period. This requires the focus of the study to be on the eighteenth and the nineteenth centuries.

3. Purpose and expected results of the research

The main purpose of the dissertation is to examine the reliquaries of the Bulgarian lands from the Ottoman and Revival period, presenting various aspects of their functioning – their role in the liturgical practices and the personal piety of worshipers; the symbolism of their decoration and form; their artistic features as metalworks. As far as possible the place of each artifact in the history of the monastery or church for which it was intended has been explored. Of secondary importance are the issues related to the identification and outlining the peculiar features of the goldsmith centers that produced the reliquaries. The dissertation focuses mainly on the material aspects of the veneration of the cult of relics in the Late Medieval and the

Revival society, and therefore the theoretical issues such as the formation of sacred space, their role in the ruler's ideology of medieval Christian states, and their role in Christianity and Christianization which have already been discussed in the Bulgarian literature are less attested.

4. Methodology of the research

The main method in this dissertation is that of the art historical research by documenting and cataloguing the artifacts, analyzing them through comparative and formal analysis, as well as iconographic analysis, where it is necessary. The interdisciplinary approach was chosen in the analytical part of the thesis.

II. STRUCTURE AND CONTENTS OF THE DISSERTATION

1. Chapter One. The role of relics during the Late Medieval and the Revival period

The first chapter aims to outline the general context into which the relics of the saints on Bulgarian lands during the Ottoman and Revival period were “dwelling” and presents systematically various aspects of the veneration of the holy remains based mainly on written sources.

It seems that the holy remains of the saints occupy a special place in the life of the Bulgarians between fifteenth and nineteenth centuries. On the one hand, this was undoubtedly inherited from the medieval traditions in veneration of the relics that were created diligently by the medieval Bulgarian rulers and the Church. On the other hand, they played a specific role in strengthening the Christianity from the end of the fourteenth century to the end of the nineteenth century. In the nineteenth century, relics played an important role in stabilizing Christian communities in the European part of the Ottoman Empire too. Initially, this was accomplished by highlighting the many sacred parts of the bodies of saints who lived during the Early

Christian or the medieval period, but also those who gained their martyrdom after the Ottoman invasions. Later, with the emergence of national ideas, the relics of the saints were no less important factor in shaping the identity of the Balkan nations. However, throughout all these centuries, relics and other sacred objects have continued to occupy an important place in the religious life of the Bulgarians, and the ways of their veneration are clear enough evidence of the personal piety of the laity and clergy.

The beginning of this chapter briefly overviews the personal piety in cult of relics during the First and Second Bulgarian Kingdom based on the written sources and archaeological material. The rest of the chapter concerns the impact of relics after the fall of the last medieval Bulgarian capital Turnovo in 1393 until the end of nineteenth century. Different kinds of written sources reveal, albeit fragmentary, the veneration of saints' relics and their significant role in the religious life of the Bulgarians in this period. Thus, it seems that from the very beginning of the Ottoman period, the Christians showed a special attitude towards the bodies of the new martyrs, the most important for the Bulgarians being those of St George the New from Sofia and St Nicholas the New from Sofia. Most probably in the fifteenth century lived St Demetrios from Basarbovo, who was venerated not because of his martyrdom, but because of his hermit deeds, and it is believed that a cult to him has already existed in the 40s of sixteenth century. In 1774 the relics of the saint were taken to Bucharest by General Peter Saltikov where they were placed in the church "Sts Constantine and Helena". Some evidence of the worship of relics during the Revival is also known. Constantine from Sofia, tortured by the Turks around 1844, was not officially canonized as a saint by the Church, but the soil from his grave was considered healing and was taken by the believers.

