

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" by Darina Boykina, PhD student at the Institute of Art Studies at the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences with scientific supervisor Corr. Member, Prof. DSc Ivanka Gergova

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The dissertation consists of 453 pages, an introduction, two parts, divided into several chapters, a conclusion, annexes and a catalog. Scientific adviser Art. Prof. Ivanka Gergova. The dissertation contains two chapters, a conclusion, an annex and a catalog.

The dissertation will contribute in the research of the subject, as for the first time an attempt is made for a systematic study, dedicated specifically to reliquaries (repositories) on Bulgarian lands from the Ottoman period. Darina Boykina for the first time attempts to systematize the well-known sources related to the worship of relics from the 15th-19th century. Various aspects of the creation, function, typology and iconography of relics and repositories have been considered. Only those created within the Bulgarian lands during the Ottoman period are analyzed. I would recommend a more careful terminological distinction and use of the terms "repository", "reliquary" and "shrine". The reliquary is a church object that holds the relics of saints. A repository is a liturgical object that contains a relic - e.g. a piece of the cross of Christ, a piece of clothing of a saint, etc. The repository is a church utensil containing more than one relic. In the dissertation, in my opinion, mainly reliquaries are considered.

Part One "General Characteristics of the dissertation / 2 1. Relevance of the topic and status of the studies / 2 2. Object, subject and scope / 3 3. Aims, tasks and expected results / 4 4. Research methodology". The PhD candidate is well versed in the existing literature on the subject as well as recent studies on the cult of relics and reliquaries in Byzantium and Western Europe. At the end of the Chapter I, attention is drawn to one still poorly studied aspect of the worship of relics - the laying on of relics of saints in the altar spaces of the churches during the Late Middle Ages and the Renaissance.

The second part is titled "Reliquaries on the Bulgarian Lands during the Ottoman Period: Function, Form and Decoration"1. Chapter One. The role of relics during the Late Middle Ages and the Revival Period / 5 2. Second chapter. Reliquaries from the Ottoman period in the Bulgarian lands: function, form, decoration / 9 3. Chapter three. The reliquaries of the goldsmith's art during the Ottoman period / 19 ". This part is the essence of the dissertation. Special attention is paid here to the problems related to the function of the reliquaries, the form and the decoration are investigated. The typology of the monuments according to their form has been made and they are classified as: arcs (casket-box), reliquaries with architectural form, hand-shaped, taxidiote boxes - book-shaped.

In this chapter the specificities of the decoration are analyzed and the functional and symbolic role of the images is sought. The first group of figures looks at the images of saints placed on repositories. In a separate group the images of patron-saints and patrons of the monasteries and churches are examined, and in the other - compositions and scenes of liturgical character. Ornamental decoration and architectural elements are also considered.

In the third chapter "Relics in the goldsmith's art during the Ottoman period" the artistic characteristics of the reliquaries on the Bulgarian lands from the Ottoman period are analyzed. The analysis of their stylistic features gives additional information about their movement from one place to another and outlines approximately the different stages of their worship.

According to the collected material, as well as from the written sources, Darina Boykina concludes that several topographic "nuclei" are formed on the Bulgarian lands, in which most relics of saints are concentrated. According to her, at least in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, Tarnovo continued to exist as an important Christian center as well as during the Middle Ages, but with the difference that the relics of the saints are located in the monasteries close to Tarnovo, and not in the city itself. She also considers the Plovdiv area. The study pays special attention to Sofia as a center of new martyrdom which is protected by the greatest number of heavenly patrons.

Particularly useful are the appendixes and the catalog, with monuments being published for the first time. For the first time, the Boykina compiles a catalog of all known reliquaries available for research, known from scientific literature or archival sources. Included in the study are also monuments the whereabouts of which are unknown, which shows Boykina's in-depth work with archives, sources and literature. In the appendixes, on the basis of archival data, a list of relics of saints and relics, located on the Bulgarian lands during the Ottoman period (Appendix 1) and a map representing the topography of the reliquaries in the contemporary borders of Bulgaria (Appendix 3), has been compiled.

The catalog contains 95 catalog articles in which each reliquary is presented with information on dating, dimensions, material, origin and location, where necessary, description, literature, archival sources and photographs. The monuments are presented according to the collections to which they belong. The works included in the study are presented chronologically by collections.

Darina Boykina also has three separate publications in academic journals dedicated to the topic of her dissertation and participation in scientific forums.

I believe that the dissertation fulfills the requirements for a doctorate degree.

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