

OPINION

By D.Sc. Peter Kanchev Tsanev

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on the dissertation for acquiring the educational and academic degree **Doctor**,
Professional field 8.1 Theory of Arts

Author: Veselina Kirilova Yoncheva

On the subject:

**PAINTINGS IN THE TEMPLES BUILT AFTER THE LIBERATION TILL
1941 ON THE TERRITORY OF PRESENT-DAY CITY OF SOFIA**

Under the supervision of Prof. Emmanuel Moutafov

The proposed dissertation thesis has a volume of 499 pages, an introduction, five chapters, conclusion and bibliography with 225 titles. A catalogue of 357 pages on the examined monuments is also included. A total of 261 illustrations are attached.

The goals and objectives of the study stated by the author can be summarized as follows:

1. The first aim of the research, which has a historiographical focus, is related to the study of church painting and architecture in Sofia temples built from the Liberation to 1941, including former villages such as Chelopechene, Knyazhevo, Botunets, Vladaya and others within the boundaries of the present-day city of Sofia.

2. The second objective of the dissertation is aimed at studying in detail and in depth the most prominent church artists who worked in Sofia after the Liberation.

The first aim is clearly formulated and outlines the exact research boundaries of the dissertation. The nature of this objective quite logically refers to a thorough study and systematization of the academic literature on the subject, as well as the existing data and archival sources related to temple architecture and painting in the city of Sofia from 1878 to 1941.

The second goal shows the author's intention to use the studied and systematized information as a methodological basis for interpreting the most prominent church artists, studios/teams that worked in the period under consideration.

The first chapter of the PhD thesis examines the historical context in which the temples of Sofia were built and decorated after 1878. This part of the study reveals various aspects of the rich history related to the development of temple architecture and painting in Sofia.

The second chapter is dedicated to the emergence of artistic life in the newly liberated capital of Bulgaria. This chapter analyzes the specific features of the cultural policy for temple decoration of the period.

The next two chapters deal respectfully with: church architecture and church painting in the period 1878-1941 in the city of Sofia.

An important contribution in this part of the dissertation are the clearly stated tendencies through which church architecture and painting for the period from the Liberation to 1941 in the city of Sofia pass. Both in architecture and in painting, two directions of development are formed, predetermined by the clash between the old Revival tradition and the striving to show knowledge and to identify with the tendencies in the more developed countries. The first direction is called "traditional" by the doctoral student, as it is a continuation of the late Revival practice, while the second trend is defined by her as "official" or "academic", as it employs exclusively academically trained architects and artists.

The fifth chapter presents chronologically the portraits of the most prominent church artists, as well as the ateliers and associations that worked in Sofia after the Liberation. For the purpose of the research, the church orders, executed by the authors for the temples in the capital for the period 1878-1941, are systematized.

The final part of the dissertation intersects questions and summaries of different nature, which outline the main conclusions of the study related to the periodization and its argumentation.

The dissertation "Painting in the Temples Built after the Liberation till 1941 on the Territory of Present-Day City of Sofia" is an original academic research, which is based on in-depth theoretical knowledge in the field of art history.

The thesis focuses on a wide range of issues and deserves admiration because it accepts the challenge to offer a suitable horizon for a specific theoretical interpretation.

The success of the dissertation is also related to the creation of a unique catalogue of all temples in the city, available for research as some of these temples have not been published so far.

In conclusion, I believe that the academic value of dissertation presented for review is indisputable and meets the requirements for obtaining an educational and academic degree "Doctor".

Sofia

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/ Prof. D.Sc. Peter Tsanev /