Highlighting the great number of relics found in the Balkans, we consider several narratives from the Ottoman and Revival period that aimed at showing heavenly protection over the Balkans, despite the difficult times for Christians. The known texts do not miss mentioning the Bulgarian lands. The earliest of these is the collection 'Various Needs' – a compilation by Yakov Kraykov, which appeared in 1571-1572. Some more information on the relics of the

Balkans and the Bulgarian lands is to be found also in the anti-Catholic essay called “Palinodia” by the Ukrainian author Zachary Kopistensky, written in 1621. It is however, the work of Paisius of Hilendar called ‘History’ which gives information about the relics of the Bulgarian saints that gained the most popularity. His work undoubtedly reached many Bulgarians through the numerous transcripts.

The discussion in the chapter continues with revealing the role of travelling monks for the popularity of relics, housed in Bulgarian monasteries, among Christians in the European part of the Ottoman Empire and briefly shows the impact of pilgrimage not only on Rila monastery, but also on Mount Athos and Jerusalem. The written sources inform us also about the role of relics in the personal piety of the Bulgarians, for whom in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries the pilgrimage to the Holy Lands or Mount Athos or some closer located monastery was an important event in their religious life. They are drawn there by the relics kept, which was also underlined in the pilgrimage literature that has been extremely popular over these centuries. But apart from the Holy Lands or Mount Athos, during the Revival period the Bulgarians were mostly attracted to the Rila Monastery due to the important cult sites located around the monastery. One of them is the miraculous icon-reliquary of the Virgin with 32 pieces of relics, but undoubtedly the most popular are the relics of St John of Rila which was much strengthened by the taxidiot movement of the Rila Brotherhood. At present it is still difficult to determine the taxidiot activity of the other monasteries in the Bulgarian lands, but it is clear that such activity was practiced by the Bachkovo monks, as well as by some monasteries located near Sofia.

The chapter ends with a case-study on the issue of consecration of the altar spaces in churches, focusing mainly on eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. In the Bulgarian literature some observations of this subject are generally made only on the earlier periods, such as the Early Christian and the Middle Ages, but it is still not clear how this practice continued after the fall of Second Bulgarian Kingdom. The evidences from the Revival period provide considerable information. Some written sources, such as a manuscript dating from 1881,

entitled “A few notes on the order of consecration of churches by the Vicar of Vidin the Bishop Partenius, transcribed by the priest Abraham” (NBKM 1387), which describes all the stages of laying the relics in the altar of an unconsecrated church. The placement of relics in altars of the churches during the Revival period is judged by several pillars that have been preserved and accessible to serve as the basis of altar masses. At the top of their pedestals holes are drilled for relics or small reliquary.

The data presented in this chapter allows us to conclude that between the fifteenth and nineteenth centuries the holy remains of saints continued to play a significant role in the personal and liturgical life of Christians as much as it was in the Middle Ages. They were an important element in the stabilization of Christianity within the Ottoman Empire, in the everyday life of the worshipers, but also in the establishment of their national identity. Belief in their miraculous power drives their godliness. In addition, the information provided has shed light on a little-discussed issue in the literature, such as the laying of relics at the altars of churches in the Revival period. In this sense, the reliquaries as “mediators” between the holy remains of the saints and the believers are of no less importance than the relics themselves, their form and decoration are directly related to the symbolism of the relics and the various aspects of their veneration.

2. Chapter Two. Reliquaries from the Ottoman period in the Bulgarian Lands: function, form, decoration

In the second chapter special attention is paid to the issues related to the function of the reliquaries in the religious life of the Bulgarians, but also an attempt is made to study the meaning of their form and decoration.

At the beginning of this chapter the known written sources are presented which, albeit fragmentary, make it possible to construct a hypothesis about the production of the reliquaries during the Revival period, as well as who determined their decoration. Considering how rare

are the data on the origin, distribution and acquisition of relics between the fifteenth and nineteenth centuries, it is quite expected that there is almost a complete lack of written sources that could shed light on the ways of producing, perceiving and using reliquaries by the clergy and worshipers. These issues are most clearly outlined with regard to the reliquaries used by the travelling monks (the so-called “taxidiot boxes”). The opinion expressed in the literature that the monks received the taxidiot boxes in their monasteries should not be completely rejected. But, according to the information obtained from a well-known source, such as the Hilendar codex of eighteenth century, which contains data about what the monks took with them, when sent to *taxid*, and, respectively, what they returned in Hilendar monastery. Much more popular seems the practice of taking pieces of relics with them and ordering “containers” at the place of their *taxid* mission. This observation helps not only to analyze the objects themselves, but more importantly, clarifies partially the issue related to their functioning.

