

P. Schreiner, Universität München: *Zur Bezeichnung megas und megas basileus in der byzantinischen Kaisertitulatur.*

S. Troïanos, Academy of Athens, Department of the History of Law: *Die Sonderstellung des Kaisers im früh-und mittelbyzantinischen kirchlichen Prozess.*

I. Anastasiou, University of Thessaloniki: *The Imperial Concept in the Vitae of Cyril and Methodius.*

THURSDAY, AUGUST 28

Morning

Chairman: P. Christou

O.Kresten, Universität Wien, Institut für Byzantinistik: *Zur Pertinenzzeile der byzantinischen Kaiserurkunde.*

E. Trapp, Oesterreichische Akademie der Wissenschaften, Kommission für Byzantinistik: *Hatte das Digenisepos ursprünglich eine antikaiserliche Tendenz?*

R.W. Hartle, Queens College, City University of New York: *Louis XIV Between Heroism and the Métier de Roi.*

Details of this Symposium will be published in the next issue of *BALKAN STUDIES*.

Institute for Balkan Studies

D. TSOURKA - PAPASTATHIS

ICONS PAINTED ON GLASS

In churches, light filtering through stained glass windows reveals their design and its religious meaning; icons painted on glass do but reflect that light and sometimes deflect it. They are a later, portable and condensed counterpart executed by the folk for the folk, and nowadays appreciated in their own right. Though bearing the name of icons, they have lost the initial power of awakening the corresponding emotion.

Recent publications, Romanian and foreign, articles and travelling exhibitions abroad, are bringing to the notice of a wider public these icons painted on glass, a popular craft of Transylvanian peasants.

Cornel Irimie and Marcela Focşa are introducing to the British public *Romanian Icons painted on Glass* in a volume the abundant illustration of

which enables the reader to get a full impression of this craft exercised in village workshops for almost two centuries.¹ The text gives a short account of controversial opinions as to these artefacts which have sprung up throughout the province of Transylvania about the middle of the 18th century as attested by examples, yet which are mentioned in writing at an earlier date.²

Both above mentioned authors as also Ion Muşlea—a distinguished folklorist who has dedicated a lifetime to the history of the origin and diffusion of such icons—agree that, though the technique was not evolved in Romania, yet this country is the most eastern part of Europe where they have been made, Romanian peasants having adapted the technique to their folklore, to themes of local religious painting and their own popular art.

When visiting Brede Place in Sussex a couple of years ago, I was to my surprise confronted—among period furniture, tapestries and Western pictures of tints muted with years—by the garish colours and imperfect design of such an icon. It was as vivid as when it came out of the hamlet workshop. Set as it was at the entrance of a private chapel opening onto a bedroom, it seemed both anachronistic and topographically intriguing.

It was the gift to his godson from a British ambassador to Romania. A typed notice pinned alongside it on the wall gave further explanations: such icons, it said, distributed throughout Romania during the reign of the Russian empress Catherine II in order to boost up Greek Orthodox faith. I cannot vouch for the exact wording as, hoping to visit that manor again, I neglected to take a copy of it, nor have I put down a description of the theme represented on the icon. Hearing that Brede Place is changing owners, I can no longer trace it, but should wish to comment upon the subject, having been sometime interested in it myself.

In a recent article Ion Muşlea's first question is: *When and where* did this art first appear, and how did it come to be spread all over Transylvania? He reaches the conclusion, shared by the two authors mentioned above, that the starting point must have been Nicula, a village north east of Cluj, where a tear-shedding icon of the Mother of God was reported in 1699, drawing pilgrims to its church. It would be either from foreigners come to the shrine, or from monks visiting the nearby monastery that the inhabitants learned the craft. As pilgrims wished to take home reproductions of the "miraculous"

1. Cornel Irimia and Marcela Focşa, *Romanian Icons painted on Glass*, Meridiane Publishing House, Bucarest, 1968.

2. Ion Muşlea, *Icoanele pe sticlă şi xilogravurile pătanilor români din Transilvania* in *Steaua*, Nov. 1968, p. 70-89.

painting, peasants who had acquired the technique were incited to copy and paint on glass the original icon in order to satisfy incessant demand and thus ensure to themselves an easy gain.

