

## ON THE SYSTEMATIZATION OF BYZANTINE GOSPEL COVERS: ABOUT A RARE TYPE OF PRECIOUS BOX BINDINGS

According to the tradition of the Christian East the precious metal bindings were used mainly for altar Gospel which is at the same time a service book and church implement with exactly determined role in the practice of liturgy. The luxurious decoration of the covers with gold, silver, jewels, pearls and enamel is an expression of the particularly great veneration towards the Gospel as a vessel of the Word of God and symbol of the Christ Himself.

Nowadays the preserved Byzantine and Post-Byzantine Gospel's precious covers are scattered in different libraries, monastery and museum collections and are known mainly from the publications for the collection in question<sup>1</sup> or from the catalogues of a given exhibition<sup>2</sup>, as well as from some more general studies<sup>3</sup> or

---

<sup>1</sup> See in this connection: *Il Tesoro di San Marco. Il Tesoro e il Museo*, opera diretta da H.R. Hahnloser. Firenze, 1971; K. Weitzmann, G. Galavaris, *The Monastery of Saint Catherine at Mount Sinai: The Illuminated Greek Manuscripts*. Vol. 1. *From the Ninth to the Twelfth century*, Princeton, New Jersey 1990; *Sinai. Treasures of the Monastery of Saint Catherine*, ed. by K. A. Manafis. Athens 1990; *Patmos: Treasures of the Monastery*, general ed. A. D. Kominis. Athens 1988; D. Fotopoulos, A. Delivorrias, *Greece at the Benaki Museum*, Athens, 1997.

<sup>2</sup> See M. Mundell Mango, C. E. Snow and T. D. Weisser, *Silver from Early Byzantium: The Kaper Koraon and Related Treasures*, Baltimor 1986; *Splendori di Bisanzio: testimonianze e riflessi d'arte e cultura bizantina nelle chiese d'Italia*, a cura di Giovanni Morello, Milano 1990; *Byzance. L'art byzantin dans les collections publiques françaises*, ed. by J. Durand, Paris 1992; *Treasures of Mount Athos*, Thessaloniki 1997; *Cristiani d'Oriente: Spiritualità, arte e potere nell'Europa post bizantina*, a cura di Grigore Arbore Popescu, Milano 1999; *The Glory of Byzantium: Art and Culture of Middle Byzantine Era, A.D. 843 – 1261*, ed. by Helen C. Evans and William D. Wixom, New York 1997; *Byzantium. Faith and Power (1261-1557)*, ed. by Helen C. Evans. New Haven – London 2004; *Byzantium 330 – 1453*, ed. by Robin Cormack and Maria Vassilaki, London 2008.

<sup>3</sup> Among them are the studies of the goldsmith during the Post-Byzantine period on the Balkans. See Б. Радойковић, *Старо српско златарство*, Нови Сад 1966; C. Nicolescu, *Argentăria laică și religioasă în țările române (sec. XIV–XIX)*, București 1968; C. Nicolescu, *Die Edelschmiedekunst in Rumänien*, București, 1968; V. Simon, *Masterpieces of the Precious Metalwork Art in Romania*, Bucharest, 1997; Е. Генова, *Църковните приложения изкуства от XV–XIX век в България*, София 2004.

elaborations on particular examples<sup>4</sup>. Unfortunately, there is no generalizing work on the development of the tradition of Gospel precious covers in the Orthodox world. The known material, however, is enough for the systematization of the preserved examples according to their iconography, type, technique and technology of execution<sup>5</sup>.