One of the most important questions in the analysis of the reliquaries of the Ottoman and Revival period is related to their functioning, which are discussed further in this chapter. During the Late Medieval and Revival period, the function of reliquaries could be separated in three groups. Along with the so-called “taxidiot boxes” that have gained widespread popularity during the eighteenth and the nineteenth centuries, the reliquaries continued to be used in the same way as in the Middle Ages, as a part of important rituals or being available for veneration in churches. However, apart from them, at the end of the nineteenth century boxes imitating the reliquaries appeared. This undoubtedly demonstrates the significant role these sacred objects had for worshipers. These functional features are important especially because they were reflected in the form and decoration of the reliquaries, which were determined by their donors – mainly representatives of the clergy. This is directly related not only to the emergence of this kind of sacred objects and testifies their use during the period, but most importantly, it gives reason to look for a concrete idea and symbolism in their form and decoration. These observations highlight the importance of the reliquaries and their sacred meaning during the Revival period.

Another significant aspect, which has not been thoroughly considered in the literature so far, is the issue of typology of the form of reliquaries and its semantics. In order to outline the problem of the form of the reliquaries, and more precisely, how the form is transformed during the Ottoman period, and especially in the eighteenth and three nineteenth centuries, the principles of the form of the Byzantine reliquaries are exposed briefly. This is due to the observation that it seems that the Byzantine tradition persisted almost to the end of the nineteenth century. It should be reminded that although the local (Byzantine) tradition and the new Western influence intertwined, the veneration of the relics of saints in Byzantium differed sharply from that in the Western Europe. This was observed mostly in the ways that relics were stored and in the access to the relics themselves. As it is well known, in the Byzantine world, immediate contact with the holy remains of saints is an important part of their veneration. This principle remained valid for the relics from the Late Medieval and the Revival period.

Undoubtedly, the most popular form among the reliquaries, which had survived in Bulgaria, is that of the box-casket, as Elena Genova points out in her monograph on the church applied arts in Bulgaria. In this typological group the shape of the lid is the most diverse. It can be flat or slightly convex, covered with a relief decoration, enamel, filigree or paintings on wooden reliquaries. Much more often, however, goldsmiths preferred to make the lids of the boxes protruding, rising in several layers, thus forming a central rectangular area, in which images of saints, scenes or compositions were depicted.

In a separate typological group are considered the reliquaries with an architectural form. Today are known only two reliquaries in the form of church buildings from the Revival period. The first of them belongs to the collection of Bachkovo monastery, preserving part of the skull of an unknown saint, shaped like a church with a centric plan. The second one is in the Etropole monastery “Varovitest”, which has an elongated parallelepiped base and three domes are attached to its lid. It could be assumed that on the Balkans there was a tradition the holy remains of the saints to be kept in reliquaries shaped as an architectural model. In our view, their form has a more general symbolic meaning, which in the context of the Christian Orthodox art could

be seen in an “imitation” of the Holy Sepulchre or in creating the ideal church building associated with Heavenly Jerusalem. In the scholarly literature it is assumed that the “spears” of the Holy Sepulchre interpret quite freely the specific architecture from the early Christian period, relying primarily on the analogue.

