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On Stylistic Replications in Early and Late 12ᵗʰ Century Byzantine and Rus' Painting

In recent decades, historians of Byzantine and Russian art have significantly expanded their knowledge of painting in the Komnenian era, the peculiarities of painting techniques, composition and plastic form that determine the distinctive features of every stage of the development of style[1].

[1] See, for example: Demus, O., *The Mosaics of Norman Sicily*, London, 1949; L. Hadermann-Misguich, *Tendences expressives des recherches ornamentales dans la peinture byzantine de la seconde moitié du XII-e siècle* // Byzantion, T. XXXV, 1965, p. 429–44; V.N. *Lazarev, Priyomy lineinoi stilizatsii v vizantiiskoi zhivopisi X–XVII vekov i ikh istoki* (Methods of Linear Stylisation in Byzantine Painting of the 10ᵗʰ–12ᵗʰ Centuries and Their Origins // Lazarev, V.N., *Vyzantiiskaya zhivopis* (Byzantine Painting), Moscow, 1971, pp. 147–69; Djurić, V., *La peinture murale byzantine: XIIe et XIIIe siècles* // *Actes du XVe Congrès international des ètudes byzantines*: Athènes, 1976. T. 3: *Art et archeology: Byzance de 1071 a 1261: rapports et co-rapports*, Athènes, 1981, pp. 3–96; Hadermann-Misguich, L., *La peinture monumentale tardo-comnene et ses prolongements au des recherches ornamentales dans la peinture byzantine de la seconde moitié du XIII-e siècle* // XVe Congres internationale des ètudes byzantines: Athènes 1976, Vol.3: *Art et archeology*, Athènes, 1981, pp. 99–127; Mouriki, D., *Stylistic Trends in Monumental Painting of Greece during the Eleventh and Twelfth Centuries* // DOP, Vol. 34/35, 1980/1981, pp. 77–124; Etingof, O.E., *Novye stilisticheskiye i ideinye tendentsii v vizantiiskoi zhivopisi XII veka (*New Stylistic and Ideological Trends in 12ᵗʰ‑Century Byzantine Painting): Extended Abstract of Cand. Sci. Dissertation (Art History), Moscow, 1987; Etingof, O.E., *K voprosu o napravleniyakh v vizantiyskoi i drevnerusskoi zhivopisi XII veka* (On Trends in Byzantine and Early Russian Art of the 12ᵗʰ century) // Lazarev Conference: Art of Byzantium, Early Rus and Western Europe: scientific conference materials, Moscow, 2009, pp. 62–78; Sarabianov, V.D., *Zhivopis serediny 1120kh –nachala 1160kh godov* (Painting of the Mid-1120s – early 1160s // *History of Russian Art*, Vol. 2/1: Art of the 1120s –1160s, Moscow, 2012, pp. 160–335.

However, this era still has phenomena that even experienced professionals often find misleading. Familiar concepts and methods of analysis turn out to be too general and do not work. A striking example of this discrepancy in dating is a discussion of the time of the creation of the famous painting of the Bachkovo Monastery ossuary in Bulgaria, which Elka Bakalova[1] dated late 12th century, after comparing it with the frescoes of the Cathedral of St Demetrius in Vladimir painted in the 1190s, while Doula Mouriki found in it features of the turn of the 12th century[2].

It is noteworthy that in most cases scholars opt for a later dating. For example, the icon *The Heavenly Ladder of St John Climacus* from St Catherine's Monastery on the Sinai, which was dated the turn of the 12th century[3] in early publications, was then dated late 12th century[4]. This was reflected in the catalogues of the exhibitions at the Metropolitan Museum in New York[5] in 1997 and the Paul Getty Museum in Los Angeles[6] in 2006, which to some extent summed up the research of the last decades.

However, there are also examples when it was possible to prove that works traditionally attributed by most Byzantine art historians to the late 12th–13th centuries were actually created at the beginning of the century. One such instance is the painting of the Monastery of Panagia Mavriotissa in Kastoria, Macedonia[7].

