

REVIEW

of a dissertation for the conferment of the educational and scientific degree
"doctor" of Tatiana Braga

The thesis "Odessa Damaskini from the Collection of V. I. Grigorovich – Part of the
Bulgarian Cultural Heritage. Palaeography. Codicology. Dating."

Reviewer: Prof. DSc. Anissava Miltenova

The topic of the dissertation is very relevant, it was chosen in time and presents unexplored source material - late medieval collections of Bulgarian origin, stored in a foreign repository, which have not been the subject of detailed research until now. The contribution to the Bulgarian cultural heritage is indisputable since access to the collection of Viktor Grigorovich in Odessa is difficult and will be difficult or even impossible for a long time. The wording of the title is very specific and precisely defines the tasks of the work.

The candidate Tatyana Ivanovna Braga graduated from the National University "I. I. Mechnikov" (Faculty of Law) in Odesa, Ukraine in 2001 and holds an M.A. degree. She specialized in SU "St. Kliment Ohridski" (1997-1998). She worked as a translator, and business consultant at TOB "TAHIT" Company - Kyiv (2012–2020), as well as as a part-time teacher at the National University "Odesa Law Academy" (2012–2020). In 2020, an independent research project on the topic "Bulgarian cultural and historical heritage" will begin in the Odessa Scientific Library. The results of the project were presented at the Institute of Bulgarian Language at the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences, where she was enrolled as a doctoral student in independent training on 01.12.2021 with scientific consultant Prof. Elka Mircheva. The topic of her dissertation is focused on a complex study of four manuscripts - Damaskini from the collection of V. Grigorovich. At the same time, he works as a researcher in the Section for the History of the Bulgarian Language of the IBE. During the duration of her doctoral studies, she fully fulfilled the requirements for specialized educational courses, passing exams in the speciality, participating in seminars and presenting reports at scientific forums, as well as publications in scientific

periodicals and collections (the assessment according to the BAS credit system is 488 credits).

The dissertation is the result of a *de visu* study of the manuscript books, with each element of palaeography and codicology repeatedly checked, compared with the existing reference books, and the final evaluation is following modern archeographic research methods. The four manuscript books deserve special attention because of their character and history. During his journey, Viktor Grigorovich found in the villages of Shipka, Vakarel, in Sishtov and in the monastery "St. Georgi" Zograph four manuscripts from the 17th - 18th centuries, written in the spoken Bulgarian language – with inventory numbers in the Odessa Scientific Library 1/117 (No. 36/62), 1/114 (No. 37/63), 1/154 (No. 38/64), 1/123 (No. 39/65), which do not have a special study in the classical works of D. Petkanova, E. Demina, E. Mircheva, etc. The author had the good fortune to get to know the manuscripts directly back in 2002. This is how her idea of researching them was born, specifying their dating, how they were composed and what function they performed. From the very beginning, T. Braga's attention was drawn to unclear toponyms and misread notes in the manuscripts, which required a new interpretation. As a result of her research, Damaskini are given a new look and a basis for future developments is created.

The dissertation consists of an introduction, four chapters, a conclusion, a reference to the contributions, a bibliography and two appendices (305 pages in total). The introductory part presents the reasons for choosing the topic, derived from the process of exporting the manuscripts abroad and their further preservation. The goals and tasks of the dissertation work, the choice of methodology and the approaches in the development of the material are formulated. The need for a palaeographic and codicological description of the manuscripts is substantiated; comparison with other attributed manuscript books; determining the chronology - by analyzing the watermarks; the graphics and letter type; analysis of the calligraphy-art school; study of distinctive lexical features; outputting the content of unique attributions whose content is relevant to the history of the manuscripts. This suggests an interdisciplinary inquiry that joins the methodologies used in the ancillary historical disciplines with the philological analysis of language and textual content. When formulating the goals and tasks of the dissertation,

the author explicitly emphasizes that she combines the historical-cultural with the linguistic approach, which is consistently implemented in the work.

The first chapter contains a systematic picture of the formation and development of the literary language during the Middle Ages in the Bulgarian lands, and the most central place is allocated to the language based on the people, reflected in the new Bulgarian Damaskini. The review of the literature on Bulgarian Damaskini shows a thorough preparation, a good knowledge of the history of Bulgarian literature, and an opportunity for an analytical reading of the existing studies and their generalization because of the tasks of the dissertation work. The key aspects of the history of literature are correctly presented (periodization, classification and characteristics of Damaskini; literary centres, etc.). A place is dedicated not only to the basic research in the field but also to the achievements of recent years - the work of O. Mladenova and B. Velcheva on the Lovesh damaskin, where they also found a place for two of the Odessa damaskini.