Today several examples of hand-shaped reliquaries in Bulgaria are known. Important for the analysis of this group of objects is the observation that the relics in Byzantium were not kept in hand-shaped reliquaries. This practice is typical for Western Europe, and wherever reliquaries this shape occur, it is assumed by researchers that they are influenced by the Western tradition. In the Orthodox part of the Balkans this influence could come from several directions. We should not exclude the possibility for this influence to come from the Adriatic coast to the inner part of the Balkans if we have in mind the active trade relations between some cities in the Bulgarian lands and Dubrovnik. Most likely, however, this influence in the Bulgarian lands comes from Mount Athos which was the most significant Orthodox center on the Balkans during the Ottoman and Revival period, as well as the continuous connections between the major monasteries in Mount Athos, for example Hilandar and Zograph, and the local Orthodox population. The production of cult objects in the form of a hand has a long history. Here are mentioned only some of its most characteristic aspects in the Orthodox Christian art – a small right hand appears both in icons and frescoes, but also it is often used as a motif in folklore art as a decoration of various ritual breads, embroideries, stone decorations.

The book-shaped reliquaries represent another rare type that existed in the Bulgarian lands. The most explored in this part of the study are the taxidiot boxes, which differ from the so far presented reliquaries with their form of a church building or hand. The existence of reliquaries in the form of a codex, as well as the borrowing of elements from the decoration of Gospel’s precious covers, does not seem so “original” if we have in mind that among the Gospel’s metal bindings there is a specific type of box-binding. It has already been observed in the literature that this rare type of binding has a symbolic link with the reliquaries, and both types of church plates are intended to preserve some of the most sacred Christian objects. It is

difficult to trace the extent to which the appearance of this type of reliquary is based on older traditions and whether they are the result of foreign influence, so we have confined ourselves to organizing them into three distinct groups – reliquaries made of silver or wood in codex form; wooden rectangular boxes, dressed in a leather book cover; box-cases, on whose covers there are compositions governed by the principles of ornamental decoration of Gospel's covers.

The rest of this chapter focuses on the decoration of reliquaries and how it is related to the relics' function. In the first group, we consider the images of saints, which appear on the reliquaries. They started appearing in the decoration of the reliquaries, which kept their relics, as early as the tenth century in Byzantium, and over the centuries this trend has been affirmed and became an obligatory element in the decoration of this kind of sacred objects. During the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, the images of the saints continued to occupy an important part in the decoration of the reliquaries with a specific symbolic meaning. Despite that it is logical the image of a saint to be on an object intended for his relics, there are only a few examples, where the inscriptions confirm this. In other cases, it could be assumed that the image of the saint, which in some cases remains the only figural decoration on the reliquary, serves to identify the relics. Studying the function of the images of the saints in the decoration of the reliquaries of the Revival period, it should be noted that sometimes images of saints are included, whose local cults are especially developed.

One of the most important aspects of the relics' veneration is related to the belief in their healing power, which is reflected on the decoration of the taxidiot boxes. This gives us a reason, apart from the images of the saints whose relics are placed in the reliquaries or those with strong local cult, to distinguish another group of images, symbolically connected to the belief in the healing power of the relics. In the decoration of several reliquaries, images of saints healers and those worshipped because of their ability to cure diseases are included, such as St Panteleimon, St Cyrus and St John, St Haralambos. For their symbolic role in the decoration of the reliquaries implies the fact that their relics are not placed in them. In addition, in support to this assumption, one more case can be considered, in which the healing power of the relics is illustrated not by

images of saints, but by the composition “The Virgin Zoodochos Pigi”, which directly “demonstrates” to the laity the possibility of healing through a miracle, obtained by strong faith and piety.

In a separate group are considered the images of saints who are patrons of monasteries and churches. The decoration of the reliquaries is dedicated primarily to their purpose in religious life, which is the reason for the complexity of taxidiot boxes’ decoration, which included images and scenes with a specific symbolic and functional meaning. In this type of reliquaries the images of the saints, whose relics are located within, occupies such an important place as the patron saint of the church or monastery to which they belonged. This feature of the decoration of the reliquaries used by the traveling monks forms another large group of images and scenes, whose main purpose is to mark a specific place.