More than thirty years ago the iconographic program of the Gospel precious covers became for the first time subject of detailed study in the article of Tania Velmans which was dedicated to the cover of the Morozov Gospel and the evolution of the Byzantine luxurious book bindings as a whole<sup>6</sup>. We should underline the fact that until now this publication is the most serious research on the subject. The observations and conclusions made by Velmans at that time are still valid and they could be only supplemented according to the larger quantity of visual material which was unfamiliar in the past. From the preserved examples it becomes clear that in the Byzantine art from the end of 12<sup>th</sup> century the most popular themes for the decoration of Gospel precious covers were the compositions Deesis, Crucifixion of Christ and Descent into Hell<sup>7</sup>. All these compositions summarize the idea for the Salvation which is possible due to the Sacrifice of Christ. From 14<sup>th</sup> century the scene Crucifixion of Christ is traditionally depicted on the Gospel's front cover and on the back side is presented the Descent into Hell<sup>8</sup>. This iconographic scheme kept its leading position during the Post-Byzantine period as well. Usually from 14<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> century the central composition is also surrounded by a frame in which are presented scenes from the Great Feasts, the images of the evangelists or their symbols, the depictions of apostles, prophets, saints<sup>9</sup>. The iconographic program of the Gospel luxurious metal bindings was broadened mainly in the Post-Byzantine period. Very often the composition

<sup>4</sup> Here we will mention only some main publications for particular examples, see P. Hetherington, *Byzantine enamels on a Venetian book-cover*, Cahiers archéologiques, 27, Paris 1978, 117-145; T. Velmans, *La couverture de l'Evangile dit de Morozov et l'évolution de la reliure Byzantine*, Cahiers archéologiques 28, 1979, 115-136; P. Hetherington, *Byzantine enamels for a Russian prince: the book-cover of the Gospel of Mstislav*, Zeitschrift für Kunstgeschichte 59, Munich 1996, 309-324; E. Kitzinger, *A Pair of Silver Book Covers in the Sion Treasure*, in: *Studies in Late Antique Byzantine and Medieval Western Art*, London 2002, Vol. I, 279-296; Е. Генова, *Напрестолно евангелие от Казанлък*, Проблеми на изкуството, 3, 2002, 34-41; И. Стерлигова, *Чеканный оклад грузинского тетраевангелия из Государственного исторического музея*, in: *Хризограф*, Москва 2003, 308-319; А. Л. Саминский, *Оклад Лабскалдского евангелия – грузинской константинопольской рукописи второй четверти XII в.*, in: *Древнерусское искусство. Искусство рукописной книги. Византия. Древняя Русь*, Санкт-Петербург 2004, 245-260.

<sup>5</sup> Having in mind the relatively limited quantity of examples we should refrain from explicit conclusions. On the other hand however, the exceptional quality of some of the preserved works allows us to examine them in relation to the type, iconography, style and techniques as representative examples for the period and the respective stage of the development of the tradition for creation of metal covers for the Gospel.

<sup>6</sup> T. Velmans, *La couverture de l'Evangile dit de Morozov et l'évolution de la reliure Byzantine*, Cahiers archéologiques 28, 1979, 115-136.

<sup>7</sup> T. Velmans, *Op. cit.*, 121.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, 125.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, 125-126.

Descent into Hell on the back cover of the Gospel is replaced with representation of the feast or the portrayal of the patron saint of the church for which the precious cover was executed. In this way scenes like Ascension, Annunciation, Assumption, etc. were introduced in the design of metal bindings.

Together with the iconography the other main variant for the systematization of the Gospel precious covers is their classification according to the typological characteristics. One aspect of the study of the preserved visual material, that in the past remained somehow outside the attention of the specialists<sup>10</sup>. Probably the reason for this is that at first sight the situation seems simple, clear and therefore it does not provoke interest. However, it turns out that the research of the typological characteristics of the precious covers completely refutes such

position<sup>11</sup>. The detailed survey and juxtaposition of the preserved examples from the Byzantine and Post-Byzantine period on the Balkans, as well as in a broader area of the Byzantine influence that includes Armenia, Georgia and Russia, outline the existence of two main types of Gospel metal bindings – single-structured and multi-structured. A little bit aside from them there is a third type that owes its particular position to the specific character of the examples themselves – bindings with the shape of box, executed especially for the preservation of the Gospel text. Exactly this group of rarely found precious covers is the focus of this text but their appropriate presentation and distinction involve more detailed introduction as a whole of the two main variants of Gospel luxurious bindings in the Orthodox world, in particular with their known versions or subtypes.