There are several reasons for this disagreement among scholars. Undoubtedly the most important of them is the imagery of the monuments themselves, the nature of the ideals that shaped the poetics of art in the early 12th century and the turn of the 13th century. They really had much in common. For the artists of both periods who worked in the capital the most important task was to achieve absolute balance and the full harmony of coexistence of two principles – the spiritual and the physical.

[1] Bakalova, E., *Bachkovskata kostnitsa* (Bachkovo Ossuary), Sofia, 1977.

[2] Mouriki, D., *The Formative Role of Byzantine Art on the Artistic Style of Cultural Neighbours of Byzantium (Reflection of Constantinopolitan Style in Georgian Monumental Painting)* // JÖB, Bd. 31/2, 1981, pp. 733–36. L. Mavrodinova dated Bachkovo paintings the first half of the century (Mavrodinova, L., *Sur la datation des peintures murales de l'église-ossuaire de Bačkovo* // ΑΡΜΟΣ: Τιμητικός τόμος στόν καθηγητή Ν.Κ. Μουτσόπουλο. Θεσσαλονίκη, 1991, Σ. 1121–1140).

[3] Weitzmann, K., *Ranniye ikony* (Early Icons*) // Balkanskiye ikony* (Balkan Icons*)*, Bulgaria, Yugoslavia, Sofia, Belgrade, 1967, pp. XIII–XIV, LXXXI, Table 19.

[4] Mouriki, D., *Icons from the Twelfth to the Fifteenth Century* // Sinai: *Treasures of the Monastery of Saint Catherine* / Gen. ed. K.A. Manafis, Athens, 1990, pp. 107, 108, Pl. 24; Corrigan, K., *Constantine's Problems: The Making of the Heavenly Ladder of John Climacus*, Vat. gr 394 // *Word and Image*, 1996. No. 12, pp. 61–93.

[5] *The Glory of Byzantium. Art and Culture of the Middle Byzantine Era. A.D. 843–1261*, New York, 1997, No. 247, pp. 376, 377.

[6] *Holy Image – Hallowed Ground. Icons from Sinai*, Los Angeles, 2006, No. 48, pp. 244–7.

[7] Zakharova, A.V., *Freski tserkvi Panagii Mavriotissy v Kastorye* (Frescoes of the Church of Panagia Mavriotissa in Kastoria // *Vizantiisky vremennik* (Byzantine Annals), Vol. 59 (84), Moscow, 2000, pp. 189–97.

The images they created had to be the visible ideal of holiness, and at the same time serve as proof of the original perfection of man as God's creation. At the same time artists of the late Komnenian period often found their inspiration in the works of artists who lived a century and sometimes two centuries before them, such as, for example, the mosaics of the Daphni Monastery Katholikon created around 1100. Close resemblance with them can be found in such monuments of the last decades of the 12th century as the paintings of the Cathedral of St Demetrius in Vladimir, the frescoes of the Church of Hosios David in Thessaloniki, and mosaic icons of SS George and Demetrius from the Xenophontos Monastery on Mount Athos. In some cases such close similarity between the original and a replica mislead scholars, including highly reputable ones, into taking the authentic features of the original for careful imitation.

Another important reason for the discrepancy in dating the same monuments is the imperfectionof scientific methodology. Until now, many art historians have treated the technical and technological properties of iconography as a factor determined, primarily, by the tradition of the craft rather than by the specific *artistic tasks* the authorof the work set himself. In general, the history of Byzantine and Early Rus art studies has a tradition to regard works of Byzantine and Early Russian painting, at best, as works of high craftsmanship and, of course, iconographic art, in which everything was subordinated to technological tradition and canons, and did not allow a display of "artistic will" proper. Changes in the style of painting are associated usually with a gradual degeneration of the technical and technological tradition and skills, with the functional purpose of icons and murals, and finally, with relevant problems of a theological nature directly affecting iconography and the literary sources inspiring it.