In the monasteries, there was special veneration to those saints whose relics were kept there, especially if the saints were hermits. When it comes to the reliquaries in the territory of Bulgaria, the most significant case is the tribute to St John of Rila among the monks of Rila monastery. Therefore, it is not surprising that in the decoration of the reliquaries from the collection of the Rila monastery, the image of St John of Rila occupies an obligatory place in most of the cases. Thus, apart from reminding of the healing power of the relics in the taxidiot boxes, the place to which they belong and from which the traveling monk himself comes from is also marked.

With the depiction of a particularly venerated cult object several reliquaries from Bachkovo monasteries are also distinguished in their decoration, in which an important place occupies the image of the Virgin Hodegetria. This choice by the monks is most likely due to the presence of the miraculous icon of the Virgin Hodegetria, which is placed for worshiping in the main church of Bachkovo monastery. It is known that this miraculous icon is extremely popular among the worshipers during the Revival period, which led to the Bachkovo monastery being associated primarily with this icon.

Thus, the cult objects that are important to the monasteries, such as the coffin with the relics of St John of Rila, and the miraculous icon of Bachkovo find their place, especially when it comes to containers keeping miraculous and capable of curing parts, but also involved in the developed and established monastery practices for attracting pilgrims.

With a specific functional meaning in the decoration of the reliquaries are differentiated the compositions and scenes with liturgical character. The Eucharist is illustrated by some of the most typical compositions for the altar space. In several taxidiot boxes from the collection of Rila Monastery in the decoration is chosen the Deesis composition. The iconographic variant Christ the High Priest, blessing with both hands, expresses the direct connection between the liturgy and the Christ sacrifice, which is indicated as a reason by the researchers for its frequent use in the mural decoration of the altars during the eighteenth and the nineteenth centuries. In addition, the Deesis composition, which appears in the altar space in the mid-Byzantine period, is considered both with an eschatological and Eucharistic meaning. During the Revival period the composition was depicted relatively rarely in the altar space, but it was present almost obligatory in the iconography being the center of the templons. Bearing in mind that the altar space of any church is perceived as a symbol of heaven, where God resides, and of the Paradise where the saints are, makes it possible to assume that the Deesis, included in reliquaries' decoration, aims to outline a miniature of the sacred space, marked mostly by the presence of the relics, but also outlined by the selection of images.

Apart from the different variants of the Deesis composition, the Eucharistic theme is illustrated by the Old Testament iconography, as is the scene of Abraham's Hospitality. The Trinity is represented in the reliquaries and through the composition of the New Testament Trinity. Such examples can again be found in the collection of Rila monastery. Another theme with a Eucharist meaning, which found place in the decoration of the reliquaries, is the composition Christ the True Vine. The images of the evangelists are found on their own in the decoration of several reliquaries, accompanied by their symbols and placed in the corners of

the rectangular boxes. It reminds, on the one hand, the decoration of Gospels and crosses, and, on the other hand, they are all directly related to the artistic ornamentation of the altar space.

Bearing in mind that most of the cases considered here are taxidiot boxes with specific purpose of worship, it remains to be found what the liturgical relation between the image of Christ and the relics of saints is. This gives rise to the assumption that the use of compositions and scenes which directly or allegorically represent the Eucharist reflect precisely the liturgical function of that type of reliquaries. It should also be stressed that the examples in which these compositions are involved are closely related to the monastery environment where the liturgical use of relics was probably well known. The above-mentioned topics are the most direct way to illustrate the idea that the reliquaries of the travelling monks are used as small portable altars.

Finally, the ornaments and architectural elements are considered, which take obligatory place in the decorations of reliquaries. The place of ornaments in the decoration of the reliquaries is subordinate to their shape; they serve to emphasize it. Ornaments, which are used in the decoration not only of the reliquaries, but also of the other church plates, in the icons and frescoes from the Revival period, symbolically represent Paradise. Another meaning can be added to the one of symbolism – that of floral ornaments in the decoration of the reliquaries, especially those present next to the relics, which, according to the researchers, symbolize the sweet smell that emerges from the relics of the saints.