Fig. 1 Front cover of the Gospel from the Great Lavra on Mount Athos, 11<sup>th</sup> century.

Сл. 1 Предњи поклопац Јеванђеља из Велике Лавре на Светој Гори, 11. век

<sup>10</sup> We can point out some exceptions from this rule, see: A. Ballian, *Liturgical Implements*, in: *Byzantium. Faith and Power (1261-1557)*, ed. by Helen C. Evans, New Haven – London 2004, 121; И. Стерлигова, *О лицевых окладах древнерусских напрестольных Евангелий XII – первой половины XIV в.*, in: *Древнерусское искусство. Искусство рукописной книги. Византия. Древняя Русь*, Санкт Петербург 2004, 263-275.

<sup>11</sup> The initial observations on the subject are made in an article, see: Н. Петкова, *Към типологията на византийските обкови на евангелия*, Проблеми на изкуството 2, 2011, 32-38.

**Single-structured Gospel precious covers** are executed from a single sheet of silver, sometimes fully gilded or gilded only in some parts, and most often the composition upon the plate is in repoussé work. The examples from this group are usually among the most luxurious and representative examples of the period in question. Their impressive vision is sometimes result of the combination of different techniques in one metal binding as in the case of the front cover of one especially revered Gospel from the Great Lavra monastery on Mount Athos (Fig. 1). It is made in 11<sup>th</sup> century and according to the legend is a gift from emperor Nikephoros II Phokas to the St Athanasius, the founder and the first abbot of the monastery<sup>12</sup>.

**Multi-structured Gospel precious covers** consist of metal elements with different shapes. Their names are known after 11<sup>th</sup> century from the inventories of the monastery treasuries and libraries in which the enumeration of the collected manuscripts often includes information about the decoration of the book covers<sup>13</sup>. The preserved metal bindings, data from historical sources as well as the examples of luxuriously decorated codices from the wall paintings and the icons give a rather clear idea of this type of arrangement of the Gospels. Usually it includes a central element with the shape of cross; corner plaques with the shape of the Greek letter gamma, known as „gammi” or „gammati”; as well protruding elements with protective function with particular shape (almond, lily, etc.) or simply empty hemispheres. The last group of elements is traditional part of the decoration of the Byzantine leather binding and an important condition for its preservation.

We should emphasize the fact that among the multi-structured Gospel precious covers there are some differences in the manner of distribution of the elements on the surface of the covers. Therefore emerges additional division of the examples in two subtypes. In the first one the silver-gilt elements don't cover closely the base on which they are fitted and the effect of the binding as a whole is achieved by the combination of metal components with other materials such as leather and luxurious fabric. The second subtype of the multi-structured covers appeared a little bit later and became widely spread among the goldsmiths on the Balkans during the Post-Byzantine period. Usually in this case the elements are arranged closely to each other and as a result they completely fill the covers. The main aim here is to accomplish resemblance with the effect of the covers made by one single sheet of metal. Among the earliest examples of this subtype is the binding of a Gospel from Iviron monastery on Mount Athos (14<sup>th</sup>-15<sup>th</sup> century)<sup>14</sup>. The same scheme is followed in the implementation of the earliest Gospel's precious cover from the treasury of the Bachkovo monastery from the second half of 17<sup>th</sup> century<sup>15</sup> (Fig. 2).

<sup>12</sup> Н. Кондаков, *Памятники христианского искусства на Атоне*, Санкт-Петербург, 1902, 195-198, pls. XXVI-XXVII; K. Weitzmann, *Studies In Classical and Byzantine Manuscript Illumination*, Chicago-London 1971, 249.

