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1

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SUMMARIES

IMAGE – SYMBOL – RITUAL (THE ICONOGRAPHY OF AN ICON FROM NESSEBAR)

Georgi Gerov

This article is devoted to a Medieval icon from Nessebar, known as the Virgin – The Lady of Life.

The study is an attempt to analyze the specific features of the icon from the point of view of an ideological paradigm, characteristic for late Byzantine Art. The analysis shows that the symbolical emphasis is of essential significance within the structure of the icon.

The icon from Nessebar is not simply an icon of the Virgin with Christ. A series of iconographic details directs trained viewers towards associations by far beyond the concreteness of the image.

The attire of Christ is also loaded with a symbolical meaning. The translucent *chiton* represents the visualization of the theme of the vulnerability of Christ's body. The orange-red himation, recalls on the one hand the regal origins of Christ, from the line of David, and on the other, his Divine origin.

The figure of Christ in the icon from Nessebar, half lying, is associated symbolically with the Lamb of God, incorporated in the consecrated spaces. At the same time, according to Medieval theologians and liturgists, it was Christ who offers the Holy gifts. That is why his gesture is an analogue of the blessing, through which the priest realizes the mystery of the Transubstantiation. Being supreme prelate, Christ is blessing. Being the one who is incorporated in the liturgical bread, he receives same blessing.

In the Middle Ages the Virgin was one of the traditional images of the church and this symbolism was also present in the icon from Nessebar. Most characteristic is the gesture through which the Virgin supports the *himation* of Christ. The gesture is identical to the gesture of the Deacon holding his *orarion*. The same gesture of the Deacon is a reminder towards the priest, given three times, during the *epiclesis* (invocation). Throughout the 13th and 14th century this moment of the liturgy had become subject of a serious polemic between Orthodox and Catholics.

The analysis of the specific iconographic features of the Nessebar icon was directed towards suggesting liturgical associations. The Virgin-church (or more precisely the Virgin-Holy altar) presents the believers the Lamb of God incorporated in the liturgical bread and bearing on itself the sins of the world.

The iconographic and stylistic observations indicate that the Nessebar icon was probably made in the 70s-80s of the 13th century. Our iconographic type had arisen in Byzantine art as early as the Comnenine period. During the second or third quarter of the 13th century a

new iconographic variant had emerged within this framework. Its main feature was the transparent *chiton* of Christ. Some Gothic techniques indicate that it arose in Catholic or Uniate circles. The supposed original of the Nessebar icon, from Constantinople, has not come down to us, however the Madonna Ruchellai and the Madonna of the three Franciscans of Duccio from Siena are her closest iconographic parallels.

In spite of iconographic similarities, from a symbolical point of view the Nessebar image differs in principle from Duccio's works, cited above. The artist from Siena has some details, in order to avoid the association with the Orthodox liturgy. Starting from the common originals and working at approximately the same period the anonymous "Nessebar" master and Duccio carry a variety of ideological messages. This stems from the cultural and confessional traditions of the two master painters.

EPIGRAPHIC HYPOTHESES ON THE ICON KYRIE TES ZOES (THE LADY OF LIFE)

Emanuel Moutafov

This article is directly linked with G.Gerov's study and to a certain extent brings out another methodological approach in the interpretation of the icon of the Holy Virgin *Koithe tes Zohes* (the Bossom and Deathbed of Life) from Nessebar in the exhibition of the National Art Gallery - the Crypt. The aim of the author is to present the instrumentarium and the phases of an epigraphic study, which according to the method of exclusion, arrives at some ideas on the linking of the inscription ΜΗ[ΤΗ]Ρ/Θ[Ε]ΟΥ/ 'Η ΚΙ'ΡΗ/ [ΤΗΣ] ΖΩΗΣ, with the iconography and functions of the icon.