The fact is that the industry prospered and spread quickly throughout the village which became the centre from which peddlars—carrying these “Nicula icons” piled in frames on their back—travelled far and wide in the whole province and beyond.³

Some scholars have objected to this hypothesis, as a whole series of icons on glass have sprung up in many other places such as Gherla, Făgăraș, Laz, Lancrăm, Sebeș-Sibiu, Brașov, etc., representing subjects other than the “miraculous” prototype. What seems to make it even more doubtful, is the fact that the oldest pieces bearing a date—1778, 1780, 1783, 1787, 1829—stem from centres mentioned above and not from Nicula.

Ion Mușlea wishing to lay emphasis on the creative impulse of popular artists and folklore, claiming besides modern appreciation by relating these creations to expressionist painting, is biased into diverting attention from historical tradition, minimising also the initial share of individual contribution, “We are interested, he says, in the design, dramatic composition, the expression of faces, and the well harmonised colours of a successful modern painting.” (p.83) That is why, while registering the gifted painters Savu Moga, Matei Țimforea his pupil, Simeon who painted icons in the village of Laz in 1837, Ioan Pop of Făgăraș, Ionița ot Brașov dating his icon and also his signature in 1780,⁴ and others, he dismisses them as being influenced by foreign patterns transmitted by Wallachian painters of Byzantine tradition.

We believe that, in spite of their having wandered far in time and form from the source, presenting inaccuracies, embellishments, additions or omissions, that these creations in order to be fully understood should not be completely separated from the religious context which in the first place determined their existence. An iconographic approach might shed more light as to their origin.

Two religious and aesthetic currents have to be distinguished: a Roman-Catholic one coming from the West and a Greek-Orthodox one coming from the South. One, more colourful and naturalistic, the second more subtle and conventional. At times the personality of the painter himself does break at

3. *Ibid.*, p. 71.

4. Maria Golescu, *Icoana pe sticlă a zugravului Ionița ot Brașov* in *Bul. Com. Mon. Ist.* XXVIII(1945) fasc. 123-126, I plate in colour. Irimia - Focșa, I. c. Pl. 53.

through, other, a cross-fertilization is noticeable. On all, rustic interpretation leaves its mark.

One of the most frequent representations is that of *Our Lady of Sorrows*, figuring the Virgin with sad countenance and clasped hands, and the crucified Christ either in the background or in front of her. Sometimes she is transfixed by swords. (Plates 7,12,13,30,31,39-70,80,84,-85, 108, 125.⁵) This theme which is unknown to Greek Orthodox iconography should be connected with the Servites, the 5th mendicant order of the Servants of Mary, which from the 13th c. onwards devoted themselves to special meditation on the Dolours of Mary, the Seven Sorrows. A feast of the *Commemoratio angustae B. Mariae V.* was instituted at a Provincial Council of Cologne "in 1413 to expiate the crimes of the iconoclast Hussites" who were destroying crucifixes and images of the Mother of God with fanatical zeal. In 1674 the feast was assigned for the whole German empire, the order of the Servites having branch houses in Austria, Poland and Hungary. Pope Benedict XIII in 1725 caused this feast to be celebrated in the States of the Church on the Friday after Passion Sunday. The order of the Servites was expelled from Prague in the year 1783. Pius VII in 1814 directed that a second feast of the Dolours should be kept on the 3rd Sunday of September.⁶ As the object of this order was exclusively the Sorrow of Mary during the Crucifixion and Death of Christ, would it not follow that Servites fleeing from Bohemia and finding asylum in Transylvania should have brought with them both technique and iconography? A village near Caransebes named Servești possessed a letter-press functioning in 1591. The spreading of the prototype would also coincide with the Counter-Reformation, for "a development in the evolution of form and a development in the evolution of thought takes place side by side and merges one in the other" (Werner Weisbach, *Der Barock als Kunst der Gegenreformation*), and the painter Sassoferrato (1609-1685) seems to have created the type of the Madonna clasping hands beside the crucified Christ during this Mannerist period which in last instance is seen sunk into communal interpretation.

