

**INSTITUTE OF ART STUDIES
BULGARIAN ACADEMY OF SCIENCES**



SIMEON TONCHEV SIMEONOV

**PREPARATORY DRAWINGS IN THE CREATIVE
PROCESS OF ICON PAINTERS FROM THE LATE 18TH
AND THE 19TH CENTURIES (USING MATERIAL FROM
BULGARIAN COLLECTIONS)**

THESIS ABSTRACT

**OF A THESIS SUBMITTED FOR THE EDUCATIONAL AND SCIENTIFIC
DEGREE OF *DOCTOR (PhD)***

Sofia 2025

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for acquiring the educational and scientific degree Doctor (PhD) in the
scientific specialty of Art and Fine Arts, professional field 8.1., Theory of
Arts

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The PhD thesis has been discussed and approved for public defence at a meeting of the Research Group of Medieval and National Revival, Fine Arts Department, held on 8 May 2025.

The PhD thesis consists of 323 pages including introduction, six chapters, conclusion, bibliography of 464 titles, appendix, and an album of 190 pages with 247 images.

The public defence will be held on 30 September 2025, 11:00 am, at the Institute of Art Studies, 21 Krakra Str., in the framework of the scientific jury's session. The Members of the scientific committee are: Assoc. Prof. Angel Nikolov, PhD, Sofia University; Prof. Blagovesta Ivanova-Tsotsova, DSc, VSU; Prof. Elena Genova, PhD, reviewer; Prof. Elissaveta Moussakova, PhD, Institute of Art Studies, BAS; Corr.- Mem. Prof. Ivanka Gergova, DSc, chairman of the scientific jury and reviewer.

The materials are available to those who may be interested at the Administrative Services Department of the Institute of Art Studies, 21 Krakra Str., Sofia.

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I. General characteristics of the dissertation

The dissertation studies and analyses drawings of Revival icon painters kept at different institutions on the territory of Bulgaria: museums, galleries, archives, libraries, etc. The title *“Preparatory drawings in the artistic process of icon painters from the late 18th and the 19th centuries (using material from Bulgarian collections)”* was selected for several reasons. Most importantly, it is a relevant topic that meets the increasing interest in the drawings of icon painters. Until now, these have not been the subject of comprehensive research. The theoretical problems connected to the role of drawing in the icon painters’ creative process also deserve more attention.

The research interest towards the drawings of Revival icon painters emerged with the discovery of the archive sketches of Zahariy Zograf in the summer of 1927 by A. Protich. The materials were first published in 1930 in his work “Denationalization and revival of our art from 1393 to 1878”. Along with his contribution, the work of A. Vasiliev and V. Zahariev in searching and preserving the icon painters’ archives including engravings, stamps, drawings and hermeneiai must also be mentioned. The interest towards the icon painters’ drawings has been varying in intensity through the decades. The literature on art studies from the more distant past does not present much information on them. In the cases where drawings have been discussed or reproduced, these mainly concern secular topics and are authored by the first academic painters of the Revival. The book “Bulgarian Revival Masters” (1965) by A. Vasilev and his monograph on Toma Vishanov Molera (1969) are the first works focusing on the religious drawings of the icon painters. In 1981, A. Sharenkov published an article devoted to the technique and technology of the drawings of Revival icon painters. The years after 1990 saw a deeper research interest towards the icon painters’ drawings. These have been considered in monographic studies on Revival icon painters and the first academic painters as an integral part of their oeuvre, as well as in thematic research on fine arts during the Revival period.

The aim of the dissertation is to find, study and systematize the preparatory drawings of Revival icon painters kept in various collections in Bulgaria. The ancillary materials used for comparison include drawings by builders and carvers, the academic painters of the era, self-thought draftsmen and depictions in manuscripts decorated by icon painters. The importance of preparatory drawings in the work practices and methods of the icon painters has rarely been considered in scientific research. Therefore, another goal of this thesis is to fill this gap in the theory. The expected result is to clarify the applications of the drawings in the icon painters’ practice. The drawings were researched using an interdisciplinary approach. The main method of work is description and documentation of the considered collections followed by analysis of the drawings included therein.

II. Drawings dated until the end of the 19th century in the Bulgarian collections. General review

This chapter offers a comprehensive review of the drawings dated until the end of the 19th century, including both collections considered in the literature and such found in the course of the present study, as well as individual drawings. The works are presented in accordance with their repository location along with the available data on their origin.

1. Drawings from the 15th – 17th centuries

From this period, one drawing has been both discovered and, paradoxically, lost. It is believed to be the work of the scholar and icon painter St. Pimen, and was drawn on the inside surface of the wooden board of the binding of one of his manuscripts, Octoechos NBKM 197, dated in research to circa 1618–1620. The drawing consists of several sketches: a saint's head, half-length figures of saints, and a floral ornament. Given the location in which they appear, it remains uncertain whether these are intentional preparatory sketches applied in the creation of a larger work, be it an icon, a mural, or a woodcarving.

2. Drawings from the 18th-19th centuries

The collection and preservation of the icon painters' working archives in a museum context began at the start of the past century. Over the first four decades of the 20th century, drawings by Nikolai Pavlovich, Hristo Tsokev, Stanislav Dospevski, Zahariy Zograf, as well as by icon painters from the Tryavna School, were successively acquired by the National Museum in Sofia. In 1951, the drawings of Pavlovich, Tsokev, Dospevski, and Zahariy Zograf were transferred to the fund of the National Art Gallery (NAG), whose collection of Revival-period drawings is today the largest of its kind. Drawings from the 18th–19th centuries are also held in the Centre for Slavo-Byzantine Studies "Prof. Ivan Duychev" (CSBS), the Institute of Ethnology and Folklore Studies with Ethnographic Museum - part of the National Museum of Ethnography (IEFEM – NME), the National Church Institute of History and Archaeology (NCIHA) and the National Church Museum of History and Archaeology (NCMHA), the Museum Collection of the National Academy of Art (NAA), the Bulgarian Historical Archive (BHA) at the National Library "Sts. Cyril and Methodius" (NLCM), the Sofia City Art Gallery (SCAG), and the Central State Archives (CSA). Institutions in the country that naturally possess such drawings include the museums in Samokov, Tryavna, and Bansko – centers of artistic schools from the Revival period. The House-Museum "Stanislav Dospevski" in Pazardzhik preserves several manuscripts, printed editions, and one sketchbook containing drawings by the artist from the time when he studied in Russia. The State Archive in Gabrovo keeps drawings by the local icon painter Ivan Hadzhivasilev. The Rila Monastery preserves an archive of notes and drawings by monk Theodosius of the monastery, who also studied in Russia.

This section focuses in greater detail on drawings by icon painters who were not affiliated with the established artistic schools of the period. An album registered in the graphic archive of Zahariy Zograf at the NAG once belonged to the icon painters Yoan Popovich and Yordan Mihov from the town of Elena. In its entirety, the album dates from the first half of the 19th century, and the drawings were created by both painters. The prevailing assumption that the sketchbook contains drawings by Athonite iconographers, specifically Hierodeacon David and Monk Yakov, who painted the Church of St. Nicholas in Elena, has been called into question. The parallels noted in the murals do not necessarily indicate that the drawings are related to their work, as they may instead be connected to the partial repainting of the church carried out by Popovich and Mihov. These particular drawings are likely by the hand of Yoan Popovich. One sheet depicts Virgin Mary's head and a crown next to it. The same sheet bears the seal of the Kapinovo Monastery where Popovich worked, which supports his authorship. The crown is identical to that of the Virgin in one of the icons he painted for the same monastery, dated 1820. Yordan Mihov is the author of twelve illustrations of the Apocalypse, a series of drawings from the Christological Cycle based on the Gospel of Luke and other sketches, initially drawn in pencil and later outlined in purple ink. The epigraphy of the inscriptions accompanying his

works matches the 1826 note on the album's cover, which testifies to Mihov's separation from his teacher, Yoan Popovich. This is further confirmed by Mihov's works dated from 1826 onward, as well as by the fact that the album contains drawings related to the design of his personal seal. Yordan Mihov, who was the principal draftsman, compiled all the drawings into a single album.

A particularly interesting item kept at the Specialized Museum of Carving and Icon Painting (SMCIP) in Tryavna is an album of lithographs, some of which have drawings (sketches) on their back sides. Several of the drawings are signed by their author, Dimitar Minov Arnaudov, who noted that he was born in the village of Karaköy, Greece. Based on his name and place of birth, it can be inferred that he belonged to the Minov icon-painting family from Galichnik, which had relocated to the village of Karaköy (present-day Katafito, Greece). However, his precise familial connection remains difficult to determine. He was most likely a son of Milosh Arnaudov.

The Regional Historical Museum (RHM) "Acad. Yordan Ivanov" in Kyustendil holds a previously unknown collection of Revival-period drawings unfamiliar to researchers and the public alike, which has been thoroughly studied in this dissertation. The drawings are by various icon painters and show parallels with works from Bansko preserved at the CSBS, as well as with drawings by Samokov iconographers dispersed across different collections throughout the country. This collection includes many drawings on oiled paper, similar to those kept at the SCAG and the NAA. The drawings from all three collections replicate icons from the iconostasis of the Church of St. George in the village of Golyamo Belovo, Pazardzhik region, painted in 1808 by Hristo Dimitrov of Samokov. The drawings are authored by two artists, who were likely among the icon painters working in the church. In 1852, murals in the church were painted by Petar Valyov, who at that time was joined by an apprentice from the same village—Kostadin Hadzhi Angelov. It is therefore plausible that Petar is the author of four apostolic drawings kept at the SCAG, while the remainder may have been produced by Kostadin. A published account notes that Kostadin stole the papers of his teachers. It is certain that he possessed drawings now preserved in the collection of the NAA. In this collection, as well as among the drawings from the RHM – Kyustendil, there are three preparatory drawings by Kostadin Hadzhi Angelov for a shroud depicting the Burial of Christ, painted by him in 1873.

Revival icon painters also copied and decorated manuscripts, which are included in this chapter due to their drawn decorations. The icon painter Yanachko Stanimirov from the village of Breze left drawings in two manuscripts he copied in the early 1840s. Dicho Krastev decorated his two hermeneiai from 1844 and 1851 in the tradition of manuscript books, with ornamental headpieces and initials; some iconographic descriptions are accompanied by small sketch-like drawings. The Rila Monastery preserves the hermeneia of the icon painters Yanaki and Nikola of Dupnitsa, as well as the iconographic manual of Varban Gardev Kolarov (1863), all of which include drawings unrelated to the manuscript text. The hermeneia of the icon painter Georgi Damyanov from 1832, kept at the CSBS, contains later drawings by him dated 1843. Drawings, technical drafts, and architectural plans by master builders and woodcarvers of the Revival period are also preserved. Their authors include Stoycho and Dimitar Fandakov of Samokov, Gencho Novakov, and Ivan and Nikola Kasev of Tryavna, among others.

Lastly, attention must be paid to the drawings of self-taught draftsmen involved in the visual arts. These include Tancho Shabanov and Hristo Koev. They are known as illustrators of the April Uprising and their works are preserved in the BHA at the NLCM and at the Museum

Directorate in Koprivshtitsa, respectively. The archive of the writer and literary and art critic Vasil Popovich, kept at the CSA, includes his drawings and watercolors.

III. Materials and techniques in drawings from the 18th–19th centuries

A dedicated chapter in the dissertation explores the paper, materials, and techniques used by icon painters for their drawings during the 18th and 19th centuries. The techniques and preparation of some of the materials are described in the hermeneiai.

1. Paper

The icon painters used paper imported into the Ottoman Empire from Italy, Austria, France, England, and Russia. Italian-made paper was most commonly used, as Italy was the principal supplier to the Ottoman Empire. A small portion of the paper used by icon painters in the 19th century was locally produced within the Ottoman Empire. Thick, handmade and (semi-) glossy papers were widely employed. Thicker varieties were used for creating stencils (pricked drawings), as they withstood repeated puncturing and prolonged use. Glossy papers were predominantly employed during the second half of the 19th century. The watermarks (filigrees) of the paper allow for approximate to precise dating of the drawings, serving as a *terminus post quem*. The watermarks found in Revival drawings have not been specifically studied and are sometimes overlooked in research. The papers used for these drawings feature distinctive watermarks not documented in the filigranological albums of Ottoman documents up to the end of the 18th century, nor in those of Slavic printed books from the Bulgarian territory.

2. Materials

The employed materials were not exclusively intended for drawing, as they were primarily used in writing or general painting practices. Inks, including Indian ink, were most commonly used, followed by charcoal, tempera, watercolour-type paints, pencils, and *sanguine*. In composition, inks were mixtures of green vitriol (FeSO₄) and plant-based substances or other materials such as cones, oak galls, walnut husks, soot, etc., that yield the pigment. These inks characteristically change colour over time and turn brown, unlike Indian inks, the next most used type, which retain their black colour. Such colour change is observed in the drawings from the Tryavna sketchbook preserved at the NHM. The ingredients for preparing drawing inks and charcoal, as listed in the hermeneiai, are the same, though their proportions and technological processes vary.

3. Techniques

The iconographic manuals provide two primary methods for reproduction and copying of images, which icon painters could employ in their practice. These are most thoroughly described in the hermeneia of Dionysios of Fournas, whose precise translation is included in the second hermeneia of Dicho Zograph, dated 1851. In the hermeneiai of Bulgarian icon painters, the instructions are more concise. In the first method, an oiled sheet of paper is placed over an icon, and the image is traced with paint or charcoal. Once oiled, the paper becomes transparent and the image is clearly visible. A significant disadvantage of this technique is that after drying, the paper becomes extremely brittle and fragile. The drawings by Kostadin Hadzhi Angelov and Petar Valyov in the collections of the NAA, the SCAG, and the RHM in Kyustendil were made on oiled paper but created freehand.

In the second method, the contours of the image on the icon are traced in black ink, and red is used to indicate highlights and shading on faces and garments. A damp sheet of paper is then

carefully pressed against the icon, producing a print of the image. The study of drawing collections reveals that this method was used rarely. One conclusion, supported by evidence from both Bulgarian and foreign collections, is that freehand drawing in two colors was preferred by icon painters over copying via the technique described in Dionysios's *hermeneia*. Variants of these methods appear in the *hermeneiai* of Bulgarian icon painters. For instance, charcoal may be used instead of ink, in which case the paper must remain dry. It is also possible to rub the sheet placed on the icon with an agate stone to produce an impression.

The *hermeneia* of the icon painters Yanaki and Nikola of Dupnitsa contains two techniques for creating and using templates (pricked drawings). The manuals of Zahariy Petrovich and Hristo Yovevich include additional instructions such as "How to colour/dye papers," "How to paint miniatures with *zank* on parchment or bone", "How to Apply Gold to Paper," and similar techniques, all of which are also relevant to drawing on paper.

IV. Drawings by icon painters of the Tryavna school

1. Drawings by icon painters of the Vitanov family

A notebook with drawings known as the *drawn hermeneia* from Tryavna is owned by the National Archaeological Institute with Museum (NAIM), though it is currently on temporary deposit at the NHM. Its content is exceptionally rich and diverse. While the drawings are stylistically very similar, they were likely created by two different authors. On the first page of the notebook, a note reveals that the drawings were made in 1810 in Sevlievo. Simeon Tsonyuv and Ioanikiy Papa Vitanov are professionally associated with this town. The established parallels between cycles from the notebook and their icons suggest that they are the authors of the drawings. Scenes from the hagiographic cycle of St. George closely match compositions from the hagiographic icon of St. George painted by Ioanikiy in 1814 for the Kilifarevo Monastery. He also used one of the Passion of Christ cycles and the hagiographic cycle of Apostle Peter from the notebook as models for two of his icons. The hagiographic cycle of Prophet Elijah is repeated verbatim in a signed 1819 icon by his uncle, Simeon Tsonyuv, in the Church of St. Demetrius in Sliven. The Hexameron cycle, structured in nine drawings, finds a close iconographic parallel in the lower panels of the iconostasis in the church in the village of Shanovo, now kept in the Art Gallery in Kazanlak. Pencil drawings and inscriptions by a third author, as well as parallels between some drawings and later icons, indicate that the notebook was used over a long period by the icon painters of the Vitanov family. The scenes from the life of the Prophet Elijah show similarities to the hagiographic icon of the prophet painted by Tsonyuv and Simeon Simeonov in 1858 for the Church of the Nativity of the Virgin in the town of Elena. Drawings from the Tryavna notebook in the NHM also served as models for icons of the Virgin Mary - Immaculate Conception and the Holy Trinity with the Seven Archangels.

The archival collection of Hristo Daskalov in the BHA at the CMNL includes a notebook which belonged to Boncho Dimitrov of Tryavna. It contains his personal notes and accounts from the second decade of the 19th century, along with several drawings. These show that Boncho Dimitrov was an icon painter and woodcarver, owned a shop, and engaged in trade. Based on a note that he was painting icons for the town of Perushtitsa and on the drawings of a horse and a dragon, an icon of the warrior saints George and Demetrius has recently been attributed to him in the literature.

The NCIHA preserves a notebook containing Menaion engravings and drawings that belonged to other icon painters from the Vitanov family—Tsonyuv Simeonov and Mityo Tsonyuv. The

notebook was purchased from the latter. The Menaion engravings printed in 1832 and 1833 in Moscow are glued on the first twelve pages. The drawings, which cover a variety of themes, are of later origin. They are dated between 1850 and the first decade of the 20th century, based on the lifespans of Tsonyu Simeonov and his sons Simeon and Mityu. The dating may be pushed forward by a decade, to the 1860s, since one drawing of Virgin Mary with the Infant Jesus is based on an icon by Stanislav Dospevski. Earlier studies classified many of the notebook's drawings as being drawn from life, but this assessment is now questioned. For instance, the Crucifixion of Christ composition drawn on two pages was copied from a small clipping glued to the front cover. The drawings of male heads have been claimed to be portraits drawn from life or photographs. However, they are highly schematic, and one of them is a direct copy produced through perforations, making it unlikely they were intended as portraits of real individuals. Two faint pencil drawings of a man lying down with crossed arms resemble postmortem portraits similar to those painted by Hristo Tsokev. Stylistically, three distinct hands can be discerned in the notebook, suggesting that the drawings should be attributed to three different authors.

2. Drawings by icon painters from the Zahariev family

The SMCIP in Tryavna keeps two sketchbooks and individual sheets with drawings by the iconographer Zahariya Tsanyuv. In the literature, these notebooks have been referred to and classified as *hermeneiai*, but their content differs from the typical “icon painters manuals”. In addition to drawings, they contain inscriptions meant to appear in scrolls, books, or as texts identifying images and scenes, in both Bulgarian and Greek. They also include accounts, biographical notes, and various clippings. The notebooks were used simultaneously by the icon painter throughout his creative career, providing information on various commissions and icons. The notebook with richer content remains less thoroughly studied. It contains the earliest known work by Zahariy Tsanyuv—Mother of God Quick to Harken (*Gorgoepikoos*) with St. Nicholas and Venerable St. Onuphrius of Gabrovo from 1825. This drawing reveals that the young artist was a talented icon painter. An inscription beneath the drawing states that he started to use the notebook in that same year. On the first page, there is a more detailed note in which the icon painter explains that in 1879 he “renewed” the notebook. Most likely, he had to rebind it at that time, since the chronological order of the drawings has been disrupted. Texts beneath the drawings provide information about the places where Zahariy Tsanyuv worked. An inscription below his drawing of St. Demetrius of Basarbovo suggests that the artist painted icons for the church in the village of Basarbovo, Ruse region, in 1874. The model for this drawing is the life icon of St. Demetrius of Basarbovo from the Church of St. George in Ruse, dated to the early 19th century. The artist had previously painted other icons for this church. The Passion of Christ cycle from Zahariy Tsanyuv's notebook shows stylistic similarities with the cycle in the notebook of the Vitanov family, preserved at the NHM. Tsanyuv used as a model an icon painted by Ioanikiy Papa Vitanov around 1820, now in the collection of the NCMHA. Many of Tsanyuv's drawings represent various iconographic types of the Mother of God, some of which are copied from graphics. His drawing of St. Menas with scenes from his life matches a life icon of the saint displayed in the Icon Museum in Tryavna.

NCMHA preserves a collection of pricked drawings (*templates*) by icon painters from Tryavna. Based on their execution and style, they were likely created at two different times or by two iconographers, thus forming two distinct groups. In the first group, the drawings were initially made in black ink and then perforated; the name of each composition was inscribed in ink above

it. In the second, larger group, the outlines of scenes or figures were perforated directly, without preparatory drawing. A characteristic feature of both groups is that the sheets were joined to form scrolls, making them easier to store and transport. Based on the watermarks, the pricked drawings from the second group have been dated to the 1840s. Some of the drawings, such as Sunday of the Samaritan Woman, Sunday of the Myrrh-bearing Women, All Saints' Sunday, and Nativity of Mary, have parallels among published Tryavna icons. The pricked drawing of the Sunday of the Samaritan Woman, which shows no signs of use, is identical to the icon of the same subject from the Batoshevo Monastery, painted by Zahariya Tsanyuv.

In the State Archive in Gabrovo, there is an archival unit containing 23 drawings and pricked drawings originating from the atelier of Todor Genkov, Ivancho Kanchev, and Georgi Dimitrov Minev. Interestingly, the sheets on which the works were created were reused. These are drafts of letters, telegrams and similar documents, subpoenas and hand-drawn maps, all of which provide valuable information. Based on the marked dates, they can be dated to the post-Liberation period. The pricked drawing of God Sabaoth is authored by Todor Genkov, as the back of the sheet contains two telegram drafts addressed to the village of Kodzha Buk (now Golyamo Bukovo, Sredets Municipality). These are related to icons he was painting for the local church. A pricked drawing with a long floral ornament was prepared on a letter cut into strips. After the pieces were reassembled and the document was restored, it turned out to be from 23 February 1880, addressed to the icon painter Ivan Genkov. In the letter, the board of the church in the town of Dolni Dabnik urges him to send the commissioned icons within a short timeframe. The letter serves as a historical source for the church in Dolni Dabnik. Two pricked drawings were made on the back of a draft contract for partnership. Although the full text has not been preserved, it provides new information about the largest of the last icon-painting ateliers in Tryavna. From the draft, it becomes clear that three iconographers, namely Genkov, Kanchev, and Venko Kalchev, entered into partnership and the contract was signed on 26 October 1890. This can be considered as the founding date of the atelier, and the participation of Venko Kalchev (1826–1891) is a previously unknown detail from his biography. Their collaboration did not last long, as Kalchev passed away the following year.

3. Drawings by Icon Painters from the Minev Family

Drawings by the Minev family of icon painters, also known as the archive of Nikola Genkov or Vitan Sarnev, are preserved at the SMCIP in Tryavna. This archive has not been systematically studied, and only a small portion of its content has been published. Based on stylistic features, the known drawings have been attributed to various authors, but their exact identities cannot yet be determined. Only future research can thoroughly present the collection, reveal what engravings and prints the icon painters of the family owned, and establish the authorship of the drawings.

V. Drawings by the icon painters of the Bansko school

1. Drawings by Toma Vishanov

The notebook with drawings Cod. D. Slavo 48 from the collection of the CSBS “Ivan Duychev” belonged to the icon painter Toma Vishanov Molera. On the inside of the front cover is his signature *Тoма X. Икономъ*, almost erased, and an inscription on the back cover reads *Anno 1786*. This is the first definite date in his biography, accompanied by his only autograph. His drawings remain the earliest precisely dated examples of their kind from the Bulgarian Revival

period. The year indicates they were drawn around the time when Toma Vishanov was preparing the icons for the Church of Archangel Gabriel in the village of Budakalász near Budapest, Hungary, or shortly after. Thirty-eight sheets of the sketchbook have been preserved. The original pagination, still visible on some sheets, is alphabetical. It goes up to HE (=55), suggesting that only a limited number of the drawings from the sketchbook have survived. The drawings by Toma Vishanov Molera were created with pen and Indian ink; he drew them quickly, with a confident hand. His main expressive means was the line, but he also used hatching, although sparingly. His style is distinctive and the dissertations adds another sheet with scenes to the drawings attributed to him. Some of Molera's drawings have graphic models. The Old Testament scenes are copied from the Piscator Bible. The models for the Apocalypse cycle drawings are the engravings in the New Testament published in Chernihiv in 1717. It remains unclear whether the author of the drawings ever used them. A comparison with his preserved painted works shows no indication that he employed them as models. However, the next generation of icon painters from Bansko used the drawings from Cod. D. Slavo 48.

2. Drawings by Dimitar Molerov

Toma Vishanov did not fill all the pages of the notebook Cod. D. Slavo 48 kept at the CSBS, which allowed another icon painter to draw on the remaining sheets. He did not sign his works, but in the literature several drawings have been attributed to Vishanov's son, Dimitar Molerov. This attribution is the most logical and is accepted in the current text. Also, more drawings from the notebook that have not previously been discussed in research, are now attributed to Molerov. Dimitar Molerov has a distinctive drawing style. His line is precise, thin, and even, meticulously executed, carefully outlining the forms and enclosing them tightly, without omitting details such as the characters' eyes or the ornate patterns on their garments. Characteristically, all of his drawings bear inscriptions in Greek. The medallions with double concentric circles are also found in Molerov's icons. So far, no dates have been proposed for Dimitar Molerov's drawings in Cod. D. Slavo 48. A dating reference is the drawing of Russian Emperor Nicholas I, which was copied from an engraving printed in Vienna in 1828–1829. The upper limit for the dating of his drawings is likely 1841 - the year of his icon of the New Testament Trinity in the church in Bansko, which shares numerous similarities with the sketchbook drawing. In Toma Vishanov's copy of Johann Ulrich Kraus's Bible from 1700, there is a drawing on the flyleaf before the title page depicting the Virgin Glycophilousa. Based on style, it can also be attributed to Dimitar Molerov, especially since another similar drawing appears among his works in *Cod. D. Slavo 48*.

3. Drawings by Mihalko Golev

Mihalko Golev used an old accounting ledger for his drawings, preserved as Cod. D. Slavo 45 at the CSBS. Based on notes left by the icon painter, the drawings date from 1860 to 1864, when he "finished the notebook," as he indicated on one of the last pages. His earliest work is the 1860 icon of the New Testament Trinity in the Holy Trinity Church in Bansko. It represents a smaller copy of Dimitar Molerov's icon. Since it is a copy, it likely dates from the time of his apprenticeship under Dimitar Molerov. Therefore, the drawings also correspond to the period of Golev's training as an icon painter. Another sketchbook with his drawings dated 1863 is kept at the Bansko Museum, although only four examples from it have been published. The execution of the drawings is varied: some are purely linear, in pencil or ink; others are developed with blurred ink; most are annotated with

colour indications for the separate elements of the composition and were later coloured accordingly. The colour marking clearly shows that the drawings were copied by Golev from painted models which can be found among the icons in the Holy Trinity Church in Bansko. Among the ornaments on one of the pages in Mihalko Golev's notebook are the inscriptions "Lozna 1872 1872" and "Kyustendil. Lozna. 1872." According to available research, the murals in the Church of St. Petka in the village of Lozno are unsigned and are attributed to Golev based on stylistic and other characteristics. These notes confirm his authorship of the murals in that church. The collection *Cod. D. Slavo 47* kept at the CSBS includes one sheet of drawings that has come loose from Golev's sketchbook.

4. The drawings from Cod. D. Slavo 47

The term "sketchbook" for *Cod. D. Slavo 47* kept at the CSBS is provisional, as it is a collection of drawings not bound into a single volume. They vary in format, paper, materials, technique, and style. The collection even includes works by icon painters not associated with Bansko. Observations indicate that 13 sheets were indeed part of a notebook—they share the same dimensions and paper type, and include two bifolia. All have a missing bottom corner, torn off in a consistent shape, and show traces of perforation along the edge, indicating that the drawings were originally bound together by the icon painter. The drawings have been copied from Toma Vishanov Molera's sketchbook. Several examples suggest that Molera's notebook once contained more material, but some drawings were lost over time. Such is the drawing of The Stoning of Archdeacon Stephen, which replicates a composition from one of Molera's icons in the Greek church in Budakalász. This sketchbook includes a drawing of St. John the Theologian based on the engravings by Averkiy Kazachkivsky, suggesting that Vishanov once made a now-lost drawing of the same subject. His notebook contains drawings of the other Evangelists. The last example includes two scenes: The Sacrifice of Abraham and Jacob's Dream and Ladder, part of a bifolio, whose reverse sides show copies of the first drawings from Molerov's sketchbook. These works show a style distinct from the other icon painters from Bansko, which has led researchers to propose that the drawings in *Cod. D. Slavo 47* might be by Dimitar Sirleshtov. This possible attribution conflicts with the dating of the drawings to the first half of the 19th century. The sheets identified as part of a notebook contain watermarks – three hats with the initials AMC, IMC, or BC – dating them to 1813–1845. It is surprising that Dimitar Sirleshtov would have access to unused paper made 30 to 50 years earlier, as according to his known works, his creative career began much later. Given the dating of the drawings to the first half of the century, they could be attributed to Dimitar Molerov. They are rendered in a fine, even line like those drawn by him in his father's sketchbook. Another potential author is Simeon D. Molerov, especially since a drawing of four saints was copied from Dimitar's drawings. Other drawings in *Cod. D. Slavo 47* stylistically match this one. The collection at the Regional History Museum (RHM) in Kyustendil contains four drawings similar in materials and style to those in *Cod. D. Slavo 47* at the CSBS.

5. Drawings by Ivan Dimitrov from Kocherinovo

The sketchbook of the icon painter Ivan Dimitrov from Kocherinovo is preserved at the IEFEM (NME). He purchased the notebook in June 1869. Some of the drawings date from 1869–1870, while the rest are from 1873–1874. Similar to Mihalko Golev, Dimitrov also copied icons from the Church of the Holy Trinity in Bansko. Other drawings replicate works from the *Cod. D. Slavo 47* collection at the CSBS. Based on iconography, several drawings are associated with

the work of the academic painter Stanislav Dospevski. Ivan Dimitrov copied some of his icons in his notebook. One of the compositions depicts the Immaculate Conception of the Virgin Mary, the closest parallel to which is an icon from 1864 painted for the iconostasis of the Chapel of the Annunciation at the Transfiguration Monastery. Among the royal icons in the Church of the Nativity of the Mother of God in Kocherinovo, the icon of the Virgin and Child is identical in composition to the drawing on folio 20 of the examined notebook. This provides grounds to attribute the unsigned icon to Ivan Dimitrov. The royal tier icons date to 1878, and several other icons were painted by the same hand.

VI. Drawings by icon painters of the Samokov School

After many years of research, most art historians agree that the drawings and engravings from the two folders titled "Zahariy Zograf" and "Stanislav Dospevski" at the NAG are part of a larger archive, collected and used by three generations of icon painters from Samokov, likely starting with Hristo Dimitrov. Therefore, it is more accurate to consider this a collective archive of the Dospevski family of icon painters. This archive also includes a smaller collection preserved in the Samokov Historical Museum, as well as Stanislav Dospevski's drawings kept in his house-museum in Pazardzhik.

Attributing individual works from the archive to specific members of the Dospevski family is exceptionally difficult due to the lack of signed drawings. To determine authorship, iconographic parallels or stylistic similarities with painted works by Samokov artists are most often sought. However, the possibility that certain drawings were used by multiple icon painters in succession should not be overlooked, as indeed such examples exist.

1. Drawings by Hristo Dimitrov

Recent research has significantly altered the creative biography of Hristo Dimitrov, founder of the Samokov School. The drawing of Virgin Mary Enthroned has long been considered preparatory for several of his icons, which have lately been attributed to icon painters on Mount Athos. Therefore, this drawing is best understood as evidence of his interest in Athonite art and possibly even as part of self-instruction based on Athonite icons preserved in Samokov. The drawing may have served as a model for future icons. Hristo Dimitrov is also associated with the acquisition of numerous pricked drawings described as "Athonite" and characterized by densely perforated contours. These templates come from different authors and, therefore, date from a longer time period than previously thought. This suggests the possibility of different origins. All of them were used, yet no parallels are found between the pricked drawings and known works by Samokov painters. The archive contains a pricked drawing of the Virgin enthroned with prophets and her Old Testament Prefigurations. There are not any known icons by Samokov painters with this composition and iconography, but two such icons by Tryavna painters have been published. Another unpublished pricked drawing depicting the Presentation of Christ in the Temple matches closely some icons by the Cretan painter Theophanes. These models and parallels point to a new direction of inquiry regarding the origins of the pricked drawings. The available biographical evidence about Hristo Dimitrov rules out the possibility of formal training in Athonite icon-painting workshops. Currently there is no indication that he worked on Mount Athos. It remains unclear how he acquired the pricked drawings, but it is plausible that these presumably Athonite templates belong to a different archive that became mixed with the Samokov collection.

2. Drawings by Dimitar Hristov

This section examines drawings that have iconographic parallels in the work of Dimitar Hristov and are thus accepted in the literature as his pieces. They demonstrate that throughout his career, the icon painter made use of drawings and *anthivola*. He used them multiple times, as they reproduce painting or graphic models, some of Ukrainian origin. In the NAG archive, there is a drawing repeatedly cited as preparatory for the earliest known icon by Dimitar Hristov dated 1820 — Virgin Mary of the Three Hands with St. Sabbas of Serbia and St. Simeon of Serbia. The drawing was made using the transfer technique described by Dionysius in his *hermeneia* and represents a negative of the icon. Thus, it is a imprinted drawing rather than a preparatory sketch. Over the course of his long career, Dimitar Hristov returned to the formal solution of his first icon and, respectively, to the drawing based on it, when painting other icons. In his mural ensembles, he included scenes such as the Old Testament Trinity / Hospitality of Abraham and Jesus Christ at the Last Supper / Bread of Life, for which corresponding drawings are preserved in the archive. On two occasions, he used as a model the drawing Virgin Mary Enthroned, attributed to his father. The mural paintings by Dimitar Hristov in the *katholikon* of the Rila Monastery are associated with the drawings Righteous and Sinful Confession, the Apocalypse cycle, and the portraits of Valko Todorovich Chalakov and his wife Rada, among others.

3. Drawings by Zahariy Hristov

Drawings document the preparatory stages in Zahariy Zograf's work, from his earliest icons to his final pieces. His first icons of the Virgin Mary Eleousa of Kykkos from 1829 and 1830 already reveal his working methods. He used preparatory drawings, showing a modern approach to iconographic planning. The drawing of Axion Estin at the NAG, associated with the 1829 icon, may either belong to Dimitar Hristov or could have been used by both brothers. Dimitar Hristov painted several icons of Axion Estin, the earliest dating to the 1820s. Another example of drawings used jointly by the two icon-painters is a pricked drawing of the demon-possessed man - a figure found in two of Zahariy Zograf's Virgin Mary Source of Life icons from the 1830s and one icon of the same theme by Dimitar Hristov dated 1853. The figure of the afflicted man is based on the dying Ananias from the engraving *The Death of Ananias*, preserved in one of the Samokov albums. Between 1839 and 1841, Zahariy attended drawing lessons given by traveling artists in Plovdiv, as he informed Neophyte of Rila in several letters. In his last letter of 15 February 1841, Zahariy mentioned that he had kept "*skedia yurneks*" (models) from his French teachers. During this period, Zahariy likely studied anatomy and perspective as fundamental disciplines in academic training. Insights into these lessons are provided by several drawings and engravings of the so-called Medici Venus – a Hellenistic marble copy of a statue of the goddess of love, Aphrodite, from the 1st century BC. His archive includes two engravings of the statue, which were either redrawn or mechanically copied. Zahariy's "education" blended academic drawing with traditional icon-painting methods of copying. The archive contains three series of preparatory drawings by Zahariy for the murals in the *konak* of the Samokov vali Hüsrev Pasha (1846), for the murals in the church of the Troyan Monastery (1847–1848), and for the narthex murals of the Great Lavra on Mount Athos (1852). The archive also includes preparatory drawings for many of his icons. This section of the dissertation also discusses a series of drawings not previously published or considered in the literature. The drawings are uniform in format and rendered in a pictorial manner with figures

coloured with diluted black or brown ink between the contours. They have no precise parallels among the drawings of Revival icon painters.

This drawing style is observed in Western Europe over a wide timespan, from the late 16th to the late 18th century. Therefore, it can be hypothesized that these are the drawings left to Zahariy Zograf by his French instructors. However, one of the drawings bears an inscription in Bulgarian, seemingly written at the time when the piece was created. It records the date 26 September 1788, thus dating the drawings to the late 18th century.

4. Drawings by Stanislav Dospevski (Zafir)

The so-called archive of the Dospevski family includes drawings related to the oeuvre of Stanislav Dospevski as an icon painter from the time he worked with his father, to his education in Russia and to his later activity after returning to Bulgaria as an academic artist. A number of religious drawings at the NAG belong to his icon-painting period. He copied icons, prints, and old drawings. A notebook containing descriptions and drawings of the murals in the katholikon of the Rila Monastery is preserved in the archive of the NLCM, in the collection of the Revival-period teacher Kesariy Popvasilev. These drawings are stylistically identical to those in two other notebooks kept at the NGA, while thematically complementing each other. They have been attributed to Stanislav Dospevski. An unpublished drawing of Christ Pantocrator and the composition Heavenly Liturgy, copied from the eastern dome of the Choir of the Rila katholikon, are also by the same author. These were created between 1842 and 1847 during the painting of the naos and the open gallery of the monastery's main church. One drawing in the notebook from the BHA bears the name "Nikolcho," which can be perceived as an autograph. If so, the drawings in the three notebooks may be considered the work of Dimitar Hristov's second son – Nikola Dospevski. This assumption is not unfounded, as these drawings fall short in comparison to the portrait of Ioan Hadzhi Mateovich by Zafir and reveal more modest skills.

In 1851, Stanislav Dospevski enrolled at the Moscow School of Painting and Sculpture. Various drawings have been preserved from his studies there and, subsequently, at the Imperial Academy of Arts in Saint Petersburg (1854–1856). In this dissertation, they are compared with the drawings of Hristo Tsokev from the Moscow School (1867–1873), along with published documents concerning both artists' education. The comparison shows that typical academic etudes by Dospevski have not been preserved—unlike those by Tsokev. A few of Stanislav's drawings date from his first year, when students copied drawings and engravings by old masters. The documents show that he advanced rapidly in the so-called copying classes, earning laudable sheets. However, drawing from plaster casts and from life, both in Moscow and Saint Petersburg, proved significantly more difficult for him, and his results were inconsistent. Hristo Tsokev received higher marks and can be considered the more accomplished draftsman of the two. Dospevski's drawings from his historical painting classes at the Imperial Academy are kept at the HM in Samokov.

In 1854, Stanislav Dospevski began working in a sketchbook that he continued to use after returning to Bulgaria. Contrary to the opinions in the literature, these drawings were created outside of class hours at the Academy in Saint Petersburg. He had the sketchbook with him during various visits to the city and used it to make on-the-spot copies of works by European and Russian artists. A handwritten note refers to the murals in Saint Isaac's Cathedral in Saint Petersburg, and several drawings are copied from those murals. Later, Dospevski used drawings from the sketchbook as models for his icons and paintings. One example is the icon of Archangel Michael from 1864 in the Annunciation Chappel at the Transfiguration Monastery. In the

sketchbook, he also made a preparatory drawing for the 1859 portrait of Paisius, Metropolitan of Plovdiv. The NAG and the Museum of the NAA keep preparatory drawings for icons by Dospevski which reveal his stylistic and iconographic innovations in art. They include the icon of Saints Cyril and Methodius in the Church of the Dormition of the Virgin in Pazardzhik, and the icons of the Virgin Mary and Christ from the Church of Saint Marina in Plovdiv, dated 1868. The collections of the NGA, NAA, and the RHM in Kyustendil contain drawings that likely belong to Dospevski's brothers – Ivan, Nikola, and Zachariy. One such drawing is examined here: The Seven Saints, a copy of a lithograph printed in Moscow in 1869.

5. Drawings by Ioan Nikolov Ikonopisets

Ioan Ikonopisets was among the owners of a hermeneia translated by Ioanis Konstantinou in 1831 in Samokov. It is preserved in the archive of Prof. V. Zahariev at the CSA. Ioan Ikonopisets made several additions to the hermeneia, illustrated with drawings. Folios 13b and 14a describe Serbian saints, borrowed from the *Stemmatographia* by Hristofor Žefarović. From folio 96b to 98b, the icon painter described the cycle Aerial Toll Houses of the Human Soul. It begins with an unnumbered ink drawing of one tollhouse on folio 96b which presents a general scheme of the composition. The inscriptions on the scrolls of the demons and angels match exactly the mural cycle in the narthex of the Church of the Protection of the Virgin at the Hermitage of Saint Luke at the Rila Monastery. This addition was undoubtedly made while Ioan Ikonopisets was at the monastery, which allows for dating of the drawing. It was most likely created in 1837, during a plague epidemic in Samokov. Back then the icon painter and his family spent about a year at the Hermitage of Saint Luke, hosted by a close relative who was a monk.

6. Drawings by Nikola Obrazopisov

Drawings by Nikola Obrazopisov are preserved at the HM in Samokov and in the museum collection of the NAA. He is the author of one drawing of Saints Cyril and Methodius in the NAA collection. On its back there are pencil sketches of storks, an exact repetition of the storks in his genre painting *Village Horo in the Vicinity of Samokov* from 1892. The Samokov Museum preserves a cycle of drawings based on the Revelation of Saint John the Theologian, consisting of 18 scenes. Their models are also the engravings from the New Testament edition published in 1717 in Chernihiv. The NAA Museum keeps another cycle of drawings on the Apocalypse, cautiously attributed to Obrazopisov. The scenes are arranged two per sheet, and one additional sheet – now part of Cod. D. Slavo 47, the collection of drawings by painters from Bansko – also belongs to the cycle. Thus, the complete cycle consists of 11 sheets depicting a total of 22 illustrations. These were copied from a cycle in the NAG archive attributed to Dimitar Hristov. The drawings in the NAA collection match exactly the scenes from the Apocalypse painted in the Church of the Dormition of Virgin Mary at the Sukovo Monastery, painted by Vasil Popradoykov between 1869 and 1871, and should therefore be considered his work.

7. Drawings by Hristo Yovevich

Hristo Yovevich worked in the field of decorative and ornamental mural painting and also decorated manuscript books. Several prayer books decorated by him with drawings of saints have been preserved at the HM in Samokov, the Rila Monastery, and the NLCM. These date from the 1830s. The most richly decorated book by Hristo Yovevich is a manuscript of Aesop's Fables kept at the Samokov Museum. It was created in 1846, when the artist left an inscription stating it belongs to him. The manuscript has not been preserved in its entirety and therefore the

original number of illustrations cannot be determined. Currently, it includes 18 drawings. In addition to the icon painter's hermeneia, the HM in Samokov also keeps a working notebook. The architectural landscapes inside are preparatory drawings for the decoration of the Marchina House in Samokov, and one landscape is repeated exactly in a mural. The second half of the manuscript contains full-page drawings of icon compositions. Commissions for icons are noted, which indicates that Yovevich also painted icons.

8. Drawings by Vasil Popradoykov

The HM in Samokov keeps an album by the icon painter Vasil Popradoykov. The drawings are diverse in terms of subject and technical execution. They were mounted/glued and arranged as an album by his son. The album includes eight scenes from the life of St. Nicholas of Sofia the New, which have already been identified as preparatory for the life icon of the same subject, painted by Vasil Popradoykov in 1882 for the church dedicated to the saint in Sofia. Popradoykov's works also include ten pages with drawings from the Apocalypse kept at the NAA and another sheet from the CSBS. One drawing of the Resurrection of Christ divided between the two collections has parallels in his sketchbook and is also attributed to him.

VII. Applications of drawings in the creative process of icon painters from the Revival period

1. Bulgarian research on drawings from the 18th – 19th century: Terms and definitions used in the literature

Drawings from the Revival period display diverse artistic qualities and were created in various artistic contexts. Often, the term “drawing” proves insufficient to describe these qualities, as it does not always create an accurate perception of them. Therefore, the researchers of drawings from the Revival period resort to using a number of terms in their studies, which are semantically related to the general term “drawing.” The academic literature contains a wide variety of definitions and terms. The present dissertation reviews these and comments on proposed classification systems. The conclusion is that terms such as *etude*, *esquisse*, *sketch*, *preparatory drawings/study*, and *outline* are applied by researchers to the icon painters' drawings to describe more accurately their artistic qualities and possible uses by the painters. These are employed mostly for drawings from the Dospevski family archive, with “*esquisse*” being the most frequently used term. However, these terms are borrowed from the academic system and in most cases, they reflect the researchers' evaluations of the drawings, indicating the level of completeness and artistic merit of a given work. Thus, authors often apply different terms to the same examples from the icon painters' archives. In other cases, drawings with similar execution suggesting the same intended practical use are categorized differently. In fact, the terms related to academic drawing were unfamiliar in meaning to 18th–19th century icon painters. This renders them inappropriate for the description and classification of their drawings.

2. Terms for drawings used by the icon painters

Various sources from the Revival period contain terms used by icon painters for their drawings, which are examined in this section of the dissertation. In the hermeneiai, a drawing obtained through copying is called *yurnek*, *shtampa* (stamp), or *anthivol(i)*. The latter term is retained untranslated in the copies of the hermeneia of Dionysius of Fourni, but is written in Slavic. “Yurnek” comes from Turkish and means “sample” or “model.” Zahari Zograf used a different

word—*skedia*, which is directly borrowed from the Greek σχέδιο (σχέδια in plural). In a letter from 1841 to Neophyte of Rila, the painter blesses the “yurneks skedia from the French Academy.” These were likely drawings that he considered as possible models for use. Even in philosophical and personal contexts, Zahariy Zograf expressed himself using drawing-related terms. In a hermeneia by the painters Yanaki and Nikola from the town of Dupnitsa, another term is used—*shkedil*, also derived from the Greek σχέδιο. In a note in the Tryavna notebook preserved at the NHM, the drawings are called *izvodi* (“outputs”, “prorisi”), referring to their function. For comparison, in Greek practice, preparatory drawings are mentioned in documents of Cretan icon painters from the 15th and 16th century, showing a greater variety of specific terms for drawings— τεσενιάσματα, σκιάσματα, ντεσένια, etc., of Italian origin. The Greek term *anthivola* (ανθιβόλα) was used as early as the 15th century, appearing in late medieval sources with meanings such as archetype, prototype, template, good example, model, and identical (exact) copy. The basic term *drawing* (both as the act of drawing and the result) was introduced in the Bulgarian language by the first academically trained artists Stanislav Dospevski and Nikolai Pavlovich. Dospevski was the first to use it and in his letters, he also employed *esquisse*, *etude* and *copy*. Nikolai Pavlovich, who studied at the academies in Munich and Vienna, used *draft*, *drawing*, *esquisse*, *croquis*, and *outlines* (sketches).

3. Practical applications of drawings by icon painters from the Revival period

The drawing had various applications in the artistic process of icon painters, beyond serving as preparatory work for the creation of specific pieces. These are discussed in this section of the dissertation.

3.1. Drawing in the artistic process of medieval painters

Researchers have formulated two opposing theories regarding the use of preparatory drawings by medieval artists. According to the more prevalent view, individual scrolls with model drawings were available at the workshops of Byzantine painters during the 12th–15th centuries. These were likely accompanied by written manuals providing iconographic and technological guidance. Researchers base this theory on medieval Western and later Georgian and Armenian codices with drawings, suggesting that these were not sporadic examples of manuals in the Byzantine tradition. The existence and use of hermeneiai and model books are seen as grounds to explain the transmission of ideas (iconographic images, stylistic motifs) and the similarities between monuments of medieval art. New research on medieval drawings related to Byzantine art indicates that they do not belong to Byzantine painters and therefore do not attest to an organized system of templates or models. It has been argued that in the centres of Byzantine culture – Constantinople and Thessaloniki – it is unlikely that artists used iconographic manuals. Rather, they reproduced variants of a limited number of scenes imprinted in their memory, using the monuments as models. The need for manuals likely arose after 1261 with the proliferation of new themes in monumental art. The creation of a large mural or mosaic and the planning of the overall scene program of a church required some form of small-scale drawing to overcome organizational challenges. Such preparatory sketches were likely created on-site, in the moment and in ephemeral form. Documents and examples show that during the 15th century, emerging prerequisites led to the use of drawings in the practice of Orthodox icon painters, first on the island of Crete under Venetian influence. The earliest preserved drawings in the Balkans are found on Mount Athos and date to the 16th century. The first examples that can be classified as

true preparatory drawings date from the mid-16th century and are associated with Theophanes Bathas Strelitzas and his murals at Meteora and on Mount Athos.

3.2. Classification and types of drawings according to the technique

A different classification of icon-painter drawings is proposed. The drawings are divided into three groups based on their techniques of execution, which relate to whether they were copied or drawn. The first category comprises imprinted drawings, created either using the two techniques from Dionysios of Fournas's *hermeneia* or through other mechanical means. These correspond to the meaning of the Greek term *ανθιβολα*. A characteristic feature of such drawings is that they are mirror-reversed in relation to the original. The second group occupies an intermediate position and includes drawings that replicate other works but were not created using any of the known copying methods. Rather, they were rendered through freehand drawing. These may be referred to as redrawn copies or copies created by drawing. Examples of this type include the drawings of Kostadin Hadzhi Angelov and the drawings found in the sketchbooks of the Bansko icon painters. The third group consists of original drawings, created either from life or from imagination, as well as various types of sketches. Greek researchers refer to them as *σχέδια* or *σπουδές*, defining them as "author's notes." Among the drawings from the Revival period, representative examples include those by Zahari Zograf, as well as the works of the two artists from Koprivshitsa – Hristo Koev and Tancho Shabanov.

3.3. Copying as a training method for icon painters and the role of drawing

Hermeneiai such as the so-called First Jerusalem Manuscript, the one by Dionysios of Fournas, and the General Instructions by Hristofor Žefarović advise young icon painters to seek out experienced art teachers or to find works by skilled masters, to collect tracings and prints, and to spend a considerable amount of time redrawing and studying them. This establishes copying as one of the fundamental methods in the training of icon painters. They would memorize numerous images through constant drawing and copying. Their drawings serve as evidence of this process of training the visual memory using mnemonic and technical methods. The archives of Bulgarian icon painters from the 18th and 19th centuries contain instructional drawings that reveal the initial stages of their education. The young Zafir (Stanislav Dospevski) repeatedly copied drawings and prints from the family archive. The extent to which copying was implemented in the training of young icon painters is illustrated by Dospevski's rapid progress at the Moscow School of Painting and Sculpture: after just one month, he was transferred from the class for copying heads to the class for copying full figures. In the context of training, the dissertation discusses several examples of children's drawings from the notebook of Tsonyu Simeonov at the NCMHA and from the collection of Todor Genkov in the State Archive in Gabrovo. In the 1840s, Georgi Vadikin Kazaka taught drawing at the Mutual School in Svishtov. He had the students trace religious images using copying templates and then colour them. They were also trained to draw from life.

3.4. The drawing as a model and the formation of a common artistic "dialect"

Another recommendation in the *hermeneia* of Dionysios of Fournas is that the icon painter should prepare imprinted drawings (*ανθιβολα*) from well-known works. Whether done mechanically or by freehand, copying allowed the icon painter to preserve various selected images from icons, murals, or printed book illustrations as drawing models. These could then be used in new works – either accurately replicated or creatively interpreted. This raises the question of how drawings

contributed to the development of a unified visual language among Balkan icon painters during the 18th–19th centuries. In this context, the dissertation presents several drawings that show common models and influences among icon painters from different centres. For instance, Toma Vishanov of Bansko and Dimitar Hristov of Samokov independently copied the engravings based on the Revelation of St. John the Theologian from the New Testament edition printed in Chernihiv in 1717. These engravings became the model for all mural cycles of the Apocalypse across the Bulgarian lands. The icons by Stanislav Dospevski from his academic period became models for other icon painters. Two drawings from the Dospevski family archive copy the icon of the Virgin Mary by Nikiforos of Karpenisi from the Metropolitan Church in Samokov, which Dimitar and Zahariy Hristov used as a model for their own icons. Two drawings from the collection of the icon painters from Chioniades in Greece were copied from icons by Dimitar Zograf in the same church. The author of the drawings was likely the Greek icon painter Kyriazis Konstantinos, who worked in the Samokov region during the 30s and 40s of the 19th century.

3.5. Iconographic guides, hermeneiai, and model books

In the literature, icon painters' sketchbooks have often been inaccurately identified as hermeneiai despite their diverse content. In the practice of the icon painters, two different types of iconographic guides coexisted: textual hermeneiai, which may also include technical instructions on painting, and illustrative model books containing drawings (models, examples). Conversely, sketchbooks with highly varied content, such as the two notebooks of Zahariya Tsanyuv or the sketchbooks of Boncho Dimitrov and Hristo Yovevich, cannot be classified as either of the two types. They are best defined as working notebooks, kept at hand by the icon painter for recording and collecting all kinds of information. Zahariya Tsanyuv referred to his sketchbooks simply as "*tetrak*" (notebook). The earliest preserved books with drawings in Bulgaria include the notebook of Toma Vishanov Molera from 1786 and the Tryavna sketchbook at the NHM dated to 1810. These can be ascribed to a series of several Balkan drawing compilations from the same period. Throughout the 19th century, Bulgarian icon painters and artists continued to compile albums and sketchbooks with drawings. Before the 18th century, illustrated iconographic manuals appeared only sporadically, which raises questions about their actual use in practice. They are more likely exceptions. Thus, the spread of model books among icon painters during the 18th–19th centuries can be seen as an influence from the European art practice at the time.

3.6. Pricked drawings in the creative process

The term "pricking" (or „tracing") most often refers to a drawing whose contours have been perforated with numerous small holes. It serves as a stencil that accurately transfers the composition onto the painting surface by rubbing charcoal powder or pigment through the perforations, imprinting the image onto the primer. This was the most commonly applied method to transfer drawings, as it offered a number of advantages: the perforated drawing could be reused multiple times, allowed for quick and precise transfer, and marked out details with accuracy. The technique was widely used by Renaissance artists in Western Europe and was adopted by icon painters as early as the 15th century. Some researchers have suggested that craftsmen and icon painters in the Balkans used perforated drawings even earlier. It has also been claimed that icon painters used full-scale pricked drawings for their murals. However, for each mural ensemble, new perforated drawings would have to be produced, making them impractical and economically inefficient. Moreover, Western treatises explain that pricked

drawings were primarily used for small-format paintings or compositions with many figures mostly in easel painting and ornamental decoration in murals. The application of perforated drawing templates among Bulgarian Revival-period icon painters appears to be similar. Perforated drawings are entirely absent from drawings of the icon painters from Bansko. The Dospevski family archive at the NAG contains many pricked drawings, but it remains questionable whether they were actually used by the Samokov icon painters. Zahariy Zograf created preparatory drawings for his icons, but he did not mechanically transfer them onto the icon's primer by turning them into perforated drawings. Ornamental compositions have significant importance as decorative elements in the mural programs of the churches he painted. His archive contains many pricked drawings of floral and ornamental compositions, some of which are larger in size and made of thick, solid paper. These are perforated and intended for use. Zahariy and his brother Dimitar used small pricked drawings for the Baroque frames of explanatory inscriptions. The pricked drawings kept at the NCMHA, which roughly correspond in size to the small icons placed on the upper tiers of iconostases, indicate that the Tryavna icon painters also used perforated drawings.

3.7. Preparatory drawings in the creative process

The study of the drawing archives of Revival icon painters reveals that they did not adopt the preparatory stages of artistic creation typical of European artists of the time, despite being influenced by various European practices. There are not any known series of drawings in which they developed different variants or ideas for icons or murals. This absence can be explained by the nature of iconography, which is largely a fixed and unchanging aspect of the icon painter's work. Therefore, iconography is mastered or "learned" through copying at the initial stage of the painter's training. At that point, creativity is reduced to selecting a model, making minimal changes during its transfer onto an icon or a mural, combining several models, choosing a liturgical text to include, selecting a color palette, determining the distribution of compositions across the walls of the church, and, above all, executing the work with specific technical and stylistic qualities. Special preparation was required when the icon painter lacked models. In such cases, he had to seek out appropriate sources, primarily visual ones. When rare images not described in the hermeneiai had to be depicted, painters turned to alternative texts. These observations are illustrated with examples from the work of Zahariy Zograf and Dimitar Hristov. Among the Bulgarian painters of the Revival, the potential of the preparatory drawing is most fully realized in the works of Nikolai Pavlovich. He produced several lithographs devoted to Bulgarian history, such as Asparuh (1870), Krum (1871), and the cycle Rayna Princess of Bulgaria (1860–1874). The preparatory work for these compositions took the form of research, driven not by the drawing process itself but by the demands of the historical genre and the pursuit of authenticity with regard to the period. Letters preserved in the archive of Nayden Gerov show that the design for a print of the Monastery of St. Joachim of Osogovo created by Stanislav Dospevski required more thorough preparations: making an esquisse of the monastery on site, selecting and depicting scenes from the saint's life, and editing the inscriptions, which was done by Gerov.

3.8. The *modello* in the practice of Revival icon painters

The coloured drawings in the archive of the Dospevski family at the NAG are considered *modello* (demonstration drawings), presumably shown to potential commissioners to demonstrate the painter's skills. In European practice, a *modello* presents the artist's design in a

detailed, small-scale version for the commissioner's approval. There is no evidence suggesting that Revival icon painters used such drawings. Several documented cases show that the testing and selection of icon painters took place on site by having them paint a small area or present previously completed icons. In 1798, Toma Vishanov Molera painted the apse of the church at the St. Luke Hermitage of the Rila Monastery, while the remaining murals were completed by the icon painters Zechariah and Benjamin from Galatista. The accepted explanation is that Molera was replaced because his work was not approved due to his manner of painting and the oil technique he used. During the painting of the katholikon of the Rila Monastery by the icon painters of Samokov, new masters were still being sought. One such candidate, Mihail from Samarina, was tasked with a trial painting of the Dormition of St. John of Rila on the western façade of the side chapel dedicated to the saint. However, his work was not considered good enough to entrust him with the painting of the main part of the church. In 1873, an impromptu competition was held to select a painter for the icons for the new Bulgarian church of St. George in Tulcea. Stanislav Dospevski and Nikolai Pavlovich participated, presenting their icons to the church council at its request.

Inscriptions on the plans of Ivan and Nikola Kasevi, builders and carvers from Tryavna, indicate that these designs were shown to commissioners, who chose the type and layout of the church or the wood-carved decoration for the iconostasis and the church furniture. These drawings date from the late 19th to the early 20th century, so they are too late to serve as representative examples of widespread practice during the Revival period. Even if such practices were typical among builders and woodcarvers, this does not automatically mean they applied to icon painters as well. The decorative and ornamental compositions in woodcarving presupposed the possibility of choice by commissioners. In contrast, church painting followed specific rules, and was a relatively rigid aspect of in the painters' work. This limited the freedom of icon painters to implement their own ideas, especially since the decorative program of a church was often dictated by the preferences and tastes of the commissioners. Under these circumstances, demonstration drawings were likely not necessary – at least not in the way they were used in Western Europe.

3.9. The drawing as an autonomous work of art

The role of drawing in the creative process can be narrowed down to two main functions. First, it could serve various supportive purposes, making it an integral part of the creative process. Second, the drawing may be the final product of the artistic act, thus constituting a finished, independent (autonomous) work of art. Autonomous drawings from the Revival period are rare. A distinguishing feature of such works is the use of a richer set of materials and expressive means such as hatching, colour, volume modelling, and colouring. Examples include works by the self-taught painters from Koprivshitsa, Hristo Koev and Tancho Shabanov, the drawings associated with Zahariy Zograf's lessons with traveling French artists in Plovdiv, studies from the training of the first academically educated painters, and others. The illustrations from that time also fall into the category of autonomous works. The emergence of drawing as an independent art form is not tied to the working method of the icon painters, nor to the general role of drawing in their creative process. Drawing is a separate form of visual expression, and it was not practiced solely by icon painters. The attention to drawing as an autonomous artistic form arose under the influence of academicism and academic training, whether acquired abroad, as in the cases of Dospevski, Tsokev, and Pavlovich, or in Bulgaria, as in the case of Zahariy Zograf.

VIII. CONCLUSION

A number of museum and archival institutions in Bulgaria preserve collections of drawings created by builders, woodcarvers, academically trained painters, and self-taught draftsmen from the Revival period, but the vast majority of the preserved materials are directly related to the work of icon painters. Alongside the activities of assembling and preserving these collections, it must be noted that their distribution among various institutions has led to their mixing, and at times even to irreversible misplacement. Information regarding the origin of the drawings has remained incomplete, inaccurate, or altogether missing. A comprehensive study of the drawing archives of a particular icon painter, artistic family, or school first requires the restoration, compilation, and detailed description of the content. To this end, a comparative examination of various collections across Bulgaria is necessary, as there is always the possibility that other collections contain drawings by the same author(s), or that some drawings in a given collection originate from elsewhere.

The Revival-period icon painters from Tryavna, Bansko, and Samokov had extensive archives of drawings, compiled over decades and continuously supplemented. The drawings were passed down from generation to generation – from father to son or from master to apprentice. Each icon painter from the family would leave his drawings in the family archive, thereby contributing to its continuous expansion, enrichment, and updating. These drawings were easy to transport and just as easy to copy. When needed, they were exchanged or borrowed among painters, and in some cases even stolen. This attests to the value these drawings held for icon painters and their importance to the artists' work.

Most of the sketchbooks contain notes indicating the author and the time of drawing. It is typical, for drawings on single sheets to lack signatures or dates; this is particularly characteristic of the work of Samokov painters. Earlier research adopted a complex approach to their attribution, where establishing parallels of specific drawings among painted works held a central place. Yet the conclusions drawn from such comparisons cannot always be considered as definitive proof of authorship. This applies especially to drawings by masters from the same workshop or artistic center, who often shared and reused drawings among themselves, as the icon painters from Samokov frequently did. Important elements in the study and attribution of old drawings are the watermarks on the paper, which can provide fairly accurate dating. These are often overlooked, but for example, the study of the watermarks in the collection Cod. D. Slavo 47 at the CSBS points to Dimitar Molerov and his son Simeon as possible authors of the drawings, as they date from the first half of the 19th century.

Sources linked to the use of drawing in the icon painters' practice are scarce. For this reason, researchers studying the icon painters' drawings often base their approaches on the preparatory methods in the creative process of academic artists. This concerns mostly the assumptions about the preparatory drawing in the icon painters' work. As a result, the prevailing view in the literature has been that the integration of drawing into the artistic process of Revival-period icon painters was a new development and their treatment of the preparatory stage of work is analogous or similar to that of artists trained in the European Renaissance tradition. However, the analysis presented in this dissertation shows that the situation is different. Earlier materials from collections across the Balkans demonstrate that drawing had a role in the work of Orthodox painters as early as the late Middle Ages. The lack of earlier dated material in the Bulgarian collections has misled researchers to believe that the introduction of drawing as a preparatory stage in the creative process was a radical innovation by Revival-period icon painters. However,

this is not the case and furthermore, the ways in which drawings were used remained largely unchanged throughout the 18th and 19th centuries.

In summary, drawings served three main functions in the icon painters' creative process: exercise, reproduction (preservation), and transfer. Notably, all three functions are subordinated to the model. This is evident even from the terms used by the icon painters for their drawings: *yurnek*, *anthivoli*, and *shtampa* all denote precisely a model or example. The collection of models and the creation of templates accompanied the entire artistic career of icon painters. When the drawings are compiled in a notebook or album, their role as models becomes even more apparent, suggesting their systematic use as iconographic guides. This implies that preparatory drawings were not always made directly prior to the creation of a painting. It also shows that a drawing was not used only once and for a single work. The contemporary understanding of the preparatory drawing as a stage in the realization of an individual artistic concept is almost entirely absent from the practice of Revival-period icon painters. This could be explained by examining the concepts of "craft" and "creativity." The fundamental difference between them lies in the intent behind the creation of a work. The artist's creative intention is difficult to explain and cannot be transmitted to his followers. In contrast, icon painters employed rules in their work, which they passed on to their apprentices. The visual repertoire they reproduced was also described and clearly defined through rules, some of which were compiled in the *hermeneiai* (icon-painting manuals).

The appropriate use of terminology for the icon painters' drawings is extremely important, as these terms should explain the purpose, function, or method of use of the examples under discussion. Moreover, it must be considered that since the drawings were employed in ways specific to the icon painters' practice, academic drawing terminology is not applicable for describing them. Referring to pricked drawings (templates) as *anthivola* is inaccurate, given the differing purposes of these two types of drawings. The term *hermeneia* is also used loosely in reference to the icon painters' sketchbooks, even when these do not contain iconographic descriptions or technical instructions.

The study of the rich material preserved in the Bulgarian collections convincingly demonstrates that the research on drawings by the icon painters of the Revival period must continue. It should focus on the collections in the country that remain unexplored. Drawings from the Revival period are at once individual works of art and invaluable sources for understanding the working methods of their creators, without which the study of their oeuvre would remain incomplete.

IX. MAIN CONTRIBUTIONS OF THE DISSERTATION

- For the first time, an attempt has been made to present a comprehensive overview of the collections of drawings dating up to the end of the 19th century, preserved in Bulgarian institutions.
- Collections of drawings previously unknown to art history have been identified and introduced into academic circulation.
- New conclusions regarding the authorship of certain collections or cycles of drawings have been proposed and substantiated.
- Inscriptions and texts written on the drawings and in the sketchbooks have been studied further as an important source of information on the biographies and the oeuvre of the icon painters.
- The terminology used by icon painters to refer to drawings has been compiled and discussed. In this context, a critical analysis of the terms and definitions used in the specialized literature regarding the icon painters' drawings has been carried out, as they do not correspond to the terminology used in the sources.
- A new classification of the drawings has been proposed based on the techniques used in their creation.
- A comprehensive analysis of the drawing collections has been carried out, based both on specific problems concerning individual drawings and their particular uses, and on a more complex approach explaining their application in the icon painters' creative method.
- The primary and specific applications of drawings in the artistic process of Revival-period icon painters have been structured and examined, placing them within a wider chronological and territorial context.

X. LIST OF PUBLICATIONS RELEVANT TO THE THESIS

Tonchev, S. Notebook with Drawings of the Icon Painter Ivan Dimitrov from Kocherinovo. In: *Metamorphoses. Art Studies 2023. I. Old Art. Sofia, 2024*, 395-410. [in Bulgarian]

Tonchev, S. Unknown Collection of Drawings from the Fund of Regional Historical Museum – Kystendil. In: *Art and History. Art Studies 2024. I. Old Art. Sofia, 2025*, 319-336. [in Bulgarian]

Tonchev, S. Drawings by the icon painter Dimitar Molerov of Bansko. In: *Art and Context. Collection of papers from the 8th Youth Scientific Conference, 25-26 February 2025. Sofia, 2025* (in print) [in Bulgarian]