To justify the proposed dating scholars point out traits that indicate, in their opinion, this or that stage of stylistic development. However, they rarely write about how these traits relate to the imagery of the work analysed and the principles which may be called formative. Most often painting style descriptions used to justify the dating are basically notes and descriptions of individual traits whose relationship to each other is not disclosed, so that the monuments themselves are beyond the framework of the stylistic context common to that time. For instance, the author of the article in the catalogue of an exhibition at the Metropolitan Museum of Art maintains that the traits attributing *The Heavenly Ladder* from St Catherine's Monastery on the Sinai to late Komnenian art are a distinctly graphic quality of brushwork, emphasising especially the "mannerist" manner of treatment with whimsically flowing drapery. She believes it to be
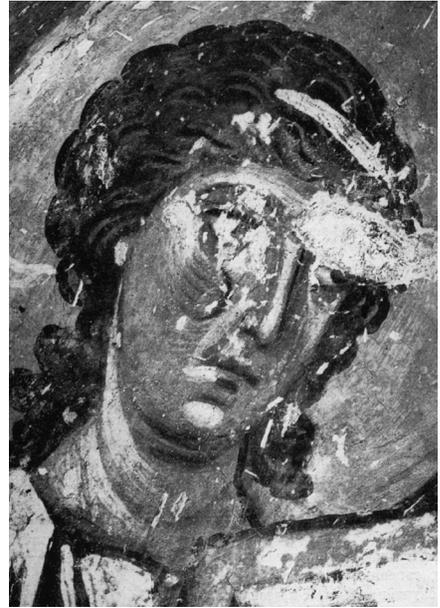
Angel. Ossuary fresco, late 11th – early 12th centuries Bachkovo Monastery, Bulgaria

stylistically similar to the *Annunciation*, another icon from the Sinai, which has identical features and was commonly recognised as belonging to the late 12th century[1]. If we compare the descriptions of various monuments dated to the late 12th century, we will certainly pay attention to the fact that their characteristics are often contradictory. For example, in addition to linear stylisation motifs, the characteristics of the late Komnenian period include both the ornamental treatment of highlights, which turn into abstract patterns, and an uninhibited, almost impressionistic brushwork found both in Bachkovo and in the Cathedral of St Demetrius. In other cases, on the contrary, to justify the dating scholars point out the perfectly flat and smooth carnation (mosaic *Hodegetria* icon, early 13th century, from St Catherine's Monastery), lapidary forms outlined by a general contour, and the absence of any expressive manner characteristic in one way or another of Komnenian art as a whole up to the 1190s (*St Nicholas the Miracle-worker with Scenes from His Life*, also from St Catherine's Monastery on Sinai)[2]. Obviously, definitions of this kind, even if they match the outer form of the described phenomenon, lack something more important which is difficult to define. The very principle of a direct description of individual features of a monument is often ineffective.

Practice shows that to evolve better methods of analysing such monuments, it is necessary to pay attention not only to painting techniques and brushwork that characterise the master's individual style. The most important thing is to understand the overall organisation of the spatial structure of the image, the relationship of the plastic form with the background, the surface of the icon board, and in monumental painting with the wall, that is what could be called the "architecture" of the icon.

If we apply such a yardstick to the two Sinai icons, *The Heavenly Ladder* and *The Annunciation*, following the suggestion of Kathleen Corrigan, who authored the article in the exhibition catalogue *The Glory of Byzantium*, we will immediately see the difference in their architectural design. In the former icon the background is treated as a flat plane of gold, which gleams a little like a mirror surface, but does not allow light deep into the composition space. The light does not come in streams, lacks mobility and does not acquire the quality of the environment surrounding the figures. In fact, gold is treated

Angel. Fresco, 1190s
St Demetrius'
Cathedral, Vladimir

[1] Weitzmann, K., *Spätkomnenische Verkündigunsikone des Sinai und die zweite byzantinische Welle des 12 Jahrhunderts // Festschrift für Herbert von Einem*, Berlin, 1965, S. 299–312; *The Glory of Byzantium*, 1997, No. 246, pp. 374–75.

[2] *Вајцман К., Алибегашвили Г., Вольскаја А., Бабић Г., Хаџидакис М., Алпатов М., Воинеску Е.*, *Ikone*, Belgrade, 1981, p. 67.

as a kind of material substance of light, whose density is equal to the density of the colour surface of the images, as if inlaid in the background and projecting only in some places like varicoloured low reliefs. Like the light, the compositional movement in the icon never goes deep into space, developing along the plane of the background at all points of its surface. Accordingly, the figures are mostly profile silhouettes.