E.Moutafov's approach besides linguistic and epigraphic lines, relies on a variety of illustrative material, ranging from the 11th to the 19th c., and covering an area from Antioch, through Rome and Constantinople, as far as Russia, making use of lexicographical, paleographical and folklore data etc. Eventually what is offered is a new, hypothetical reading of the inscription, namely ΜΗ[ΤΗ]Ρ/Θ[Ε]ΟΥ/ 'Η Κ[Ο]ΙΤΗ/ [ΤΗΣ] ΖΩΗΣ - the Bossom and Deathbed of Life, which in opinion of the author semantically better corresponds to the concrete image.

The article is interesting on the one hand from a methodological point of view in modern art history, and on the other through its application - it is a valuable source of epithets used in iconography.

TAXIDIOTES AND THEIR PART IN THE FORMATION OF ART DURING THE REVIVAL REVIVAL

Mariela Stoikova

In my article I have examined some icons and two reliquaries, which were shown in the exhi-

bition Taxidiotes and Revival Culture at the Crypt at the end of 2004. Generally speaking they belong to two groups directly linked with the activities of taxidiotes and those brought from pilgrimages. Most of the monuments shown here have not been published, others are well known. Nevertheless their selection is based on the intention to illustrate as much as possible the variety of themes and images which have come down to us, thanks to activities of taxidiotes. The main aim of the study is to outline the various routes through which these themes reach Bulgaria and hence reveal the role of certain monks – taxidiotes in these processes.

The results presented in the study of a small number of icons, connected with the activity of traveling monks (taxidiotes), constitutes an attempt to draw the attention of scholars of Bulgarian art, to the contribution of taxidiotes in establishing contact with the monasteries of Mt.Athos and bring forth their undoubted contribution to the spread of new and unknown themes and images in Bulgarian Art in the 18th and 19th century.

DOMESTIC ICONS IN THE COLLECTION OF THE NATIONAL ART GALLERY – SEMANTICS AND MORPHOLOGY

Elena Popova

History of art has always looked down on domestic icons as a primitive "low" form of church art "λαϊκή τέχνη", seeing in them only small wooden triptychs, produced on a mass scale in the 19th century. Actually domestic icons, especially drawn for private veneration and designed for the home are in their characteristics, quite different from those painted for the church. They are a phenomenon, which developed under the influence of their own immanent laws, directly determined by the context of the house and religious ritual practices within which they function. Moreover the triptych is by far not the sole representative of this kind of art. The crypt of the National Gallery in Sofia possess a remarkable collection of domestic icons, including cheap triptychs, as well as fine examples of triptychs done with high professionalism and artistic taste, icons done with a precise technique and complex decoration of woodcarving. Like a number of ateliers in the 18th c. and the 19th c. they also had specialized in cheap production for the market and parallel elite ateliers, which made expensive home icons, accepted commissions coming from secular persons and members of the clergy. Domestic icons, regardless whether they were done on more than one boards or not, in their content consisted of many elements, which allows automatically to identify them either as "Virgin with saints", or "The Virgin with saints and feasts", "Deesis with Saints", etc. Namely the selection and combination of

certain figures and scenes on the surface of the icon classify a certain type as a domestic icon or an icon designated for the church. Combinations of certain figures and scenes are also decisive in cases when the issue of the professional and social status of the owner of the icon are raised.

If the classification of icons in the home is done according to the central image of the icon field – namely because its dominant position determines the compositional and semantic link with additional figure, scenes – the entire variety of types which amount to the two main groups – Mariological types and Deesis Types. The principle of space, semantic and functional subordination of “secondary” elements, of lateral forms/elements of “primary” figures, placed in a central position and field of the icon, who dominate in their size and dogmatic meaning over everything, including the periphery of its semantic fields. We are facilitated by the circumstance, that the variants of central images are limited:

Mariological images prevail, and the compositions of Deesis occupy a comparatively smaller areas, as well as the image of some saint may appear in rare cases in the central field. The collection of domestic icons in the National Art Gallery is a fine possibility to present each of the main types and their varieties.