In the second chapter, the history of Viktor Grigorovich's collection of manuscripts is traced. The scholar's merits are highlighted in the context of his collecting work in various regions of the Bulgarian lands, and pages from his travelogue "Essay on European Travel" (1848) are analyzed. The study of the manuscripts themselves, the valuable achievements and discrepancies in the scientific literature in determining the dating and in their evaluation as a whole are presented exhaustively. Attention is also directed to the history of the New Bulgarian literary language (according to V. I. Lamanski, B. Tsonev, P. A. Lavrov, etc.). A preliminary review of the contents of the Odessa damaskini in the context of other similar monuments is also made.

The third chapter is the essential part of the dissertation - paleographic and codicological research, analysis of watermarks, writing, and decoration. A scheme of the results of the archeographic description was drawn up, which was consistently followed in the analyzes made. The history of the discovery and description of the Odessa damaskini (I. I. Sreznevsky, V. Yagich, V. N. Mochulski, V. Kachanovski, etc.), as well as the publication of some texts, shows how they gradually took a place in the history of Slavic written heritage. For clarity, I will trace the achievements in the analysis of the four damaskini:

– No. 36 (62). The dating of the manuscript has been further specified in relation to existing research, it has been done according to watermarks - 1680-1690 and is

consistent with other paleographic signs. The decoration is analyzed in detail, in parallel with other manuscripts, as well as the graphics of the letter. The specific features in the decoration and graphics successfully argue the time of the book's appearance and the environment in which it originated. A comparison is made with the Elena's damaskin, the Tikhonravov damaskin, the Lovech damaskin, and the Avram Collection from 1674, emphasizing the similarity with the last manuscript. Undoubtedly, the conclusion that the book belongs to the Karlovo-Adzar literary school and is the work of Avram Yerei Dimitrievich or his direct students is convincing. The assumption that the Ljubljana damaskin is related to the Odessa damaskin No. 36 (62) is a novelty in the field of late medieval literature.

– No. 37(63). First of all, dating was specified - in the 18th century with the means of interdisciplinary analysis. It is emphasized that the type of book is characteristic of codices intended for portability - small format and layout. A new localization of the monument has been proposed - the monastery "St. Georgi" Zograf after a complex analysis of the features (confirms the view of Petrun 1927). A new explanation was found for the word "пошехонья" - misread by V. N. Mochulski, which is actually a note by V. Grigorovich in the sense that the manuscript is incomplete: "полнехоньякая". The book is defined as a damaskin of the third New Bulgarian type, and its origin is associated with the Kotel Book Center due to the special characteristics of the letter (letter drawings) and the layout in general, not least – the ornamentation of the binding. As evidence, the similarities with Milko Kotlenski's Hourglass, as well as the proximity to the Kotlen damaskin of Pope Stoiko (Sofroniy Vrachanski) from 1765, were cited. The parallel with the printed book "Различни потреби", published in Venice, was also noted. A contribution is the display of the scribe's name concerning the attributions: priest Ilia Markov. Of undoubted interest is the established connection of Kotel with Mount Athos – Hilandar and Zograf.

– No. 38 (64). The manuscript is dated to the second half of the 18th century. It was discovered in Svishtov by V. Grigorovich. A preserved text testifies that the author was the scribe Josif Bradati, and the copyist was Nikifor Rilaski in 1757. The original text of Josif Bradati has not been preserved, but the copies are kept in the region of the Rila Monastery. A book is convolute that consists of three separate manuscripts written by different copyists and bound together. The role of Nicephorus of Rila and the Rila

Literary Center is argued to be highlighted - with the manuscripts read, which are qualified as primary historical sources. An analysis was made of the language, in which East Bulgarian and West Bulgarian features are interwoven. The content is identified and described correctly with clear references to the scientific literature. The second part contains "Sunday lessons" translated by Joseph Bradati based on the edition of Glikis in 1676. A detailed description of the third part of the manuscript - the so-called "Women's Collection". It has been specified that Grigoriy pop Ilijovich is the author-transcriber of the second and third parts of the manuscript, and at the end of the collection, a transcript of the original inscription by Joseph Bradati is included. Assumptions have been made about the origins of the content, looking for the possible sources of the "women's collection" of Joseph Bradati - previously translated hagiographic and monastic instructional texts (about Simon the Wise, about Queen Jezebel, the words against evil women, etc.).

– No. 39 (65). T. Braga points out that the manuscript is of interest for the interaction between literary circles - it was discovered by V. Grigorovich in Vakarel, but it is related to Eastern Bulgarian circles in terms of language. It is the work of the writer Ivan son Petrov, who is originally from Svishtov. Its content is defined as damaskin of the fourth new Bulgarian type and, according to the author, it testifies to the connection between the Eastern and Western Bulgarian literary environments.