Such a system of coordinates is fully consistent with plastic form. Here the distinctly dark (usually black, sometimes brown) contour lines as if traced in the background play the decisive role. Creating a kind of halo

The Ladder of Divine Ascent. Icon, early 12th century St Catherine's Monastery in the Sinai
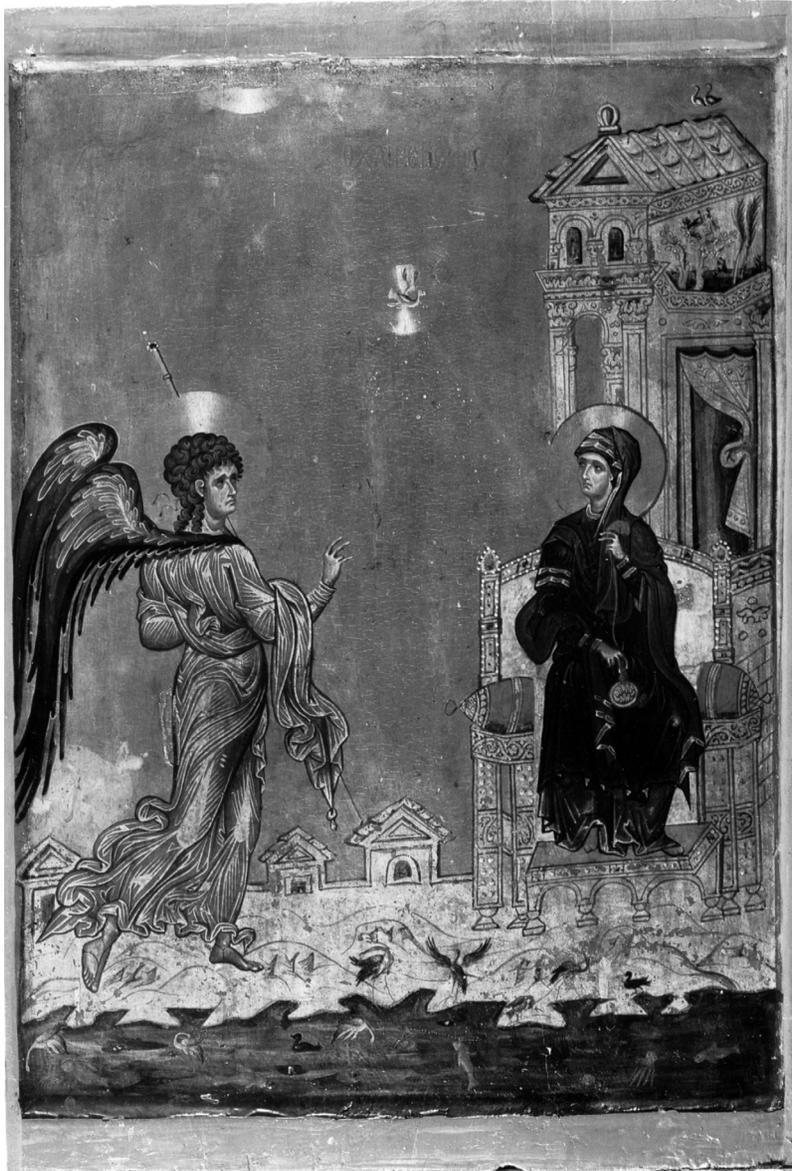
**The Annunciation
Icon**, late 12th century
St Catherine's
Monastery
in the Sinai

shadow, they separate the figures from the golden background and at the same time fasten them to it, fixing every pose and every gesture. Light does not spread over the surface of clothing that is mostly treated flatly and determines the configuration of slightly towering crests of folds. Only in some cases (the host of angels in the upper left corner of the icon) do the white highlights come into contrast with bright blue and pinkish-red flowers of the clothes, making the figures seem slightly more voluminous and rise a bit higher over the perfectly flat surface of the background. Basically, the icon painter uses the technique creating the effect of "subsidence"

of light that seems to be absorbed in the surface of the fabric. The artist achieves remarkable tonal mobility and diversity in characterising the movements of the figures by varying the power of light, sometimes adding different colours to white or changing the measure of saturation of colour spots, and giving preference to achromatic hues (spots of gold, blue, pink and white look particularly expressive against their background).