<sup>13</sup> C. Dielh, *Le trésor et la bibliothèque de Patmos au commencement de XIII siècle*, *Byzantinische Zeitschrift* 1, 1892, 501, 503; P. Gautier, *La Diataxis de Michel Attaliat*, *Revue des Études Byzantines* 39, 1981, 92-93.

<sup>14</sup> *Treasures of Mount Athos...*, 342-344, № 9.20.

<sup>15</sup> П. Атанасов, *Български художествени подвързии*, *Известия на Народна биб-*

As it was already mentioned besides the two main types of Gospel precious covers – single-structured and multi-structured with the respective subtypes of the latter, in the Orthodox world is known a third type of luxurious bindings – **bindings with the shape of box**. The following pages will discuss this group of works. In this case of bindings for the preservation of the precious manuscript with the text of the Gospel were made silver boxes or caskets with elaborate embossed decoration. Usually the separate plaques of these constructions are connected along the edges with a rather complex system of hinges that provides very good mobility of the non-fixed elements of the bindings, namely the lateral flaps on the side, top and bottom of the book block. In this way were protected not only the covers and the spine of the manuscript but also its edges.

Undoubtedly the metal box bindings are on the border between the book bindings and the precious boxes for the preservation of relics, which are known in different versions. Besides they are relatively rare and due to their specific character remain a little bit aside from the already presented two main types of luxurious metal binding executed for the Gospel covers. Most probably because of these reasons in the existent publications the particularities of the metalwork bindings of this type are usually not mentioned and in the rare cases when they are mentioned, some of the specific and especially valuable for the researchers details are not always presented. Thus described situation on one hand explains why the treasury box bindings for Gospels are almost unknown as a type, and on the other hand makes clear how prolonged and difficult is the process of collecting, systematizing and analyzing the preserved examples.



Fig. 2 Cover of the Gospel from Bachkovo Monastery, second half of the 17<sup>th</sup> century, National Gallery of Art/Crypt in Sofia.

Сл. 2 Повез Јеванђеља из манастира Бачково, друга половина 17. века, Национална галерија уметности / Крпти у Софији

лиотека "Васил Коларов" за 1960-1961, Т. 2 (8), София 1963, 316-317; М. Иванов, *Златарските произведения от XVI – XIX век в музея на Бачковския манастир*, София 1967, 74-75; Д. Друмев, *Златарско изкуство*, София 1979, 99-100, 158, fig. 30, 344, № 30; М. Сантова, *24 златарски паметника от Бачковския манастир*, София 1990, 9; Гендова, Е. *Църковните приложни изкуства...*, 56.

It is not an easy task to estimate when exactly this kind of precious Gospel cover appeared in the Orthodox world. Unfortunately the number of the examples known today is too small and most of them are from a later period. However, the possibility for additional division among the box bindings justifies the suggestion for an earlier appearance of this tradition.

It turns out that the known examples of this type can be divided into two subtypes. In the first type for the preservation of the codex are made separate boxes. They are usually caskets of wooden panels covered with gilded silver sheets with lavish embossed decoration<sup>16</sup>, but the Gospel box binding can be also made entirely of metal<sup>17</sup>. In the second subtype the construction looks like a box but the metal plaques are fixed to the wooden boards of the codex covered with leather<sup>18</sup>.

We should draw attention to the fact that the described version of binding in the shape of box for preservation of valuable manuscript has its parallels in another context. Though, the box bindings that could be found in the Islamic tradition are not made of metal. The earliest examples among them are from 9<sup>th</sup> century<sup>19</sup>. On the other hand one very special group of Western examples could be regarded not without reason as a closer parallel of the treasury box bindings in the Orthodox world. They come from the territory of Ireland and to a great extent express the specific aspect of the Christianity in this region. These are elaborate and precious bindings – boxes or shrines for books. They are separate caskets and usually made of bronze or wood and then covered with lavishly decorated silver elements<sup>20</sup>. The Irish box bindings were made in order to serve as reliquaries and the books preserved in them were venerated as relics, because they were possessed by the chief Irish teachers and saints in the early years of the spreading of Christianity on the island – St Patrick, St Columba, St Molaise, etc. And precisely this important particularity of the purpose of the box bindings is related to the main difference between the Irish tradition and the Orthodox concept that above all perceives the luxurious cover as an expression of the veneration towards the Word of God kept between the pages of the Gospel.

