

## OPINION

For the dissertation for awarding the educational and academic degree "DOCTOR" in the academic specialty "Art Studies and Fine Arts" 8.1.

on "RELIQUARIES IN BULGARIA FROM THE LATE MIDDLE AGES AND THE REVIVAL PERIOD"

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### INFORMATION ABOUT THE DISSERTATION AND THE ABSTRACT

The dissertation submitted for defense consists of an introduction, 3 chapters, a conclusion, 3 annexes, a catalog and a bibliography, with a volume of 453 pages. The main method of work is that of art research by documenting and cataloging the objects in question, analyzing them through comparative and formal analysis, as well as iconographic analysis.

The INTRODUCTION (p.2-16) contains four paragraphs that combine the subject matter and the chronological scope of the study; literature review; terminology and related problems. Darina Boykina clearly outlines the main purpose of trying to independently study the reliquaries on the Bulgarian lands from the Ottoman period, considering different aspects of their functioning - their role in the liturgical practices and personal piety of believers, the role of the semantics of decoration and form, and, as far as possible, a study of each object in the history of the monastery or church for which it was intended. In the presented text, the doctoral student has covered almost all the research relevant to the topic. The structure of the introduction, in my opinion, is a little heavy, as it contains problems that require consideration in other parts of the work.

CHAPTER ONE (pp. 16-39) is entitled "The Role of Relics in the Late Middle Ages and the Revival Period." It includes written information about holy relics and the miracles associated with them, as well as their role for personal piety. A brief overview of the role of holy relics in the Middle Ages is given. The doctoral student's effort to present the hitherto known information on carrying relics of saints during the Late Middle Ages and the Revival Period, reverence for the new martyrs, and the identification of major worship centers should be admired. In addition, the doctoral student draws our attention to the order of services of the consecration of churches during the Late Middle Ages and the Revival Period and the unwavering requirement to place relics in the altar space, and specifically at the heart of the Holy See, following the Euchologion of the period, following the period of iconoclasm. As a logical transition to the second chapter of the dissertation is Boikina's conclusion about the essential role of relics as "mediators" between the relics of saints and believers.

CHAPTER TWO "RELIQUARIES ON THE BULGARIAN LANDS DURING THE OTTOMAN PERIOD: FUNCTION, FORM AND DECORATION" (p. 37-92) consists of two paragraphs, formulated in the title of the chapter.

First of all, Boykina highlights the functional meaning of the term "reliquary", such as a repository for relics or an arc for relics. The doctoral student noted that "... these boxes and containers often

start to possess the characteristics of the sacred materials they store, but the presence of relics in them is absolutely necessary to justify their existence."

With the development of the taxidiotis movement a new functional group of taxidiotis boxes used by traveling monks is being formed. Boykina notes the existence of another functional group of reliquaries from the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, in which no relics were placed. I would like to point out here that this so-called "pseudo-reliquary" group existed in the Middle Ages and was especially popular in the 13<sup>th</sup> -14<sup>th</sup> centuries. The role of these expensive items as workmanship and material is primarily for personal piety and demonstration of social status.

The second paragraph addresses the semantics of form and typology of the reliquary. To begin with, Boykina draws attention to the principles by which the form of reliquaries, which hold the relics of saints, is subordinated to the Byzantine world and at the same time makes important comparisons with Western European monuments of the same period. Offering a number of examples from Bulgaria, the doctoral student concludes that the Byzantine manner in which relics remained fully accessible to believers continued to be relevant in the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries. The most common relics resemble the shape of miniature sarcophagi decorated with various techniques. This explains the standard prismatic housing, combined with a variety of lids in the layout - flat, semi-cylindrical, cross-shaped pyramids, etc.

In addition, the relatively less common reliquaries from the Revival Period according to Boykina are typologically divided into three groups. The first one – reliquaries with architectural form, she correctly marks, that "...carry a more general symbolic meaning, which in the context of Christian art can be sought in the direction of "imitation" of the Holy Sepulcher or in the creation of the ideal image of the temple which is connected with the Heavenly Jerusalem". The second group of reliquaries in the form of a hand were under West European influence and, according to Boykina, reached Bulgarian lands from Mount Athos. The third very rare group is the book reliquaries.

The decoration of the reliquaries is thematically divided into three groups: images of saints; patrons and mentors and compositions and scenes with a liturgical meaning. Finally, the ornamental decoration and architectural elements that complement the decoration of the monuments under consideration in the manuscript are examined.

CHAPTER TREE. "RELIQUARIES IN GOLDSMITH'S ART DURING THE OTTOMAN PERIOD" (p. 92-120) aims to trace the artistic characteristics of the reliquaries found on Bulgarian lands from the Ottoman Period. During the National Revival Period, four major centers were set up to "produce" reliquaries. Those were Sofia, Vratsa, Vidin / Lom and Pazardzhik. Boykina examines famous reliquaries from each of the centers with distinctive stylistic features of the individual masters.

The dissertation presents the results of the doctoral student's visits to churches and monasteries on the territory of Bulgaria. The information from the collected sources and archival materials is reflected in a list that includes relics of saints and relics (Appendix 1) from the Bulgarian lands during the Ottoman Period and a map presenting the topography of the reliquaries within the contemporary borders of Bulgaria (Appendix 3). Information on the goldsmiths who worked in Pazardzhik and Plovdiv until 1614 are presented in a table (Appendix 2).

Included are 45 color and black and white photographs, illustrating individual examples covered in the dissertation.

CATALOG. (p. 180-453) The dissertation is accompanied by a comprehensive catalog, which presents the available research material. It contains 95 catalog texts, in which each reliquary is presented with data on the date, size, material, origin and location, where necessary, description,

literature, archival sources and photographs. The reliquaries covered by the study are presented in collections, and in each of them the objects are arranged chronologically. The catalog will be particularly useful for researchers working on this subject.

The abstract is developed in accordance with the requirements, it clearly and comprehensively states the concepts of the doctoral student.

#### ACADEMIC CONTRIBUTIONS

Darina Boykina has marked six academic contributions in the abstract. They reflect the serious work that has been done in writing the thesis. These contributions are convincingly defended and are the result of the individual work of the PhD student.

#### PUBLICATIONS AND PARTICIPATION IN ACADEMIC FORUMS

On the topic of the dissertation Darina Boykina has 3 publications, which meets the requirements of the LDASRB.

#### CONCLUSION

I am convinced that the dissertation contains sufficient scientific results and original contributions that meet the requirements of the Law on the Development of Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria(ZRASRB).

The dissertation shows that doctoral student Darina Yankova Boykina has the competence and skills to engage in academic research.

In view of everything stated above, I give my positive assessment of the dissertation and propose to the honorable academic jury to award the educational and scientific degree "Doctor" of Darina Yankova Boykin in the specialty Art and Fine Arts, professional field 8.1.

14.10.2019

Veliko Tarnovo

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