In painting faces white is used very sparingly – mainly as tiny touches that emphasise eyebrow ridges, nose tips, frontal lobes, and grey strands of hair on the heads and beards of the elders. The artist employs the techniques of multilayer modelling of low relief only when painting the images of angels and Christ stretching his arms towards the righteous men who reached the highest rung of the Ladder. Apart from that, the faces are painted mostly in the same flat manner that allows the artist to create the impression of a continuous overall movement. Transparent spots of rouge are applied in a scumbling technique on the monochrome orange ochre underlayer. The delicate outlines of facial features and slightly vertically elongated heads serve as shadows here as well.

The Ladder of Divine Ascent. Icon, early 12ᵗʰ century Fragment St Catherine's Monastery in the Sinai

The massive gold background clearly dominates the images of figures collected in separate groups. It is evenly distributed in all directions, forming around them large but well-balanced spatial caesuras distinctly correlated with the symmetry axes – vertical, horizontal and diagonal lines that define the structure of the composition. Thanks to this strict hierarchical order, the icon painter managed to combine two seemingly different sensations – the vastness of the divine cosmos appearing before the eyes of a praying person and its intelligent architectural arrangement. Naturally, introducing his characters into this cosmos, which is the aim of spiritual ascension for a worshipper, the artist tried to organise the compositional movement, colour texture and palette in such a way so as not to disturb the calm mirror-like surface of the background or break the strict order and peace reigning there.

One of the closest parallels of this icon is the sheet with the image of the prophet Moses receiving the Tablets of the Law, from the Psalter created about 1088 (Cod. W 530b in the Walter Art Gallery, Baltimore)[1], which could

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[1] Der Nersessian, S., *A Psalter and New Testament Manuscript at Dumbarton Oaks* // Dumbarton Oaks Papers, Vol. 19, Washington, 1965, pp. 155–83.
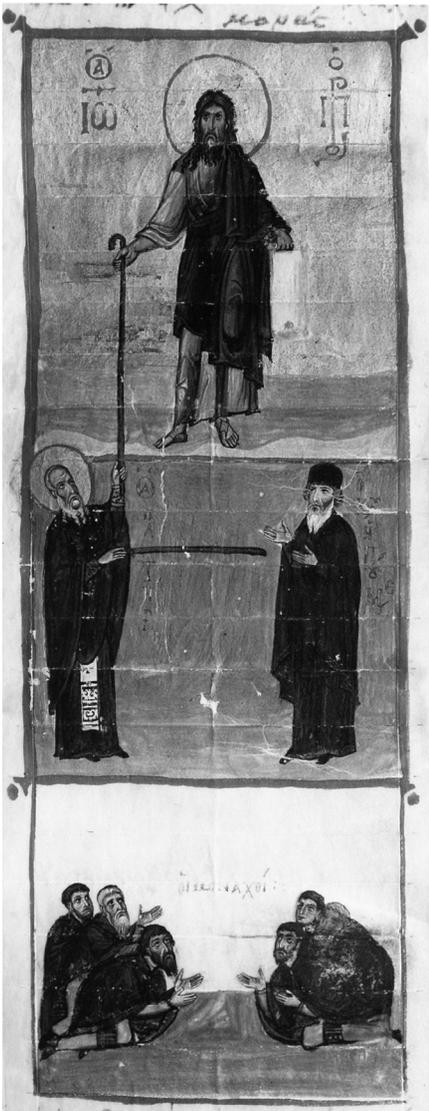
The Prophet Moses
Receiving the Tablets
of the Law
Liturgical scroll,
last third
of the 11th century
Library, Russian
Academy of Sciences

be an important argument in favour of dating *The Heavenly Ladder* to the late 11th – early 12th century. Interestingly, it was on display at the same exhibition in New York[1].

