

OPINION

By Ass. Member of BAS, Prof. Mila Santova, D. Sci.

For the dissertation of Nona Krasteva Petkova

Repousse Covers of the Book of Gospels from the Bulgarian Lands (16th - first half of 18th century)

Dissertation for awarding the educational and academic degree "Doctor" in the Academic Specialty

Art Studies and Fine Arts, 8.1 Art Theory

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Content wise, Nona Petkova's text, presented as a doctorate for acquiring the educational and academic degree "Doctor", lies in a thematic field, which is relatively underdeveloped in the specialized academic texts. The repousse covers of gospels - the object of the study - are a very specific field, the analyzes of which need to be drawn from research and on the characteristics of the gospel itself and its place, in principle, in worship; and on knowledge of iconography operating in a particular period (in this case of the 16th and 17th centuries) and ways of interpreting certain gospel subjects; and on the treatment options of the processed metal (silver) sheet, combined with knowledge of the plastic form.... And more, and more and more ...

I would like to say right away that Nona Petkova did a good job with this difficult task. She has been working for years on gospel-related issues and has many publications. Her current work is, in practice, the first in Bulgarian art studies comprehensive summary of knowledge on this matter and the period under review. In practice, it comes after sufficiently well-known in the native specialized literature, but more or less partial publications developing other more particular problems, such as that by Miyatev dated 1926, and later by M. Ivanov, S. Georgieva and D. Buchinsky or as part of ones whose primary purpose is another – Iv. Sotirov, etc. Even if only on the basis of the incomplete listing of the known names that have written on the subject, the expert in the matter can now draw conclusions about the different preparation and knowledge of those authors, and from there - on the sphere (s) of questions on which each of them accentuates. One way or another, in most previous publications, the gospel covers are one of the problems studied, but not central. It is also worth adding here that a researcher who does not have a background in art cannot always find his/her way in this matter.

In fact, Nona Petkova in her text successfully manages to fill in the gaps missed from

one or another author during the years. The proposed dissertation summarizes from the point of view of an art historian the research done in previous times, enriching the factology, commenting theses and adding interpretations.

It is noteworthy that the text is distinguished by:

- looking at the monuments in a broad historical context, introducing little-known, unused so far in texts on this subject or unknown facts. In the context of such an approach, the monuments are situated in relation to the documented historical reality, however difficult it may be with each monument. Concerning the Chiprovtsi goldsmiths, N. Milev's work on personal and family names of the 17th century may also be useful (Bulgarian personal and family names of the seventeenth century, Proceedings of the Ethnographic Museum, 3 - 4, 1921, p. 14 - 171).

- high degree of completeness - both of the existing bibliography on the topic of the dissertation and of the monuments cited. Given that, as the text points out, important gospel covers have sunk into obscurity in the last thirty years, the completeness of the text itself is an important virtue. In this sense, the one published by D. Drumev Gospel repousse from the village of Kainardzha, Ruse region, offering features that reveal the possibility of being assigned to the (Vrachanski?) center, could probably be a small but useful addition.

- correctness in the presentation of the theses. It is noteworthy that in cases where she does not agree with one or the other thesis already existing in the research area (regarding individual monuments or groups of monuments), the author tries to draw sufficient arguments in favor of her understanding. Not only, but most clearly, this becomes clear in the epistolary "dialogue" with Ivan Sotirov's claims regarding the diffusion of Chiprovtsi goldsmiths, which does not prevent N. Petkova from considering the author's broad input and with due respect for his contributions to the discussed problematics. In this particular case, with this "dialogue", I think that the author's ideas are justified and sufficiently substantiated.

Of course, in a work, sufficiently voluminous in range of parameters, there may be ideas that not everyone agrees with. For me, one such moment is the accentuation of the so-called "typology" on the gospel covers. In the present case, the organization of the material under study (and its corresponding parallels) should rather be defined as a formal classification. Such systematization will, of course, have implications for the attribution of an individual monument or group of monuments, with regard to which type of organization the cover dominates a particular center and the relationship of the monument under study to it. In this sense, the "typology" as the term is used in the work, could rather be one of a group of evidence, rather than a major and / or sole argument. Even the well-known covers from the Sofia Goldsmith's Center, which

generally seem to be most tightly "held" in a single (plastic) concept, can now be proof in this respect, since not all of them (for one reason or another) cover entirely the metalwork of the gospel and / or are made with only one sheet of metal.

From the point of view of a single clear plastic view, as "connecting" the work in a certain goldsmith's center, I also think that a little too categorical is the inclusion of the Tarnovo covers from the church of St. Peter and Paul (1606/1660?) in the parameters of the Chiprovtsi goldsmithing. It is quite different plastic treatment and decorative solutions from the typical for the Chiprovtsi monuments.

Actually, the additions and reflections I have made are within the minimum necessary to turn a text from a simple text into science, for the problems raised there it is natural to discuss. I think that the work of Nona Petkova has all the merits of being included without a doubt under the heading "science". It contributes to the development of knowledge.

I have no doubt that the proposed dissertation of Nona Petkova has all the qualities necessary for a PhD and I propose that she be awarded the educational and academic degree "Doctor".

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