<sup>16</sup> As an example we could mention box binding executed for the needs of the Coptic community in Egypt in 1442. See *The Glory of Byzantium...*, 435.

<sup>17</sup> Similar examples could be found among the precious box bindings preserved in the funds of The National Centre of Manuscripts in Tbilisi. See in this connection *Georgian Manuscript Book 5<sup>th</sup>-19<sup>th</sup> century*, on-line album, ed. by Nestan Chkhikvadze, Tbilisi 2010, 168, 170, 173.

<sup>18</sup> This probably was more widely spread variant of Gospel box bindings. Most of the preserved examples however are not easily available for work and from the reproductions we cannot judge whether a given box binding is a separate box or it is fixed to the covers of the Gospel. Usually such data are missing in the existent publications as well, and this makes the systematization of the examples according to this indication even more difficult.

<sup>19</sup> J. A. Szirmai, *The Archaeology of Medieval Bookbinding*, Aldershot: Ashgate 1999, 52-53.

<sup>20</sup> Most of the survived early book caskets are executed in 11<sup>th</sup> century and have later additions. More for the Irish tradition of book shrines and its examples see: *Treasures of Early Irish Art, 1500 BC to 1500 AD: from the collections of the National Museum of Ireland, Royal Irish Academy, Trinity College, Dublin*, ed. by Polly Cone, New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1977, 96, 148-149, 182-185.

Fig. 3 Gospel Box Binding from Western Georgia, 1581, Museum of History and Ethnography in Kutaisi.

Сл. 3 Повез јеванђеља у кутији из западне Грузије, 1581, Музеј историје и етнографије у Кутаиси



The earliest known Eastern box binding is a work of the Armenian toreutics<sup>21</sup>. It is made in 1255 in one of the workshops in Hromkla for richly illustrated manuscript from 1249. On the front cover is presented the composition Deesis. The interesting point here is that Christ is in full height, not on throne as it is usual. However, the uniqueness of this Gospel comes from the composition realized on the back cover. Here in the centre of the precious cover are presented the four evangelists, their figures are in full height and with a relatively high embossment. The described iconographic scheme is without parallel among the preserved Gospel precious covers from the Byzantine and Post-Byzantine period and it is definitely related to the great significance of the Gospel text and written text as a whole in the Armenian tradition<sup>22</sup>.

<sup>21</sup> S. Der Nersessian, *Le reliquaire de Skévra et l'orfèvrerie cilicienne aux XIII et XIV siècles*, in: *Études byzantines et arméniennes: Byzantine and Armenian studies*. Vol. I, Louvain, 1973, 715-716; Н., А. Степанян, С. Чакмакчян, *Декоративное искусство средневековой Армении*, Ленинград 1971, 48, fig. 152.

<sup>22</sup> In the Armenian culture the manuscripts are given special attention, care and veneration for centuries. Thanks to this attitude today many of the texts by ancient and early Christian authors have survived only in translation into Armenian language that has its own alphabet since 5<sup>th</sup> century. As for the Gospels, they were so valued and venerated that they were bought off from the invaders against man as a hostage. On this question see *Treasures of Armenia*, Athens 1998, 45.



Fig. 4 Gospel Box Binding from Monastery of Saint Catherine at Mount Sinai, 17<sup>th</sup> century (after Y. Ikonomaki-Papadopoulos).