The Annunciation mentioned above is absolutely different. What immediately catches the eye is the powerful contrapposto of the figures of the Virgin and the Archangel, pushed into the space of the golden background. The movement develops here not along the surface of the background, but diagonally, which is also emphasised by the outline of the roof of a building behind the figure of the Virgin. The composition space is broken up into alternating levels – at the front is a symbolical landscape with a river, various waterfowl and birds; further on, on the second level, is the figure of the archangel, and further away, a little higher and further, is the Virgin, seated on the throne; behind her are the abovementioned chambers with open doors leading inside; finally, there is the gold background. All enveloping and occupying the foreground in *The Heavenly Ladder*, but the background in *The Annunciation*. The figures are distinctly separate from it; they do not exist in it a priori, but enter it, as does the archangel, the contours of whose wings touch the margins of the centrepiece, the border of the icon space.

These differences, which seem small at first glance, are fundamental. The scene loses its cosmic character and turns into an episode of the Gospel story while the action acquires temporal characteristics. The monumental scale of the compositional space of *The Heavenly Ladder*, which could be compared with the vast expanse of a large cathedral, is transformed here, becoming a confined space and acquiring features of intimacy.

Accordingly, the system of plastic form interpretation is also modified. If in *The Heavenly Ladder* every pose and every gesture are distinctly fixed, finding their unchanged position in the system of spatial coordinates of the composition, in *The Annunciation* movement is treated as a multi-phase process that unfolds in space and time. This explains the complicated nature of the postures of the archangel and Virgin Mary, the elaborate rhythm of contours fancifully twisted into a complex pattern, and the rich drapery.

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[1] *The Glory of Byzantium*, 1997, No. 241, pp. 360–1.
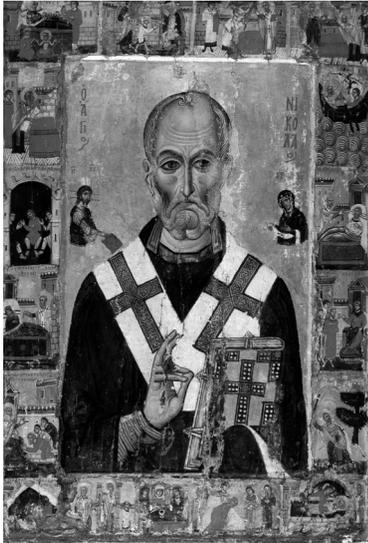
Light and shade acquire mobility and tonal variety, embracing the entire scope of the figures and moving along their surface. They either go into the depth or turn into powerful gold highlights on the raised parts of the image. Contour lines expand and do not cut into the background, but merge with the shadow area. Completely losing the quality of material substance and the former link with the plastic form design, light and shade mix with different colours and are endowed with properties of volatile colourful reflexes.

The volumetric form itself, interpreted previously as a relief fixed to the wall surface, is also transformed. It begins to acquire properties that suggest comparison, if not with a freestanding statue, then with a high relief, the edges of which are immersed in space, while its major part noticeably dominates the background. The interpretation of composition movement also submits to the same logic. It develops here not along the background, but from the foreground to the depth of the proscenium. A trademark of the time, in line with the trend towards the expansion of the stage space, is the principle of direct interaction of the characters, whose heads and eyes now turn to each other and into the depth of the gold background. A special device has been developed for this purpose – part of the face turned to the viewer is considerably expanded, modelled by means of active contrasts of light and shade, while the part facing the depths of the stage is narrowed as much as possible and surrounded by a dark line of shadows. The edge of the form seems to roll up and immerse in the gold background. In its turn, the background loses its former density of mirror-like amalgam to become a kind of environment. What prevents the figures from getting fully immersed in it is only a thin pattern of their contours, emphasising their silhouettes and keeping them "afloat", as well as the principle of the organisation of the movement receding into the depth, characteristic of that time, and always returning to the foreground. Superimposed on the background, the figures and the architectural backdrop seem to form windows and openings of different size, giving a glimpse of the golden sky.