ON SEVERAL UNPUBLISHED WORKS OF CHURCH MINIATURE PLASTIC WORKS IN BULGARIAN MUSEUM COLLECTIONS

Elena Genova

The text offers an analysis and attempted dating of several unpublished works of church miniature plastics together with the exhibition *Taxidiotēs and the National Revival Period Culture in 2004*, namely

1. Panagia (Chalcedony, 15th c. diameter 6 cm., National Art Gallery, 1065).

has been studied in the context of this type of church plate and in connection with other published panagia of the Byzantine period, as well as its ritual function in the *orthros* (matins) and on other occasion.

2. Miniature icon-enkolpion with 12 feasts (16th c. ivory, 6,5 x 6 x 0,6 cm) National Art Gallery.

The icon is interpreted in the context of the development of post Byzantine plastic arts in line with the traditions of carving on ivory and steatite from the 11th - 14th c. An identical icon from the Dionisiou Monastery, Mt.Athos is cited.

3. Miniature icon-triptych (end of 18th c. woodcarving, silver revetment, 14 x 9 cm. National Art Gallery)

This type was made up to the end of the 18th c. as a reminiscence of miniature plastic art on ivory and steatite. The revetment is pure filigree contemporary with the triptych.

4. Three wood-carved icons of the **Annunciation, the Tree of Life, and Four Evangelists** (1892, wood, National Ethnographical Museum 31885); **The Annunciation with Prophets** (1892, wood, National Ethnographical Museum, 31886) and **St. George** (1894, wood, National Ethnographical Museum, 31884...)

At the back there is a note, that they were bought from the Kapsokalivia chapel by the artist Arsenius with his group at Mt.Athos. These are quality works of late church miniature woodcarving, the work of the miniature's woodcarver from Mt. Athos.

ON THE STRAIGHTFORWARDNESS OF AN EXCENTRIC REVIVAL PERIOD FIGURE THOUGHTS ON THE JUBILEE EXHIBITION OF NIKOLA OBRAZOPISOV

Ljudmila Dobрева

The article traces interesting features of the eminent Bulgarian icon painter of the Revival period Nikola Obrazopisov (1859-1915), in connection with the anniversary March-May 2005 at the Department of Medieval at the National Museum for Fine Art – the Crypt together with the 90th Jubilee Exhibition of Zographs death at the Samokov City Historical Museum.

Nikola Obrazopisov trained under his father

Joan Ikonopists one of the first and particularly impressive representatives of the Samokov school of icon painting. A Renaissance personality at the age of 23, he took an active part in the struggle for church and national independence. A petition personally made by the painter, contains the names of the citizens of Samokov, who support the idea of church service at long last to be conducted in Bulgarian, previously conducted in Greek, has survived. Hatred towards the pro-Greek supporters in the church, the *Phannariotes*, made him change his family name from Ikonopisets (Icon painter) – to his father's family name –Obrazopisets (image painter) and in none of his works has he placed Greek inscriptions. However interesting a personality Nikola Obrazopisov appears to have been, he remained in Bulgarian history with the icons he has painted. His first signed work is dated 1853, his last 1902. The painter has signed most of his icons and murals, which allows us to trace his development as an artist. The period up to the 60s of the 19th c. can be called his early period. From the 60s to the end of his life Obrazopisov has decorated over twenty churches and carried out numerous commissions for icons. The leading ones are the church of St.Peter and Paul in the Orlitsa metochou, Beliova Church, the St.Savour Monastery of Dolni Lozen, the church of the Presentation of the Virgin in the Temple, at Panagjurishte. The historical composition the Translation of the Relics of St John of Rila from Tarnovo to the Rila Monastery was painted for the first time in the Orlitsa metochiou. The artists' selection of saints for the decoration of various churches is also interesting: he had painted the images of over 40 Bulgarian and Slavic saints, moreover in many instances they have been painted in the lower band of the murals. His picture *The horo dance in the village*, commissioned for the Plovdiv Fair, is an emblematic work. Nikola Obrazopisov's times have indeed been dynamic; concerning icon painting it departs from the mystic and sought the road to the realistic, yet remaining within the framework of the Eastern-Orthodox canon. This is the approach towards Nikola Obrazopisov's works.