Another theme which is unknown to Greek-Orthodox iconography is the "representation of a vine issuing from the side of Christ seated on a wine-press and pressing the grapes in a cup" and as such "an original iconographic

5. Irimia & Focșa.

6. *A Catholic Dictionary* by William Addis & Thomas Arnold, Routledge & Kegan Paul Ltd. London, 1951, and *The Catholic Encyclopedia* New York, 1913, vol. XIV, p. 151-152.

version" (Plates 24,42,63,124,121).⁷ N. Cartoian related this theme to the legend about Procla, wife of Pilate who, although forbidden to do so, attended the crucifixion. The Saviour's blood springing onto her dress so frightened Procla that she rushed home, washed the dress and buried it under a peach-tree. The vine grew up from that spot and bore the most wonderful grapes. Procla is mentioned in the apocryphal Gospel of Nicodemus (ch.II). According to Cartoian the legend was translated into Romanian at the beginning of the XVIIth century from a slavonic text included in what western medieval literature called *Joca Monachorum* and which was compiled in the Byzantine world and may be traced back to the XIIth c. It was forbidden to Russian Greek-Orthodox worshippers in 1644. N. Cartoian concluded that "folklore material and the old legend combine to throw light on the naïve vision that the painter tried to fix through this iconographic representation by a symbolical interpretation of the scene preceeding the Passion when the mystery of the Eucharist was established."

We believe that some other source literally mentioning the "Mystic wine-press" on which Christ is seated and the whole symbolical context should be sought for in western hortatory literature contemporary with the appearance of such icons. In Coverdale's *A spiritual and most precious pearle* (1550) we may find: "the heavenly vine-man bringeth the Christians unto the press," and the image must have been familiar at the time.

When telling about the manner in which the icons were made, Ion Muşlea—who has himself visited the workshops still extant and interrogated survivors of artisans—writes that "setting aside too few exceptions, the painter used models on paper which they had inherited and which they transferred by tracing, sometimes also by freely drawing from engravings or other icons."⁸ The second part of his study deals with stamps from wood blocks, that, he says, are an exclusive feature of the village Haşdate near Nicula. This craft was exercised there from the beginning of the 18th to the end of the 19th century. The author adds that some 15 blocks of wood were found in Haşdate itself and a number of stamps in the possession of Armenian merchants in the town of Gherla. He further mentions that in the Ukraine, notably in the religious centres of Pečerska (the name connects with the Athonite monastery of Lavra) and Počaiv, the engraving of similar loose engravings flourished from 1721-1802. Likewise in Polish monasteries and villages, being intended for Greek-Orthodox worshippers.

7. Irimia & Focşa, op. cit.

8. I. Muşlea *l.c.p.* 85.

This might add an indication as to the second road of dissemination starting from Mt. Athos for which visiting monks would clearly be responsible, and thus the notice met with at Brede Place could partly be explained, though Russian agents have been more often employed in peddling political propaganda under cover of carrying icons.

The principal road that can be iconographically followed would in our opinion lead from south of the Danube through Wallachia. Stamps like these have certainly come to the notice of church-painters who have included them in their pattern-books—*hermineia tis zographikis technis*—and which Transylvanians acquainted with the technique termed by Germans *Hinterglas-malerei* have subsequently traced onto glass; models for frescoes were also reduced to the size of portable icons eliminating details already poor, and using flat fields of colour as their art demanded—all according to historical tradition.

That stamps representing popular saints and scenes of the principal religious feasts were to be found in vast quantities in south-eastern Europe may be attested by anyone who has visited St. George's church in Arbănași, Bulgaria, and could see them papering from ceiling to floor the walls of the osuary. Arbănași was once Prince Constantin Brancoveanu's stage on his journey to Constantinople (1688-1714). Romanian architects had built for him this church, where a slab shows the tomb of one of his children, and also a place, thus establishing a direct link with the Danubian Principality.

If we examine the icon mentioned by Mușlea, reproduced by N. Iorga in *Les Arts mineurs en Roumanie* I, and Plates 115-116 of *Romanian Icons painted on Glass* representing "St. Haralambios...who often inspired icon painters in the 19th c. particularly in the south of Transylvania" we see the saint treading the demon of the plague (which raged in Wallachia in 1812 during the reign of Caragea so that importation of woodcuts from south of the Danube was encouraged) which is featured as Chronos, i.e., with scythe and hour-glass as headgear, obviously no local popular motive but familiar to Greeks. This icon follows line for line a woodcut to be found in the collection of engravings belonging to the Romanian Academy in Bucarest, which had been donated by Dr. Ciuhandu. He found it together with others of the kind enveloping the pedestal of an altar in a Transylvanian church, as a notice attached to the series attested when it was consulted by me.

An engraving of St. George of the Crypto-Christians, martyr of Jannina in "evzone" costume i.e. Greek fustanella and pompom shoes, was hanging some time in the Alba Church of Bucharest.