Outwardly the new principles of composition and the scenic nature of the action, which acquires
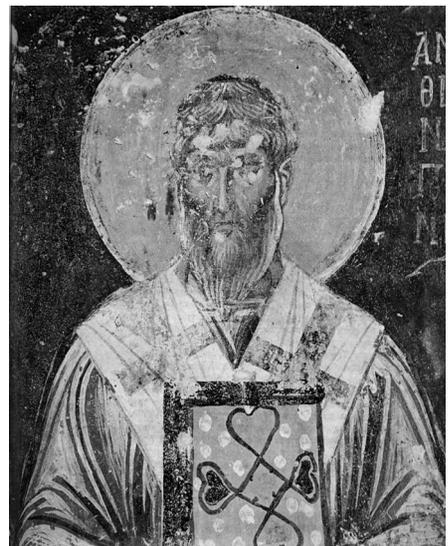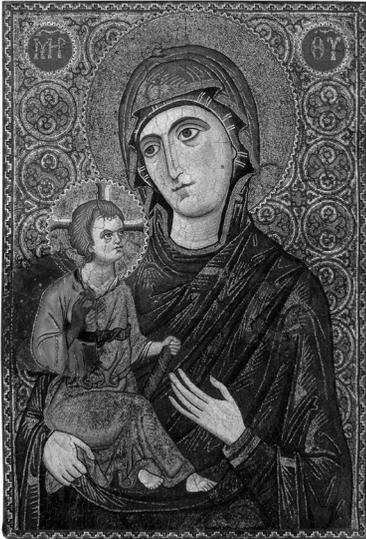
The Theotokos
Deksiokratussa. Icon,
early 13th century
St Catherine's
Monastery
in the Sinai

temporal and spatial reference points, as well as its drama, are reflected in a virtuoso mobile manner of painting and nervous and intricate form pattern, which accords with ornamental motifs, making colour and light-and-shade contrasts more active. The modelling of faces becomes more multi-layered and contrasting, with special attention paid to white colours that complete volume modelling and render the features of participants in the action emotionally expressive.

Thus comparison of the two Sinai icons, *The Heavenly Ladder* and *The Annunciation* makes a strong case for admitting that the first was painted about a century earlier than the second, which confirms its affinity with such monuments as the aforementioned Psalter miniature created about 1088.

The criteria for style evaluation received on the basis of the analysis carried out can be used to clarify the dating of a number of other paintings of the Komnenian period, whose dating can also differ by as much as a century.

The icon of St Nicholas with scenes from his life, also from St Catherine's Monastery on the Sinai like the monuments discussed above, is perhaps one of the most striking examples of incorrect dating recurring in scholarly and popular writings. Since its first publication it has been dated as the early 13th century, which seems to be corroborated by a number of features characterising the manner of painting[1].

This dating was based on many features, such as the strictly frontal turn of the figure, smooth calm colourful surfaces of the face and clothes and the total absence of any ornamental stylisation of forms typical of Byzantine art of the 1130s-1190s (no big spots of white or light-and-shade contrasts, emphasising the facial expression and the emotion of the whole image). However, comparison with other monuments from the turn of the 13th century and with paintings of the early 12th century reveals some features of the icon of St Nicholas not immediately apparent to the eye.

The first thing that should be noted is the complete unity of the golden background and the figure, which is not opposed to it as can be seen in icons of the late 12th – early 13th century, but slightly stands out from it. Such unity is further enhanced by the wide bands of the omophorion painted a luminous yellow saffron colour and adorned with large, ornate gold crosses. In comparison with works of the late Komnenian period the composition here is organised in a different way, with everything subordinated to the vertical axis of symmetry: the elongated oval-shaped head, the straight ridge of the nose, the deep cut formed by the omophorion bands, the gesture of two fingers of his right hand raised in blessing and the extended gold line of the frame of the large and high Gospel Codex moved

[1] Mouriki, D., *Icons from the Twelfth to the Fifteenth Century*, 1990, Pl. 43.

to the middle of the centrepiece. The rhythm of ascending lines dominating the composition matches the outlines of the straightened and elongated contours of the saint's shoulders with the large bands of the omophorion. The rhythm develops freely, and nothing gets in its way. It should be noted that exactly the same principle of composition, plastic form and colour range can be found in the paintings of the Bachkovo Monastery ossuary. This similarity is an additional argument in favour of dating them to the turn of the 12th century.