3. Chapter Three. Reliquaries and goldsmithing during the Ottoman period

The third chapter of the dissertation deals with the artistic features of the reliquaries in Bulgaria from the Ottoman and Revival period. The stylistic analysis provides additional information about the movement of artifacts from one place to another and outlines approximately the stages of their veneration. This is particularly true for the situation in the Bulgarian lands during the eighteenth and the nineteenth centuries, a huge number of objects date since then, which helps to build up a hypothesis about the contacts between the monasteries

and their convents, about the activities of the travelling monks and all these elements show very clearly the popularity of relics among the worshipers. Furthermore, the possession of church plates, manufactured in a particular goldsmith center and sometimes even by a certain goldsmith may have been a matter of prestige. No doubt the Church, as the main guarantor of the goldworks, intended exclusively for liturgical use, had a major impact on the development of the local goldsmith centers, and also determined the scale of their production, as well as their quality and distribution.

In order to define the artistic context of the artifacts which are the focus of this dissertation, it is necessary to pay attention to the circumstances that had an impact on the formation of the common artistic tendencies. Goldsmithing from the Ottoman and Revival period developed in constant contacts between the Islamic and Christian cultures and was renovated during the eighteenth and the nineteenth centuries through the strong Western influences that affected the life in the Ottoman Empire. Apart from the “outside”, the formation of the stylistic features of the silverworks during the aforementioned periods were affected by the existing links between the different goldsmith centers. They are carried out through the transfer of the silverworks or through the journeys of goldsmiths when filling orders, but also by the movement of goldsmiths with educational purposes.

The renovation of the goldsmith art during the eighteenth and the nineteenth centuries, when adopting new elements from Baroque and Rococo art, was performed synchronously with the overall reformation of the Orthodox Christian art. In the repertoire of ornaments and iconography, used by the goldsmiths, were enrolled elements such as rockers, shells, abundance horns, vases and idols with lavish flower bouquets, placed under arches, garlands of flowers, intertwined with twisting strips. At the earliest this is done in the goldsmiths’ workshops, located in the capital of the Ottoman empire. It is known that in the Galata district of Constantinople workshops were opened by goldsmiths and watchmakers from Geneva, as well as from other Western European cities. No less important for the implementation of these

contacts with the achievements of European culture are imported items, church plates were no exception.

The new economical circumstances provide opportunities for the emergence of goldsmith workshops in cities and small villages in the other parts of the Ottoman empire. However, in the Bulgarian lands the “old” goldsmith centers keep their leading role at least in terms of the manufactured church plates, which is most likely strengthened by the fact that they are also metropolitan residences. In order to analyze specific problems related to the artistic context in which the reliquaries appear, attention is paid on those which give reliable data about their origin as pieces of art. During the Revival period there were four major goldsmith centers, which manufactured reliquaries. These were Sofia, Vratsa, Vidin/Lom and Pazardzhik. Of course, the reliquaries were also produced in the smaller goldsmith centers, such as Gabrovo, Tryavna, Koprivshitsa and Panagyurishte, but the lack of published comparative material makes it impossible to place them in a broader context. For the same reasons the production of Turnovo’s goldsmith center is not analysed. The reliquaries of goldsmiths from Turnovo known up to now are dated in too wide chronological boundaries, which makes it difficult to draw a definite picture of this goldsmith center, complicated further by the lack of published sources.

III. CONCLUSION

Analyzing the reliquaries within the framework of one study allows to outline one more aspect of the Christian history of the Bulgarian lands between the fifteenth and nineteenth centuries and shows how the sacred topography was transformed after the Ottoman invasions of the Balkans. The collected material, as well as the information obtained from the written sources and archives, form several “nuclei” in the Bulgarian lands with a lot of holy remains of saints. It seems that the old Bulgarian capital, at least in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, continued to exist as an important Christian center as in the Middle Ages, but with the difference that the relics are now housed in the monasteries located close to Turnovo and not in the city

itself. The area of Plovdiv, another metropolitan residence in the Bulgarian lands, is similarly shaped. Undoubtedly, however, Sofia is emerging as a place protected by the most saints whose relics were kept not only in the monasteries located near the city, but also in the parish churches.