Сл. 4 Повер јеванђеља у кутији из манастира Св. Катарине на Синајској гори, из 17. века (по И. Икономаки-Пападопулос)

Especially interesting in terms of iconography but also in terms of construction, style and execution are two Georgian box bindings from the end of 14<sup>th</sup> century. The first one is kept at the Iviron monastery<sup>23</sup> and its elaborate decoration includes scenes from the Great Feasts as on each cover are distributed six, as well as series of smaller representations of some saints. The flexible flaps on the side, top and bottom edges of the book block are decorated with images of the writing evangelists, depiction of the Angel announcing the Resurrection and the Appearance of Jesus Christ to Mary Magdalene after Resurrection. The second box binding is made in 1581 and it belongs to the collection of the Museum for History and Ethnography in Kutaisi (Western Georgia)<sup>24</sup>. The iconography of the front cover is traditional – the Crucifixion (Fig. 3), but in its execution the goldsmith has tried to follow examples of the Georgian toreutics from the end of 12<sup>th</sup> century, such as the bindings of the Tsqarostavi and Berta Gospels, as well as the Tbeti Gospel. On the back cover, however, we find again a very unusual iconographic choice, namely one of the Miracles of Christ – the Healing of the Blind Man.

The last Georgian treasury box binding we shall discuss is donated in 1604 to the Monastery of Saint Catherine at Mount Sinai by the priest monk Ioakeim from Crete<sup>25</sup> (Fig. 4). The two principal themes Descent into Hell and Crucifixion are depicted respectively on the front and on the back cover. On the

<sup>23</sup> The binding (1578-1609) is made in Western Georgia. The style and the iconography of the separate scenes of the feasts on the covers as well as the floral ornaments in the frames are rather close to the examples of metalwork from the Palaiologan period. See *Treasures of Mount Athos...*, 368-369, № 9.34.

<sup>24</sup> *Cristiani d'Oriente...*, 316, 356, fig. 196.

<sup>25</sup> The binding preserves Gospel manuscript from the beginning of 12<sup>th</sup> century, see: K. Weitzmann, G. Galavaris, *The Monastery of Saint Catherine...*, 116-118, figs. 386-391; Y. Ikonomaki-Papadopoulos, *Church Metalwork*, in: *Sinai. Treasures of the Monastery of Saint Catherine*, ed. by K. A. Manafis, Athens, 1990, 275, fig. 16.

three flexible lateral flaps are shown the evangelists in medallions, the Virgin as the Burning Bush between figures of Moses and St Catherine as well as a long and detailed donor's inscription. The binding from Sinai differs considerably from the other examples in which there is more prominent archaic approach. It reflects the current tendencies in metalwork from 16<sup>th</sup> century and particularly the work of the workshops in Eastern Georgia. They skillfully combine the known iconographic schemes with a new, extremely rich floral ornamental decoration typical for the Islamic art of this period.

Common feature of the box bindings discussed until now is the flexibility of the lateral elements which cover the edges of the codex. Usually this flexibility is achieved through densely or distantly fitted hinges, locks, etc. But it is also possible to find the use of steadily fixed bands with the same function as it is in the case of the two luxurious Gospel bindings executed for the Backovo monastery in 1701<sup>26</sup> and 1731<sup>27</sup>. They could be regarded as box bindings though the spine of the codex is enveloped with five hinge bands and does not have compact metal cover. The edges of the two Gospels are protected by couples of bands with ornaments along the length of each side that are steadily fixed to the head, front and bottom edges of the wooden boards. The width of the bands is very precise so that together they correspond to the volume of the codex. Thus used bands are elaborately decorated with filigree and enamel which is in unison with the other decoration of the binding. Similar solution is realized in the box binding of another Gospel which is also made by the same goldsmith centre and is from the middle of 18<sup>th</sup> century<sup>28</sup>. The Gospel itself was preserved in the church of the Intercession of the Holy Virgin convent in Samokov until ten years ago<sup>29</sup>. Its short edges of the book block are protected with steadily fixed to the boards couples of narrower bands and the side edge is completely covered by a broader band decorated with enamel, filigree and colorful glasses. It is a flexible element (cover) because it is fixed with hinges to the back cover of the Gospel.