The review illustrated the systematic and effective work of the doctoral student, both in terms of practical work with the manuscripts, and her ability to summarize the signs found in them regarding localization and attribution, to deduce the place of the codices in literary life and the literary process. The excellent results are also possible due to the good knowledge of the entire damaskini tradition, and the well-learned techniques of comparative analysis.

The fourth chapter is devoted to the characterization of the vocabulary in the studied manuscripts. Considering that the manuscripts originate from different parts of the Bulgarian lands (Western Bulgarian, Eastern Bulgarian, Central-Balkan) and preserve different linguistic phenomena, this chapter has an important place in the work. The vocabulary is traditionally divided into groups - native, with foreign origin (Greek influence, Turkish influence, other languages). The coexistence of different layers of vocabulary is emphasized. In this part of the dissertation, the Church Slavonic phonetic

influence on the lexicon of the Odesa damaskini is examined, and phenomena characteristic of the era are described. Due attention has been paid to the lexical borrowings from the Turkish language. They are examined according to a thematic principle (nature, plants, animals; economy, heritage; crafts, trade; construction sites; clothing, ornaments; meals, drinks; tokens related to social relations; terms from the management; military terminology; reproachful nicknames, etc.). In addition, Greek and Latin borrowings, Hebraisms and other phenomena typical of the Balkans in the pre-Renaissance period are described.

As a valuable contribution to the work, I would like to single out the reading and interpretation of the inscriptions and notes in the Odesa damaskini. It is thanks to them that the names of some scribes were established (e.g. on manuscripts 37(63) and 39(65)). Regarding the history of local places, T. Braga with the necessary expertise has revealed unsuspected elements for locating the manuscripts, hidden in some inscriptions, such as e.g. with the note in damaskin 38(64) for the hamlet in the town of Svishtov $\psi(\tau)\gamma\kappa\alpha$ - the name of today's Kaleto district, where in the church "St. Dimitar" in 1845 Viktor Grigorovich found the manuscript book 38(64). Other findings are the reading of individual glosses additionally inscribed in the marginalia in damaskin 39(65). Most of them are explanatory or interpretative, complementing the image of the copyist in terms of his knowledge as well as his approach to the text. Glossing through synonyms illustrates the entry of the spoken language into literature during the era, and the aspiration to present the text understandably. More archaic words that are familiar from the Old Bulgarian translations are found somewhere (e.g. $\phi\iota\lambda\omega\phi\iota\tau\epsilon$ are glossed as $\beta\lambda\lambda\omega\beta\iota$); there is glossing of Turkish terms with home vocabulary, etc.

The conclusions of the lexical analysis are important for the history of the language, as they largely reflect the real state of the lexicon from the end of the 16th to the end of the 18th century. It is pointed out, for example, that Turkish loanwords entered the written speech relatively late, for example in the Odesa damaskin from In the 17th century, their frequency was much lower than in Odesa damaskin from the 18th century. The conclusion that Turkish words do not replace their Bulgarian counterparts, but are used in parallel, is also significant. The criterion for lexical choice is not the frequency of the word, but its comprehensibility, the author points out. Future work may wish to examine the lexicon and texts of the manuscripts in comparison with other transcripts to

obtain a picture of grouping within a wider range of damaskini. A very good basis is that the Odessa damaskini are from different parts of the Bulgarian lands, if it is comparing a specific word in different transcripts - it will give an interesting picture.

In conclusion, it can be said that the current thesis is an indisputable achievement for the author. T. Braga worked independently, and very thoroughly; the research ends with justified conclusions. The composition of the work meets all requirements. The bibliography is voluminous and comprehensive, and the appendices complete the overall picture of the study. In developing the methodology and approaches to the material, the author shows very good preparation, ability to work with texts, their reading, comparative research, and historical-cultural and philological commentary. The contributions are formulated completely objectively. The abstract and scientometric data for evaluating the preparation of the doctoral student fully satisfy the conditions.

In my opinion, Tatiana Braga has undoubtedly built up a certain level of knowledge and skills to work with the sources and with the scientific literature, which satisfies the requirements for dissertation work. This is clearly visible from her publications in scientific periodicals and collections, as well as from her active participation in scientific forums with delivered reports and announcements. The scientific contributions in the present dissertation are significant and the full introduction of Odesa damaskini into scientific circulation deserves real recognition.

With complete conviction, I propose to the scientific jury to award the educational and scientific degree "doctor" to Tatiana Braga.

29.07.2022

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