The situation with relics from the territory of the Diocese of Sliven and along the Black Sea remains unclear. At present, we do not have enough sources, documents, or reliquaries that would provide a solid base for construction of a working hypothesis for the sacred topography of these parts of Bulgaria. The territory of the Diocese of Dorostol-Cherven is also “empty”. The state of this diocese was documented in 1903 which shows that by that time not a single reliquary was kept there. This may find its explanation in the historical circumstances. The territory of modern northeastern Bulgaria was densely depopulated very quickly after the Ottoman conquests, and later these lands were populated with Muslims. This may partly explain the lack of any reliquary found on the territory of this diocese immediately after the Liberation, but also the radical changes of the sacred topography. The primary place of the medieval Bulgarian capital, Turnovo, as a Christian center with many relics of saints, was transferred to Sofia during the Ottoman period.

From the collected material, a small group of reliquaries is formed, which were located or are still being kept in small parish churches. Some of them belonged to travelling monks who most likely died in these villages or small towns, and then their belongings were not collected in the monastery where they served. It still remains unclear the question of the presence of reliquaries in small parish churches in cities or villages distant from the metropolitan residences, which were produced specifically for churches and did not belong to traveling monks.

IV. APPENDICES

The information from the written sources, archive documents and publications of the reliquaries make it possible to compile a list of relics, found in the Bulgarian lands between the fifteenth and nineteenth centuries (Appendix 1) and to draw a map presenting the topography

of relics' collections on the territory of modern Bulgaria (Appendix 3). The data on the goldsmiths who worked in Pazardzhik and Plovdiv until 1614 are displayed in the table (Appendix 2).

V. CATALOGUE

The dissertation is accompanied by a catalogue, which contains 95 reliquaries organized by monastery or church collections and arranged chronologically. Each reliquary is presented with data on the date, size, material, brief description, bibliography, archive sources and photographs. First, the precisely dated objects are presented, followed by those dated to their stylistic features in broader chronological periods. It should be noted that the catalogue does not include the coffin with the relics of St John of Rila, the icon-reliquary “The Holy Virgin Mary Osenovitsa” and the ark of the relics kept in the German Monastery, to which numerous publications are devoted and have been sufficiently discussed in the literature. Outside the scope of this catalogue remains the second icon-reliquary “The Holy Virgin Mary Portaritsa”, also kept in the Rila monastery. No research is yet devoted to it, but it does not find a place here, as its peculiarities in artistic design distinguish it too much from other artifacts. This interesting sacred object needs a thorough and independent study that goes beyond the tasks of the dissertation.

VI. CONTRIBUTION OF THE DISSERTATION

- This is the first attempt to study systematically the reliquaries on the Bulgarian lands from the Ottoman and Revival period.
- This is the first attempt to systematize the known written sources related to the veneration of relics and reliquaries between the fifteenth and the nineteenth centuries.

- Information was collected about the production and function of reliquaries.
- A typology was created of the reliquaries, according to their form with a focus on their meaning.
- We suggested systematization of the main issues related to the decoration of the reliquaries and its semantics.
- A contribution is the compiled catalogue with all known reliquaries, available for examination, known from the scholarly literature or archive documents. Their total number is 95. The objects are presented in the context of the collections to which they belong. A part of these artifacts have not been published so far.

VII. LIST OF PUBLICATIONS

- Boykina, D. Several Reliquaries by Goldsmiths from Sofia. – *Art Studies Quarterly*, 4, 2016, 37-43.
- Boykina, D. Two Reliquaries from Troyan Monastery in Bulgaria. – *Balcanoslavica*, vol. 47, 1, 2018, 105-118.
- Boykina, D. There was shining something like a star – an unpublished reliquary. – In: *Marginlia. Art Readings 2018*. Sofia, 2019, 321-340.