

OPINION

Concerning the dissertation for acquiring a PhD on the subject: *Personifications in Roman Art from the Territory of Bulgaria (I-III c.)*,

By Elina Antonova Anastasova, Institute of Art Studies, BAS

By Assoc. Prof. Dr. Ivo Topalilov, IBCT – BAS

The dissertation is 616 pages long and contains two parts: an analytical text (300 pages) and a catalogue (270 pages), supplemented with appendices (maps). The first part contains an Introduction, six chapters, a Conclusion and a list of references used, while the second part: a catalogue of the empirical material used in the thesis (227 catalogue numbers) and ten maps illustrating the analytical text.

The work presented here explores a category of abstract images that, despite the considerable number of monuments found in Bulgaria, has not yet been the subject of a generalizing study. It is this gap that Elina Anastasova's study attempts to fill, and among the goals she sets herself, along with examining the specifics of iconography, form, style, and context, is to discover the place of these monuments in the context of Roman imperial art (p. 3). And this could be accomplished through the study of stone sculpture in particular, whose monuments are also the most varied in their functionality: cult statues, votive statuettes and reliefs, tombstones, sarcophagi, and the like, architectural details and the like. In addition, the data of small bronze sculpture, glyptics and, where possible, the issues of bronze provincial coinage in Thrace are considered as comparative material, but also to gain a better idea of the distribution and popularity of the images of personifications in the Roman provinces located within the present territory of Bulgaria. In this case, the absence of mosaic floors in the study is remarkable due to their specificity.

At the beginning of her study Elina Anastasova introduces us to the issues by presenting in basic forms the origin, development and meaning of personifications in ancient art. In order to achieve the set tasks, the PhD student collects and analyses the images of all the personifications discovered so far, which are divided into several main categories: personifications of natural phenomena - Helios-Sol, Selene-Moon, Eos; Oceanus and Aion, most often on reliefs depicting Mithras and therefore fitting into her doctrine, personifications of rivers, of feelings and emotions, of qualities and virtues, of the state of the body and last but not least, of abstract concepts and their relation to imperial propaganda. And these are Nemesis, Nike-Victoria, Hygeia, the many-faced Eros, seen as the personification of love and overwhelming desire, but also with a torch as the Genius of Death, Tyche-Fortuna, Bonus Eventus, Pudicitia. The proposed division also shapes the structure of this part of the presented work, and the analysis of the monuments is carried out using several methods - stylistic, iconographic, comparative, and cartographic.

The analysis allows the author to improve the dating of the monuments, to search for the earliest appearance of the personifications and to investigate the duration of their use. It also raises some questions relating to the purpose of some of the personifications studied, such as the insistence on a link between the identity of the cities and the river deity depicted on the reverses of local coinage (p.78), of the Hellenistic prototypes of sculptural representations of Eros and their popularity in the Roman period (p. 97) and at the same time as the Genius of Death influenced its dissemination (p. 100), of the existence of a sculptural studio at Durostorum (p. 106), of some of the Victorian monuments being linked to imperial propaganda (p. 245), etc.

The analysis also allows the specifics of local production to be explored and the main influences and parallels with the art of Rome and the neighbouring eastern provinces to be highlighted. The study of the different categories of stone sculpture would not be complete without examining the role of military and urban culture, as well as the context in which the monuments are found - public or private; in urban or suburban settings. And this shows the way in which new images are perceived and disseminated to be revealed.

All this permits the author to make a summary of the main iconography, form and style of the monuments with personifications from Bulgaria, as well as to outline the territorial distribution and dating of the characters under consideration. Comparison with the images on small bronze sculpture, glyptic and Roman imperial coinage, contribute significantly to observations on the preferred iconographies of different types of monuments. In addition, attention is given to the appropriateness and combination of different categories of personification on a single monument, and suggestions are made about the presence of local studios and masters of stone sculpture from Bulgaria. Logically, the questions 1.) What personifications occur on the different categories of monuments of stone sculpture from Bulgaria, 2.) How and why are different types of personifications combined on a monument? and 3) Can the images of personifications determine the context of the monument in case it is not known? receive at the end their answers. The answers to these questions, along with the discussion of the problems of masters, studios, production centers, imports, influences, and parallels in the copying of iconographies of personifications, context and symbolism of the personified image, present Elina Antonova Anastasova as a scholar who learns to formulate her own original theses, which are also defended with arguments. I commend her for this courage.

It should be noted that the state of research and the lack of comprehensive publication on stone sculpture in recent decades makes some of the conclusions related to the geographical distribution of the monuments of a preliminary nature.

The literature used includes a total of 436 titles, of which 197 are in Cyrillic and 239 in Latin.

In the scientific metrics, with the required 80 points, Elina Anastasova has a total of 100 points (Group A: indicator 1 (submitted completed dissertation) = 50 points; Group D: Sum of indicators 6 to 15 (indicator 9 = 5 articles X 10 points) = 50 points).

The author of the dissertation has a total of 5 scientific publications on the topic and three participations in scientific forums and participation in a project abroad, thus meeting the required minimum.

The abstract presents the text of the thesis well and correctly reflects its scientific achievements.

After reading the dissertation, analyzing its significance and the scientific contributions contained therein, I give my **positive opinion** and recommend to the esteemed scientific jury to **award** Elina Antonova Anastasova the educational and scientific degree "Doctor" in the scientific specialty Art and Fine Arts, in the field of higher education 8. Arts, professional field 8.1. Art Theory.

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Assoc. Prof. Dr. Ivo Topalilov: