Aleksandra Sulikowska

"New Constantinople" : Byzantine traditions in Muscovite Rus' in the 16th century

MUZEUM HISTORII POLSKI

"New Constantinople": Byzantine Traditions in Muscovite Rus' in the 16th Century

Aleksandra Sulikowska, National Museum, Warsaw

The subject of this paper is the problem of relations between Rus' and the Balkans in the 16th century which is still the one of the least discussed questions of Orthodox art. Scholars usually assumed that canonical models of icon painting had reached Rus' from Serbia and Bulgaria from the 11th century.[1] But if there is not much doubt that Balkans were „the christian world" for Rus', the scarceness of sources illustrating the manner of their effects on the visual culture of the eastern Slavs is much more striking. However, in effect, this situation is typical while even the most famous Greek master who was working in Rus', Theophanes the Greek, left only one surviving wall-painting, and information about him in Epifanij the Wise's letter to Cyril of Tver cannot be verified in the present state of research. On the other hand, the sources of the most "cosmopolitan" Russian city, Novgorod, preserved only three names of the Greek painters who were working there.[2]

The problem of Greek and Balkan influence concerns also the process of changes in the canon of icon painting which finally brought about a transformation of its principles. It raises questions about the origins of "new" iconographical subjects and the beginning of the growth of "new" Russian icon painting in the second half of the 16th century. Another one is the role of Greek and Balkan artists in its creation. But the most interesting problem, in effect, is the Russian clergy's attitude towards Byzantine and Post-Byzantine heritage and the possibility of its impact on icons in the 16th century.

---

[1] G. K. Vagner, *Problema žanrov v drevnerusskom iskusstve*, Moskva 1974, pp. 183-185, 230.

[2] V. N. Lazarev, 'Drevnerusskie hudožniki i metody ih raboty', [in:] *Drevnerusskoe iskusstvo XV – načala XVI vekov*, Moskva 1963, p. 11.

G. Florovskij wrote about Russian "intellectual silence" in the Kievan period. It was, Florovskij said, a result of comprehensive adaptation of religious and cultural models from Constantinople and the Balkans since the time of the official adoption of Christianity.[3] However, beginning from the second half of the 15th century religious reflections began to be more individual, but neverthless they still kept the same ecclesiastical patterns which were understood as the one correct expression of Orthodox faith. There is no question but that familiarity with patristic and Byzantine literatures, as the Russians could gain access to them, was the main impulse of the growth of "the Russian theology of the icon". Russian writers obtained their knowledge of Orthodox doctrine indirectly from their "Greek masters". As a result of that, their literary canon contained not only the Bible and the Church Fathers but also texts from the middle and the late Byzantine periods. What is more, their authorities were supposed to be equal because all of them were considered to be an expression of the same tradition, so they were often used interchangeably. On the other hand, knowledge of Greek among Russian elites was very imperfect and, although the use of Greek was highly estimated by them, it never became an element of "religious education". As a result the principle role in disseminating Orthodox literature was naturally taken by translations.[4]

Most of these reached Rus' during the 14th century because of the southern Slavs. The books often came from Moldavia where refugees from the Balkans were gathering in the second half of the century. However, there were still big centres of Slavonic contacts in the monasteries of Constantinople, Thessalonica and Mount Athos which were also the main centres of the hesychast movement at that time.[5] In the Monastery of Studios and monasteries of Mount Athos theological manuscripts were translated and copied, frequently with the intention of sending them to Rus'. But in fact,

---

[3] G. Florovskij, *Puti russkogo bogoslovija*, Pariž 1937, pp. 1-2.

[4] G. Fedotov, *Svjatye drevnej Rusi*, Moskva 1990, p. 121; F. von Lilienfeld, *Nil Sorsky und seine Schriften. Zur Kreise der Tradition im Russland Ivans III*, Berlin 1963, p. 78.

[5] N. M. Dylevskij, 'Žitija Ioanna Ryl'skogo russkih drevlehranilišč i ih bolgarskie istočniki', *Trudy Otdela Drevnerusskoj Literatury*, XXIII, 1968, p. 283; K. Ivanova, 'Otraženije bor'by meždu isihastami i ih protivnikami v perevodnoj polemičeskoj literature balkanskih slavjan', [in:] *Actes du XIVe Congres International des Etudes Byzantines*, vol. II, Bucarest 1974, p. 167; V. A. Kostakël, 'Russko-ukrainsko-moldavskie istoričeskie svjazi v XIV-XV vv.', [in:] *Feodal'naja Rossija vo vsemirno-istoričeskom processe. Sbornik statej posvjaščennyj L. V. Čerepninu*, Moskva 1972, pp. 276-277; G. I. Vzdornov, 'Rol' slavjanskih monastyrskih pis'ma Konstantynopolja i Afona v razvitii knigopisanija i hudožestvennogo oformlenija russkih rukopisej na rubeže XIV i XV vv.', *Trudy Otdela Drevnerusskoj Literatury*, XXIII, 1968, pp. 171-172.

only occasionally did Russian elites have the possibility of becoming acquainted with the actual spiritual trends propagated by the Church in Constantinople really rapidly. It did happen in the instance of the hesychast writings about Uncreated Light and Divine Energies. They reached Rus' as early as the first half of the 14th century and the first reaction to them was the Novgorod bishop's "address" to Theodor, *vladyka* of Tver (1347), relating to the controversy of a material or transcendental Paradise. Shortly after the middle of the century the new hesychast *Synodicon* of Orthodoxy of 1352 was known and read out in the Muscovite Church.[6]

One of the most important source of theological *gnosis* were, just because of their dissemination, the *sborniki* composed of passages of the Fathers' writings. The greater part of their Slavonic versions from the 13th to the 15th century included selections from the fragments of the works of Isaac the Syrian, Abba Dorotheus, Simeon the New Theologian, John Climacus, Philotheus Sinaites, Peter of Damascus and Gregory Sinaites. Therefore they were not dogmatic but had moral and ascetic meaning. That was the most popular literature which was read in both Athonite and Balkan monasteries. In the eastern Slavs' area these texts took also an important part in the creation of ascetic writings, especially in Nil Sorski's circle. On the ground of saints' lives it is possible to say that among the monks' favourite books there were the writings of Basil the Great, John Chrysostom, Ephraim the Syrian, Isaac the Syrian and Pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite.[7]

Corpus Areopagitum was translated into Slavonic very late, only in 1371 by the Serbian monk, Isaac, superior of the Panteleemon Monastery on Athos. According to the Russian tradition the *Corpus* was imported by metropolitan Kiprian, a refugee from Bulgaria (1381-1382, 1390-1406), but it most certainly was known towards the end of the century.[8] Nevertheless knowledge of it did not become common immediately, and the shortage of manuscripts still existed even at the end of the 15th century. An increase in the availability of those books began shortly after their inclusion in

---

[6] G. V. Popov, A. V. Ryndina, *Živopis' i prikladnoe iskusstvo Tveri XIV-XVI veka,* Moskva 1979, pp. 64-65, 198; G. M. Prohorov, 'Izihazm i obščestvennaja mysl' v vostočnoj Evrope v XIV v.', *Trudy Otdela Drevnerusskoj Literatury,* XXIII, 1968, pp. 103-105.

[7] V. Ikonnikov, *Opyt izsledovanija o kul'turnom značenii Vizantii v russkoj istorii,* Kiev 1869, p. 238; G. M. Prohorov, 'Izihazm i obščestvennaja mysl...', p. 103.

[8] V. V. Byčkov, *Russkaja srednevekovaja ėstetika XI-XVII veka,* Moskva 1992, p. 171; G. M. Prohorov, *Pamjatniki perevodnoj i russkoj literatury XIV-XV vekov,* Leningrad 1987, p. 5; Idem, 'Poslanije Titu-ierarhu Dionisija Areopagita v slavjanskom perevode i ikonografija Premudrost' sozda sebe dom', *Trudy Otdela Drevnerusskoj Literatury,* XXXVIII, 1985, pp. 11-12; G. J. Vzdornov, 'Rol' slavjanskih monastyrskih pis'ma...', p. 173.

Makarij's *Četii-Minei* but even then they existed only in manuscript and this naturally reduced their influence. But since the middle of the 16th century Pseudo-Dionysius became just "a first theologian" in all the discussions about art. His name was always mentioned in explanations of controversial subjects and his writings were used usually in a rather free way.[9]

The use of Greek theological sources for Russian *knižniki* was just the one of the aspects of "literary etiquette" of course,[10] but there is no question that authors had access to the texts, as they were originally written; rather, just like the *shorniki*, they delivered Byzantine literature only as fragments. For example, some parts of *The Address to the Icon Painter* indicate that Joseph Volotsky used the *shornik* known as *Patriarch German's Briefing to Recalcitrant Latins*, including among others quotations from the works of Athanasius the Great, Gregory the Theologian and Pseudo-Dionysius.[11] The use of sources known only "at second hand" was permissible and even indispensable because of the permanent lack of manuscripts. What is more, the Slavonic translations which were used since the 14th century often differed from the Greek originals. In consequence, in the 16th and the 17th centuries a number of conflicts and discussions broke out, especially on the subject of icons. The Stoglav (Council of the Hundred Chapters) held in 1551 saw that the problem strengthened the necessity of using "adequate translations" by copysts and ordered church elders to examine "incorrect" books which had to be amended.[12] Action, however, was hard and perhaps impossible to achieve just because there were no Greek translators throughout the country. In the 1510's and 1520's they could come only from Mount Athos. The surviving correspondence of Basil III and the archimandrite of Vatopedi (1515) testifies that the prince asked for the dispatch of a scholar who could correct books. But the statement of the *letopis* about the admiration of Maximus the Greek for the Moscow prince's library should be considered only as an example of rhetoric and an attempt to emphasise the splendour of the Muscovite court.[13]

---

[9] G. M. Prohorov, *Pamjatniki perevodnoj i russkoj literatury...*, p. 52; B. Dąb-Kalinowska, 'Klasyczna ikona ruska', [in:] *Klasycyzm i klasycyzmy*, Warszawa 1994, p. 94; V. Ikonnikov, *op. cit.*, p. 267; G. Fedotov, *The Russian Religious Mind*, vol. II, Cambridge 1965, pp. 29-30.

[10] Qualification used by D. Lihačev in his book *The Poetics of the Ancient Rus' Literature*. D. S. Lihačev, *Poetika drevnerusskoj literatury*, Moskva 1979.

[11] 'Prosvetitel' prepodobnogo Iosifa Vockogo', *Pravoslavnyj sobesednik*, 1859, 3, pp. 165-166.

[12] K. Ivanova, *op. cit.*, pp. 174-175; 'Stoglavnyj Sobor', *Pravoslavnyj sobesednik*, 1860, 2, pp. 230-231.

[13] Arh. Makarij Veretennikov, *Moskovskij mitropolit Makarij i ego vremja*, Moskva 1996, pp. 110-111.

The tragic vicissitudes of Maximus, his lawsuits and imprisonment made a background for the change in the position of the Moscow hierarchy regarding the Byzantine Church in the first half of the 16th century. Accusations against the Greek scholar show the growing distrust of aliens from the South. One of the charges concerned his supposed favour with the Turks, another his unsuitable attitude towards the Russian prince and rejection of the bishops' right to elect the metropolitan without the approval of the Constantinople patriarch. The list of objections ended with criticism of the Church's possession of estates and blasphemies against "Russian miracle-workers".[14]

In the change of relation to the Byzantine heritage, the turning-point of 1453 has a rather symbolic meaning. The time of direct and properly documented transformations of that relation came immediately after the middle of the 16th century, in the reign of Ivan the Terrible. In his oration to Ivan on the day of his coronation (1547), metropolitan Makarij put his hopes in the young tsar who would humiliate "all barbarous languages", begin just government and be the guardian of the Church and of Orthodoxy. Instead the analysis of Makarij's opinions expressed at the time of the Kazan' war (1552) suggests that in the victory over "blasphemous Kazan' Tartars" he saw an expectation of regaining the important role lost by Byzantium in 1453, when, as Philotheus of Pskov wrote, the Empire was profaned by "the progeny of Hagar", who brought shame upon the city.[15] In the first half of the 16th century in Russian publications there are no statements poining at the fall of Byzantium as a punishment for its "apostasy" from the rules of Orthodoxy in the days of the Council of Florence. But the Stoglav condemned all ritual traditions other than native ones as heretical (e.g. in the matter of crossing the fingers, a number of *proskynesis* and singing "alleluia") and presented them as being more correct than Greek.[16]

Laying claim to be "the last Orthodox Empire in the world" Moscow would become "New Constantinople" and "New Jerusalem". According to the sources Rus' would be also "the new land". Philotheus called the Muscovite Church "the holy, apostolic and catholic Church of new Rome" which "at the end of the world [...] shines because of its Orthodox Christianity". Ivan Peresvetov compared Ivan with Alexander the Great and the emperor

---

[14] N. A. Kazakova, *Očerki po istorii obščestvennoj mysli. Piervaja tret' XVI veka*, Leningrad 1970, pp. 185-186.

[15] Arh. Makarij Veretennikov, *op. cit.*, pp. 12-17; *Pamjatniki literatury drevnej Rusi. Koniec XV – pervaja polovina XVI veka*, Moskva 1984, pp. 437-441.

[16] *Stoglav*, St. Peterburg, pp. 22-23, 58 ff.

Augustus and his period with that of Constantine IX Palaeologus, the last emperor of Byzantium, whose place Ivan would have to take.[17] The canonization of "new Russian miracle-workers" in 1547 and 1549 seems just like one of the Church activities undertaken after the increase of the authority and influence of the tsar and the Church (canonization of princes, saints, the founders of the biggest monasteries, Russian bishops and Muscovite metropolitans).[18] In a number of texts of that period Rus' was called "shining", "bright" and especially blessed by God.[19] Many actions of Makarij's circle show aspirations to set up a conception of "the holy Russian land" and its cultural "transfer" from "the ends of the world" to "the centre".

One of the aspects of that process was an action of collecting in the main Muscovite churches the most important, i.e. the holiest, icons-relics of Rus'. It began just in the 15th century with the placing in the Annunciation cathedral of the Moscow Kremlin the icon of the Mother of God of Smolensk and removal to the Dormition cathedral of the icon of the Mother of God of Vladimir.[20] After the conflagration of Moscow in 1547 Ivan IV "sent to the cities for holy and venerable icons; to Novgorod and Smolensk and Dmitrev and Zvenigorod. Thus numerous and miraculous icons were transported from many other towns".[21] However, after the pacification of Novgorod in 1570 "icons of Korsun' painted by the Greeks" were taken away.[22] "New icons" painted after 1547 and placed in the Dormition cathedral from the very beginning awakened enormous controversies. They were caused, as the documents of the Council of 1553-1554 testify, by Ivan Mihailovič Viskovatyj. His greatest objections was the result of the appearance among them of the images of God the Father (called as Lord of Sabaoth) and the New Testament Trinity, Christ as a warrior sitting on a cross, the crucified Christ covered with cherubs' wings and others. Viskovatyj's argument against them was simple: images like those

---

[17] *Pamjatniki literatury* [...] *Koniec XV – pervaja polovina XVI veka*, pp. 437-441, 606-611 ff.

[18] L. Golubinskij, *Istorija kanonizacii svjatyh v russkoj Cerkvi*, Moskva 1903, pp. 100-108.

[19] G. Fedotov, *Svjatye...*, p. 105.

[20] G. V. Popov, A. V. Ryndina, *op. cit.*, p. 271; L. A. Ščennikova, 'Čudotvornaja ikona Bogomater' Vladimirskaja kak Odigitrija evangelista Luki', [in:] *Čudotvornaja ikona v Vizantii i drevnej Rusi*, Moskva 1996, pp. 266-267.

[21] O. I. Podobedova, *Moskovskaja škola živopisi pri Ivane IV. Raboty v Moskovskom Kremle 40-h – 70-h godov XVI v.*, Moskva 1972, p. 15.

[22] G. V. Popov, 'Tri pamjatnika južnoslavjanskoj živopisi XIV veka i ih russkije kopii serediny XVI veka', [in:] *Vizantija, južnye slavjane i drevnaja Rus'. Zapadnaja Evropa. Iskusstvo i kul'tura. Sbornik statej v čest' V. N. Lazareva*, Moskva 1973, p. 359.

were not in conformity with the tradition of Orthodox art established by the Quinisextum Synod and Seventh Ecumenical Council, so they should be forbidden in the Russian Church.[23]

The leading antagonist of Viskovatyj's view, metropolitan Makarij, completely denied the substance of his argument. The metropolitan affirmed that the images in question had a long tradition in both Byzantine and Russian art, and, what is more, he emphasised the second one. He quoted a story about some "old men" who came from the Athonite Panteleemon Monastery. There were the icon painter Euphemius, Paul the Priest and "companions" among them. Monks told the council (and Euphemius even described everything) about wall-painting and icons on the Holy Mountain. They testified to the popularity of images of God the Father and the New Testament Trinity among them. For Makarij it was clear enough to prove their canonical character. It should be pointed out that the metropolitan was inclined to take as "ancient" "the icons of Korsun'" as well as the paintings "more than two hundred years old" from the churches of Mount Athos.[24] "Icons of Korsun'" (корсунские письма) is a designation which in the 16th century referred to paintings also called "ancient" and "Greek". It seems that designation "of Korsun'" was just a synonym for their old-time origin. It is probable that the icons of Korsun' were thought of as pictures which, as the Russians believed, appeared in Rus' shortly after the baptism of Vladimir the Great. Acording to *The Tale of Bygone Years* (*Повесть временных лет*) that event took place in Korsun' (Cherson). During the ceremony, the prince, the chronicle related, confessed the Creed which included the first known exposition of the theology of the icon in Russian writings.[25] The close relation between the icons of Korsun' and the Christianization of Rus' is supposed to be confirmed by Makarij's pronouncement that such icons were good models for painters. The metropolitan mentioned among them the Annunciation of Ustjug Velikij, taken from Novgorod by Ivan IV, but "more than five hundred years ago conveyed from Korsun'".[26]

Analysis of the council's statements and the hierarchs' attitudes gives a sign that in the beginning of the second half of the 16th century Russian culture was designated as the possessor of the same authority and tradition whose centre since the 10th century had been identified as Constantinople.

---

[23] Arh. Makarij Veretennikov, *op. cit.*, pp. 225-228, 257.

[24] Ibid., pp. 238-239.

[25] *Powieść minionych lat* [*Povest' vremennyh let*], trans. F. Sielicki, Wrocław 1968, pp. 287-292.

[26] Arh. Makarij Veretennikov, *op. cit.*, p. 238.

But it is difficult to point at pronouncements of Makarij and other hierarchs which might attempt to deny or reject the Byzantine heritage. Although in sources of that period, especially in polemics, distrust and ill-will towards Greece increased, it is not possible to find similar tendencies in opinions about art. In the Stoglav's and the council of 1553-1554's acts Greek icons were referred many times as the correct models for Russian painting. Most likely, in their conception of ancient, Greek models, the bishops and the tsar did not mean works from Constantinople but those from Athos and especially the paintings "of Korsun".[27]

It should be emphasised that the Stoglav recommended the elimination of "foreign" wandering sellers of icons (it referred surely to newcomers from the West) and, at the same time, postulated the necessity of "the right education" of icon painters. They would have to "study good masters" and use "ancient good models".[28] The council's opinion about the canonical form of the icon of the Old Testament Trinity testifies unequivocally that both Greek and Russian icons were understood as "good models". However, as Pokrovskij noticed, members of the Stoglav had no knowledge of the traditional iconography of that subject in Byzantium.[29] Some aspects of the attitudes of the great protector of tradition, Ivan Viskovatij, are equally disquieting just because he said for example that the Greeks painted Christ on the cross "in trousers".[30] It seems that both sides in the icon controversy used canonical sources rather freely to support its own arguments. At the same time every party formally declared for the side of Orthodoxy and rejected any deviation from its principles.

What did the Russian elite know about the art of Mount Athos? N. Pokrovskij supposed that in Athonite monasteries in the 16th century "the renaissance" of Post-Byzantine art began which penetrated into Greece, Crete, the Balkans and also Rus'. It could be asserted that in the case of the last it was possible because of really frequent bilateral contacts with Athos. They lost the nature of pilgrimages made by Russian priests who wished to obtain from the source the moral teaching of Athonite fathers, because

---

[27] N. Andreev, 'Mitropolit Makarij, kak dejatel' religioznogo iskusstva', *Seminarium Kondakovianum*, VII, 1935, p. 241 ff; 'Stoglavnyj Sobor', p. 225; L. Uspenskij, 'Moskovskije sobory XVI veka i ih rol' v cerkovnom iskusstve', [in:] *Filosofija russkogo religioznogo iskusstva XVI-XX veka. Antologija*, Moskva 1993, pp. 321-322.

[28] N. Andreev, *op. cit.*, p. 240; Cf. N. Pokrovskij, *Očerki pamjatnikov hristianskoj ikonografii i iskusstva*, St. Peterburg 1900, p. 370.

[29] N. Pokrovskij, 'Opredelenija Stoglava o sv. ikonah', *Hristianskoe čtenie*, 1885, 1, pp. 547-548.

[30] Arh. Makarij Veretennikov, *op. cit.*, p. 232.

frequently fathers reached Moscow asking Russian rulers for protection and financial support for monasteries in their dangerous situation under the reign of infidels. The first mission came from the Panteleemon Monastery in 1509.[31] During the reign of Basil III there were close relationships also with other Athonite centres, Great Lavra and Vatopedi among others.[32] In 1538 some Bulgarian monks from Zographou Monastery came to visit Makarij, archbishop of Novgorod at that time. Owing to that meeting Makarij got to know the story about the martyrdom of Gregory the New, killed by Muslims. Those facts were written in Makarij's *Minei*.[33] In the period of 1550-1558 three legations from Hilandar reached Moscow to beg Ivan IV for aid. Monks from Rila monastery in Bulgaria made a similar mission in 1558.[34]

Sources from the 16th century confirm that Makarij was especially interested in information about Athonite monasteries. At his request Paisius of Hilandar wrote down *The Typikon of the Holy Mountain* in 1550. In 1560-1562 *The Story of the Holy Mountain* was compiled, including information collected from the monks (who had been in Moscow almost two years) of Panteleemon, Stavronikita and the Great Lavra. *The Story...* brings detailed descriptions of monasteries, particulars of the sites of the buildings, their origin and the number of the brethren. It also tells about Athonite nature, farming and monastic life. Just like most of the texts from that period it includes news of the humiliations and insults which monks met on the part of the Turks.[35] *The Story...* shows that the interest of the Russian clergy concerned not only spiritual questions and "the holy places" but also economic activities. During the time of the evolution of Russian monasticism and conflicts between adherents of possession and non-possession of the estates and the properties by the Muscovite Church the example of Athonite economy could be a really important argument for Makarij's followers in the case of the appearance of "heretics" who criticized the wealth of clergy, and trans-Volga monks – partisans of non-possession of large land property by monasteries.[36]

---

[31] Ju. A. Pjatnickij, 'Odin iz putej proniknovenija pamjatnikov balkanskogo iskusstva v Rossiju', [in:] *Drevnerusskoe iskusstvo. Balkany. Rus'*, St. Peterburg 1995, p. 230.

[32] Arh. Makarij Veretennikov, *op. cit.*, pp. 110-111.

[33] *Pamjatniki literatury drevnej Rusi. Vtoraja polovina XVI veka*, Moskva 1986, pp. 530-545.

[34] A. A. Turilov, 'Rasskazy o čudotvornyh ikonah monastyrja Hilandar v russkoj zapisi XVI veka', [in:] *Čudotvornaja ikona...*, p. 510.

[35] *Slovar' knižnikov i knižnosti Drevnej Rusi. Vtoraja polovina XIV-XVI v.*, II, Leningrad 1989, pp. 389-390.

[36] P. Bushkovitch, *Religion and Society in Russia. The 16th and 17th Centuries*, New York-Oxford 1992, p. 26 ff.

The priests reached Rus' from the South and the East, especially from Mount Athos and Jerusalem, and presented the tsar's family and clerics with "gifts and blessings". There were crosses, liturgical utensils, books, relics and icons – the sacred objects being "keepsakes" from the holy places where the monks came from. In the case of icons – they were the cult images of saints especially venerated in particular monasteries; for example the Serbian Hilandar Monastery in 1550 made the tsar's family a gift of icons of Sts. Simeon and Sabbas.[37] It seems that images like these could not be a cause of iconographical innovations, even if they presented unique subjects (e.g. St. Anne with Mary as Child). Their influence on Church iconography would surely be insignificant just because they were appropriate to private devotion. The influence of stories and legends about icons from the Holy Mountain, e.g. The Mother of God of Iviron (Portaitissa) and The Mother of God "Troieručnica" (Tricherousia), could be much stronger; however, the popularity of those images and of course their legends probably began not before the 17th century.[38] In the end of the 16th century the Serbian bishop Nektarij reached Rus'. *The Typicon...* he brought was an exposition of the style of icons painting "according to Greek practice" but also in that case it is rather questionable whether *The Typicon...* could affect the form of Russian *podlinniki* (patterns) which were current in the 17th century.[39]

On the grounds of the preserved objects of Russian icon-painting it could be assumed that some complicated symbolical-dogmatic compositions appeared only once in the14th-15th centuries to return in many copies and variants in the art of the 16th century. On the two-sided tablet from Novgorod (the second half of the 15th century) there is a composition of *The Exaltation of the Mother of God* with prophets and Christ Emmanuel.[40] The program of the so-called *Sophia Church Calendar* from Novgorod (end of the 15th century) comprises among other images related to Balkans art that of the Passion and *Christ the Vine* (*Assembly of the Apostles*); the prototype of the latter surely came from Crete.[41] The scenes from the Passion

---

[37] Ju. Pjatnickij, *op. cit.*, p. 230-232; E. Pokrovskij, *Očerki pamjatnikov...*, p. 399; A. A. Turilov, *op. cit.*, pp. 510-511.

[38] Ibid.

[39] Z. Morozova, 'K voprosu o vremeni pojavlenija "ikonopisnyh risunkov" i ih rol' v rabote mastera-ikonopisca', *Filevskije čtenija*, 1993, 3, pp. 50-51.

[40] M. V. Alpatov, *Early Russian Icon Painting*, Moscow 1984, cat. no. 118.

[41] E. S. Smirnova, V. K. Laurina, E. A. Gordienko, *Živopis' Velikogo Novgoroda. XV vek*, Moskva 1982, pp. 314-315, cat. no. 63 – 14 a, b, 15 a, b, 21 b; cf. *Byzantine and Post-Byzantine Art*, Athens 1985, cat. no. 101.

cycle: *The Procession to Golgotha*, *Christ Ascending the Cross* and *Request for Christ's Body* were painted in 1509 for the festival tier of the iconostasis in St. Sophia cathedral in Novgorod by native artists – Andrej Lavrent'ev and Ivan Jarcev.[42] In the present state of research it is not possible to ascertain how big influence on their appearance could have been due to the activity in 1338 in Novgorod of Isaac the Greek with his workshop and even of Theophanes the Greek who made the wall-paintings in the church of the Transfiguration in 1378.[43] In the case of the tablets from the *Sophia Church Calendar* it is very likely that they were made in the time of Gennady, archbishop of Novgorod in 1484-1504. In his court there were meetings of "Latins" and Greeks working on the translation of the Bible and religious literature, both eastern and western.[44]

It is very propable, despite of the shortage of sources confirming the process, that a large number of new but much more popular images in the 16th century came to Rus' directly from Mount Athos, the southern Slavs or Moldavia. They could arrive in a similar way to the composition *The Tree of Jesse* in the Annunciation cathedral in Moscow.[45] Scholars assumed that the image *Divine Wisdom Has Built the Temple Herself* migrated from Balkan painting in the end of the 13th or in the 14th century. Moreover its spread was, to Prohorov, closely connected with the increasing interest in the works of Pseudo-Dionysius, especially his *Message to Titus the bishop.*[46] The same thing probably happened to images like *Weep not for Me, Mother* and *Anapeson – The Vigilant Eye of Christ* both popular from the 16th century. Their Russian variants have close analogies to the paintings of Athos and the Balkans, but there is no direct interdependence between them.[47] In the matter of much more enigmatic and problematical compositions, images of God the Father and the New Testament Trinity, scholars often saw them

---

[42] V. V. Filatov, 'Ikonostas novgorodskogo Sofijskogo sobora (Predvaritel'naja publikacija)', [in:] *Drevnerusskoe iskusstvo. Hudožestvennaja kul'tura Novgoroda*, Moskva 1968, pp. 78-80; Cf. *Byzantine and Post-Byzantine...*, cat. no. 85.

[43] V. V. Filatov, *op. cit.*, p. 77; V. N. Lazarev, *op. cit.*, p. 10.

[44] E. S. Smirnova, V. K. Laurina, E. A. Gordienko, *op. cit.*, p. 319.

[45] I. Ja. Kačalova, 'Stenopis' galerej Blagoveščenskogo sobora Moskovskogo Kremla', [in:] *Drevnerusskoe iskusstvo. Balkany...*, p. 426; G. V. Popov, *op. cit.*, p. 358.

[46] G. M. Prohorov, 'Poslanie Titu-ierarhu...', pp. 8-10.

[47] E. K. Redin, *Ikona „Niedremennoe Oko"*, Harkov 1901, pp. 2-3; N. P. Kondakov, *Pamjatniki hristianskogo iskusstva na Afone*, St. Peterburg 1902, p. 86; Idem, *Ikonografija Bogomateri. Svjazy grečeskoj ikonopisi s italjanskoju živopisju rannogo Vozroždenija*, St. Peterburg 1911, pp. 205-206; G. K. Vagner, *op. cit.*, pp. 183-185; cf. *Byzantine and Post-Byzantine...*, cat. no. 75, 86.

as an effect of the influence of western art. However, in the larger context of Russian culture with its negative attitudes towards "Latins" it is very doubtful if it could be possible.[48] It is also proper to add that one of the earliest images in Russian art (and the earliest one in Muscovite art), that of *Paternitas*, appears on the liturgical textile presented by Sophia Palaeologus to St. Sergius Trinity Monastery in 1499. Retkovskaja assumed that its iconographical program was created by the princess herself. Before the wedding with Ivan III she lived for a long time in Italy (so she must had known Italian painting) but Retkovskaja considers that the model for the textile was the Byzantine manuscripts which Sophia probably saw in Italy.[49] Moreover, it is not unlikely that non-canonical images came in a similar way just like secular literature did: *The Story of Alexander the Great*, *Trojan History* and *The Tale of Dracula* reached Rus' in the 15th century from the southern Slavs and Moldavia.[50] G. Popov suggests that even so unique image as *The Church Militant* should be connected with *The Blessed Army of Constantine* known in the 14th century in the paintings of Ohrid and especially popular in Moldavian wall-paintings in the 16th century.[51]

Even if it could be accepted that the examples above testify to the influence of Post-Byzantine art in Russia in the particular matters of images, is it possible to find out about the Greek and Balkan artists who could be "carriers of innovations"? The names of Balkan refugees, *knižniki*, who were active in Rus', are known. There were the metropolitan Kiprian, Pachomius the Logothet, a Serb Leo Philologus and others. But if it is a question of the icon-painters working in the end of the 15th and the 16th centuries there is no precise information nor, unfortunately, any preserved objects. On the one hand, there were most certainly not only bishops and writers but also artists in the suite of Sophia Palaeologus who arrived in Moscow in 1472. If the one of the bishops, Nil (then *vladyka* of Tver), came from Athos, perhaps there could be also Athonite icon painters among the painters.[52] On the other, in the group of artists and craftsmen established

[48] L. Ouspensky, *La théologie de l'icône dans l'Eglise orthodoxe*, Paris 1980, pp. 373-374.

[49] L. S. Retkovskaja, 'O pojavlenii i razvitii kompozicii „Otečestvo" v russkom iskusstve XIV-XVI vekov', [in:] *Drevnerusskoe iskusstvo. XV – načala XVI vekov*, Moskva 1963, pp. 251-253.

[50] Ja. S. Lur'e, 'Čerty vozroždenija v russkoj kul'ture XV-XVI vv. (Drevnerusskaja literatura i zapadnaja "narodnaja kniga")', [in:] *Feodal'naja Rossija...*, pp. 159-160.

[51] G. V. Popov, *op. cit.*, pp. 363, 364.

[52] V. G. Brjusova, 'Tverskij episkop grek Nil i ego Poslanie knjazju Georgiju Ivanoviču', *Trudy Otdela Drevnerusskoj Literatury*, XXVIII, 1974, p. 181, 186; cf. E. Pokrovskij, *Očerki pamjatnikov...*, p. 399.

by Sophia's husband Ivan III there was a majority of Italians and Germans. A few Greeks, just like Peter and Arganapagos, were active in Venice first. There is no question but that the influence of "Latins" as "infidels", and catholic Greeks from Italy too, could not play an important part, simply because they were not permitted to paint icons, due to concern for the significance of icons to the Orthodox. Aliens working in the Muscovite court were obliged to accept canonical models first of all. Even having a good reputation, Aristotele Fioravanti who built the Dormition cathedral in Moscow had to "copy" the cathedral of the same name in Vladimir on Ivan's order.[53]

It must be assume that after the first half of the 16th century the influence of southern Slavs models in art could be dependent only on "icons of Korsun'" as icons and wall-paintings which were approved as "ancient" and "correct" expressions of Orthodoxy, and, as a result, lacked any participation by contemporary Balkan artists. The originals of the Serbian icons from the 14th century *The Empress Has Stood at the Right-Hand [Предста Царица...]* and *The Exaltation of the Mother of God with Acathistos* were taken away from Novgorod after 1550 and put in the Dormition cathedral and soon copies of them were painted by Russian icon painters.[54] In the same way wall-paintings from the church in Volotovo near Novgorod (end of the 14th century) could probably also have had some influence. Here were the first Russians versions of *Divine Wisdom Has Built the Temple Herself*, the images of prophetic visions and *The Mother of God, Fountain of Life.*[55] The increase of the number of copies and continuations of their subjects were surely intended for the purpose of keeping up the tradition which was considered in the 16th century as Byzantine and designated in the texts as "Greek". Indicating the canonical sources of Orthodox art, Makarij during the council of 1553-1554 actually mentioned not only "the all-holy churches" of Mount Athos but also icons and wall-paintings in Moscow, Novgorod, Pskov and Tver.[56] The archpriest Sylvester instead laid emphasis on the question that "grand princes [...] sent for Greek icon painters to paint the

---

[53] Ibid., pp. 331-333, 371-372; cf. R. Cormack, 'Moskau zwischen Ost und West', [in:] *Zwischen Himmel und Erde. Moskauer Ikonen und Buchmalerei 14. – 16. Jahrhunderts*, 1997, pp. 21-22.

[54] G. V. Popov, *op. cit.*, pp. 352-363; cf. *'Prečistomu obrazu Tvoemu poklanjaemsja...' Obraz Bogomateri v proizvedenijah Russkogo muzeja*, St. Petrburg 1995, p. 63, cat. no. 34.

[55] G. I. Vzornov, *Volotovo. Freski cerkvi Uspenija na Volotovom pole bliz Novgoroda*, Moskva 1989, cat. no. 168, 181.

[56] Arh. Makarij Veretennikov, *op. cit.*, pp. 238-239, 242.

churches and icons" and, on the other hand, the continuity of tradition in Ivan the Terrible's time: "In the whole state of tsar Ivan Vasilievič there are Greek and Korsun' icons and the others – painted by native masters after the [ancient] models on the walls and icons".[57] Though it must not be forgotten that these opinions were only an attempt to demonstrate the Orthodox character of icons whose meaning was questioned. But they were also just a manifestation of the point of view of the Muscovite clergy: Rus' is the only empire in the world which holds and protects the ancient traditions of Orthodoxy. *The Tale about Miracles of the Icon of the Mother of God of Tihvin* from the first half of the 16th century tells the same story in the curiously way, but in the language of popular literature. According to *The Tale...* the Mother of God herself decided that her image would leave Constantinople where she did not want to remain it anymore. The icon was carried by "supernatural power" and revealed over the waters of Lake Ladoga near Novgorod where the church for her was built.[58]

According to that idea the Rus' persistence in Orthodox traditions and customs could be possible owing to Moscow's having taken Constantinople's place, interpreted as "the Third Rome". In the eschatological vision of history Moscow took over the title and the dignity of the emperor's city, in that way achieving a primacy in the whole Orthodox world.[59] It could be reinforced by endless emphasis on continuity of tradition in Rus' but also the peculiar "expansion" of art in the South of Europe and in the christian East. It was especially strong at the end of the 16th and in the 17th century at the time of intensive western influence in Rus'. In the 16th century "gifts and keepsakes" were conveyed from Athos to Moscow, but in course of time the movement was reversed in connection with alms sent to the Holy Mountain by the tsars for helping impoverished monasteries. In 1515 Basil III, while was asking for a translator, bestowed on the Great Lavra and Vatopedi icon coverings, liturgical utenstils and textiles.[60] Ivan IV often sent suitable funds and gifts to Mount Athos. In 1556 he presented Hilandar monastery with an embroidered veil with the image *The Empress Has Stood...*[61] During the 16th century assistance for Balkan monasteries became

---

[57] Ibid., p. 271.

[58] I. A. Ivanova, 'Ikona Tihvinskoj Bogomateri i ee svjaz so *Skazaniem o čudesah ikony Tihvinskoj Bogomateri*', *Trudy Otdela Drevnerusskoj Literatury*, XXII, 1966, pp. 419-436; *Slovar' knižnikov i knižnosti...*, pp. 365-367.

[59] O. I. Podobedova, *op. cit.*, pp. 18-20.

[60] Arh. Makarij Veretennikov, *op. cit.*, pp. 110-111.

[61] G. V. Popov, *op. cit.*, p. 359.

something like a custom of the Russian tsars who aspired to the title of "the one and only Orthodox emperor". Although from the end of the century Russian icons frequently reached the southern Slavs, Moldavia and even Georgia and in the 17th century also Constantinople, Damascus, Antioch, Jerusalem and Sinai (in 1652 the Serbian metropolitan Mihail in his journey to the Holy Land took twelve carts of "all the reserves" but also icons and other liturgical objects)[62] the importance of Athos as a spiritual centre of Orthodoxy could increase in some periods. In the 17th century it paradoxically intensified in the time of patriarch Nikon who, when striving for the goal of change of customs and rituals in the Muscovite Church after the example of the Byzantine rite, designated himself as a "believer in the Byzantine faith": "I am a Russian and I am the son of a Russian, but my faith and my religion are Greek".[63]

It seems that Nikon, having "improvement" of Russian Orthodoxy in mind, intended to adapt it to Byzantine models so the patterns for reform could be books such as those from Iveron Monastery. However, Nikon's opponents reproached him that their origin was not Orthodox. The Old-Believers said that the books were printed "under the power of God's apostates, the pope of Rome, in Rome, Paris and Venice, in Greek but not according to the old belief".[64] But there was no adequate "artistic policy" in Nikon's circle. The Russian clergy did not try to employ Greek and Balkan artists to "reform" Russian icon painting, despite of the patriarch's criticism of it as *frjaz* (meaning western) in style. If icon painters reached Rus' at that time, they were certainly guided by the same economic reasons as Apostol Juriev "with the companions" was. Icon painters from Athens remained some time in Moldavia where they could not earn enough even for a journey to Moscow. Finally Juriev arrived there in 1659 – quite alone because his "companions" died on the way. However, the undertaking evidently became profitable since the Greek instantly found a position in the Oružennaia Palata and was "inundated" with commissions.[65] But interestingly, other aliens could be entertained much better even than the Greeks,

[62] V. G. Brjusova, *Russkaja živopis' XVII vcka*, Moskva 1984, pp. 28-29; E. Pokrovskij, *Očerki pamjatnikov...*, pp. 372, 399.

[63] B. Dąb-Kalinowska, *Między Bizancjum a Zachodem. Ikony rosyjskie XVII-XIX w.*, Warszawa 1990, pp. 12-13.

[64] Ibid., p. 45; *Grečeskie dokumenty i rukopisi, ikony i pamjatniki prikladnogo iskusstva moskovskih sobranij. Meždunarodnaja konferencija „Krit, Vostočnoe Sredizemnomore i Rossija v XVII v."*, Moskva 1995, pp. 46-48.

[65] A. I. Uspenskij, *Carskie ikonopiscy i živopiscy XVII v. Slovar'*, Moskva 1910, pp. 300-302.

for example Bogdan Sultanov from Persia, a convert from the "Armenian faith". Before he proved his competence in icon painting, he was given lavish gifts of various provisions but also more than ten "pails" of wine, fifteen "pails" of beer and ten of mead.[66]

---

[66] "Pail" – an old Russian cubic measure, circa 12 litres. Ibid., p. 235.