I. Mușlea mentions an icon representing St. George on horseback with

a youth riding pillion behind him—the latter he interprets as “holding the beaker from which the saint will drink in new powers (!)”; this again is the misleading result of too much concentration on folklore. We have traced back the illustration of this subject to 3 versions available in Mt. Athos mss. published by G. Aufhauser in a special issue of *Byzantinische Zeitschrift* it is represented on Athos frescoes, and has been taken over by Romanian hagiographers and church painters relating the legend.⁹

Incidentally, a scene described as “St. Nicholas surrounded by three maidens he has saved from their father’s plans who, wanting them to be dishonoured, had placed moneybags on their windows at night” (Plate 97-98, p. 19)¹⁰ is an erroneous interpretation. The bags of gold were placed by the saint himself as dowry for the maidens. Then again, the two different representations of Elijah in his chariot refer to two successive moments of the prophet’s life in the Old Testament: Kings I, 17, 18, “Elijah found Elisha who was plowing with 12 yoke of oxen... and cast his mantle upon him” and Kings II, 4, 5, “and he took the mantle of Elijah that fell from and stood by the bank of the Jordan and smote the waters (which became clouds on the icon) and they parted hither and thither” seen on Plate 117 and cover. On some plates we have as secondary images Elisha’s servant Gehazi, on another Elijah himself fed by the crow.

A study of contemporary religious texts and their illustration might be illuminating for tracing the origin of details that have found their way onto icons, for painters who were just craftsmen still hesitated to introduce in venerated images anything for which there was no doctrinal support or precedent, obedience to tradition not having been at the time completely wiped out.

Unskilled copying of finer models led finally to such debasement that
the roughly countenances

Bothe in shappe and portrayture (Lydgate)

caused “in 1890 a departmental order actually to prohibit the sale of icons painted on glass in Transylvania” which explains why by 1900 the craft had ceased to be exercised.

If we have dwelt so much at length on the filiation of certain themes, it was as an attempt to indicate a way that might lead towards the unravelling of sources, though this is unessential when assessing the appeal of such pro-

9. M. Golescu, *Sf. Gheorghe izbăvește copilul dela Amira*, in *Bul. Com. Mon. Ist.* XXX fasc. 93, 1937, p. 128.

10. Irimia & Focșa, p. 19.

ductions. We can only be too grateful to C. Irimia and M. Focşa for having brought out a beautiful work which cannot but stimulate the interest of a sympathetic public.

London

MARIA GOLESCU

**"CONVEGNO LO 'STOLNIC' CANTACUZINO
E LE RELAZIONI ITALO-RUMENE NEI SECOLI XVII-XVIII"
A PADOUE**

A l'occasion du 3ème centénaire de l'inscription à l'Université de Padoue du premier humaniste roumain, d'origine grecque, Constantin Cantacuzino le "Stolnic" (1640-1716), une réunion de spécialistes italiens et roumains a eu lieu à Padoue du 2-4 mai a.c., consacrée à l'oeuvre de cet érudit et aux rapports culturels italo-roumains du XVII et XVIIIe siècles.

Les travaux de ce symposium étaient mis sous les auspices du vénérable Atheneum Patavinum et sous la présidence de l'illustre linguiste et romaniste M. Carlo Taglivini, Professeur à l'Université de Padoue et Directeur de l'Institut de linguistique de cette ville.

Le Comité d'organisation était formé de Professeurs MM. Gianfranco Folena, Gianbattista Pellegrini, Paolo Sanbin et M.elle Dr Lucia Rossetti, Conservatrice des Anciens Archives de l'Université de Padoue, ayant comme Secrétaire Général M. le Professeur Alexandre Niculescu, chargé des cours de langue et littérature roumaine à cette université.

Une vingtaine de communications ont été faites dans l'ordre suivant:

1. "La cultura rumena e l'Italia tra i secoli XVII-XVIII" (Prof. Alex. Elian-Bucarest);
2. "Ricerche sul cognomen Cantacuzin" (Prof. Gius. Schirò-Roma);
3. "Lo Stolnic Cantacuzino e il barocco letterario" (Prof. G. Caragata-Florenza);
4. "Les premières études de Constantin Cantacuzino" (Dr. Cl. Tsourkas-Thessaloniki);
5. "Lo Stolnic Cantacuzino. Nuovi coordinati biografiche". (Cor. Di-ma Drăgan-Bucarest);
6. "Constantin Cantacuzino, scolaro à l'Università di Padova" (Dr Lucia Rossetti-Padova);
7. "I libri pubblicati a Padova nella biblioteca dello Stolnic Cantacuzino" (Prof. O. Drîmba-Torino);