We can approach the discussion of the Orthodox tradition for placing luxurious bindings upon the covers of the Gospels from different perspectives. In this relation the preserved nowadays examples from the Byzantine and Post-Byzantine period are of special interest. Here they are examined and systematized according to their typological characteristics – an aspect of the research of this visual material that is to a large extent neglected in the past. Very briefly are presented the two main types of precious covers – single-structured and multi-structured with the correspondent subtypes because the main objective of

<sup>26</sup> Иванов, М. *Златарските произведения...*, 66-70; Друмев, Д. *Златарско изкуство*, 97-98, 101, 160-161, figs. 32-34, 344, № 32; Сантова, М. *24 златарски паметника...*, 8-9, 46, № 19; Генова, Е. *Църковните приложни изкуства...*, 58-60.

<sup>27</sup> Иванов, М. *Златарските произведения...*, 71-73; Друмев, Д. *Златарско изкуство*, 98-99, 162, ил. 35, 344, № 35; Сантова, М. *24 златарски паметника...*, 8-9, 44, № 8; Генова, Е. *Църковните приложни изкуства...*, 60.

<sup>28</sup> Друмев, Д. *Златарско изкуство*, 103, 198, fig. 78, 346, № 78; Генова, Е. *Църковните приложни изкуства...*, 53, 91.

<sup>29</sup> Presently the location of the Gospel from Samokov as well as of the two other Gospels with bindings from the collection of Bachkovo monastery is unknown.

this text is to draw attention to one last, third group of bindings – precious box bindings. Their tracing down, collection and examination turn out to be very difficult tasks since in the catalogues and various publications on the subject the specific characteristics of the box bindings are usually omitted. In addition to this fact they are relatively rare and the largest number of these examples comes from Georgia and Armenia or they are made by Georgian and Armenian workshops abroad. It turns out that the box bindings are actually almost unknown and unstudied. Still, they are especially interesting in terms of the region of spread, as well as in terms of symbolical meaning, iconographic program, style and execution. Presently the known facts about the treasury box bindings are far less than the questions that still haven't found their answers. So with this brief research we hope to open the door towards their further examination in the future and towards the discovery of the unknown answers.

Нона Петкова  
СИСТЕМАТИЗАЦИЈА ВИЗАНТИЈСКИХ КОРИЦА ЈЕВАНЂЕЉА:  
О РЕТКОЈ ВРСТИ ВРЕДНОГ ПОВЕЗА КУТИЈА

Према предању хришћанског Истока спајање племенитих метала се углавном користило за олтарско Јеванђеље које је у исто време сервисна књига и средство цркве са тачно одређеном улогом у пракси литургије. Луксузна декорација корица је израз нарочито великог поштовања према Јеванђељу као брод Речи Божје и симбола самог Христа.

Овај чланак је усмерен на систематизацији корица Јеванђеља према њиховим типолошким карактеристикама. Истраживање се заснива на примерима из византијског и поствизантијског периода и нуди њихову класификацију по врстама и подврстама. Он испитује постојање две основне врсте корица јеванђеља у православном свету - једно-структурисане, мулти-структурисане корице са одговарајућим подтиповима овог другог. Мало по страни ова два постоји трећи тип који дугује своју посебну позицију на специфичан карактер самих примера - повезивања у облику кутије. Управо ова група племенитих корица је фокус овог текста. Они су на граници између повезивања књига и драгоцених кутија за очување реликвија, поред тога што су релативно ретки и готово непознати као тип. Примери луксузног повезивања корица јеванђеља у православном свету могу се поделити у два подтипа. Прво су одвојени контејнери (кутије), док други су фиксирани на дрвеним даскама кодекса, али имају такође облик кутије. Тренутно познате чињенице о повезивању кутија блага су далеко мање од питања којима још увек нису пронађена њихови одговори. Тако са овим кратким истраживањем надамо се да отворимо врата ка њиховом даљем испитивању у будућности и ка откривању непознатих одговора.