Artists of the late 12th – early 13th century were guided by other principles. First of all, what we call the architecture of an icon changed; so did the relationship of figures with the background. The compositions, which used to be dominated by the rhythm of long straight lines correlated with the vertical axis of symmetry, now have horizontal lines dividing the surface of the background, and springy, arc-shaped, undulating, intricately curving contours. Along with

St Panteleimon. Icon, early 13th century St Catherine's Monastery in the Sinai

them, the composition acquires motifs of movement, spreading in all sides and introducing a sense of the existence of extended three-dimensional space. The rhythm of vertical lines is constantly broken; the composition loses its architectonic clarity and structural precision. While the volume of forms does not seem to increase, they become more massive and bulky, and at the same time a little more fractional and closed-in. The overall orientation of movement changes to acquire a more specific and, one might say, more individual character. For example, in the early 13th-century icon, St Panteleimon from St Catherine's Monastery[1], the saint healer carries a medicine box, lifting it slightly, as if pushing it forward, toward the viewer. Equally vivid is the gesture of his right hand, which not only tightly holds the Cross, but lifts it and demonstrates it instructively to every worshipper.

The composition of another work of the early 13th century, the mosaic icon of the *Theotokos Deksiokratussa* from St Catherine's Monastery[2], is rendered in a similar way. Only here the Theotokos carries the baby Jesus in her right arm, slightly lifting him and demonstrating him to the world. This action of "carrying and demonstrating" which is inevitably, almost intuitively correlated with the sensation of a physical effort, is reflected in the pictorial structure of the icon. Thus, the action is not subordinated to the composition as can be seen in the *The Heavenly Ladder* and the icon of St Nicholas, but the composition is almost imperceptibly subordinated to the action, which has a certain aim in the space surrounding the saint.

[1] *The Glory of Byzantium*, 1997, No. 249, p. 379.

[2] *Holy Image – Hallowed Ground*, 2006, No. 8, pp.140–3.

St George. Reverse
of two-sided icon,
early 12ᵗʰ century
Assumption
Cathedral
of the Moscow
Kremlin

As in the *Annunciation* discussed above, they have several parallel alternating horizontal planes. Thus, in the St Panteleimon icon they are formed by: a box in the hand of the saint that he holds forward, its lid pushed back; the right hand with the Cross; the folds of the upper garment markedly distinct from the tunic underneath; the shoulders rounded towards the background, which are slightly separated by a zone of shadows from the gold background surface; and finally, the gold background itself finishing the composition. What is especially important is that the artist wants to show that there are, though small, space intervals between these planes. To do this, he uses the principles of light-and-shade modelling of shapes, and light and colour contrasts.

On the contrary, in the icon *St Nicholas the Miracleworker* the composition space is not divided into planes; the Gospel, the right hand with two fingers raised in blessing and the omophorion are not located *one behind the other*, but either *side by side* or vertically *one above the other*. There are no spatial gaps between them, they tightly abut on one another and are almost inlaid in the surface of the gold background from which the figure of the saint is not visually separated. He belongs to the world in which there is no time, his gestures not associated with a specific action – they are just high symbols. The saint does not hold, but only touches the massive Codex, which rests on the lower boundary of the centrepiece as on an architectural foundation. Like in *The Heavenly Ladder*, nothing violates the established balance and order; everything is subordinated to supreme rather than personal will.

Face modelling techniques merit special consideration. The most important task for the painter of St Nicholas was to completely unite light and colour saturation in face modelling, the saint's clothes and the gold background. Of major importance here is the flat light ochre underlayer with a warm yellow hue, on which the modelling layers are applied in a scumbling technique. This tone is fully consistent with the colour of the omophorion bands whose dim glow also fully matches the soft radiance of the background. The same can be said about the cold light blue tone of St Nicholas' grey hair and the same colour of the Gospel Codex edge. This creates the effect of a restrained inner glow emanating not from outside, but from the depth of the surface of the image.

However, there is another way of achieving the same effect in painting faces based on stronger colour contrasts. By increasing the luminosity of white highlights, which are put on the most prominent places of the dimensional form, the artist simultaneously activates the effect of the golden ochre tones of the underlayer, showing through the transparent top layers of the modelling and interacting with rouge spots and rich green shadows.

This is what we see in the image of St George on the monumental two-sided icon of the early 12th century in the Assumption Cathedral of the Moscow Kremlin[1]. Despite all the external differences, just as in the St Nicholas icon from Sinai the range of colours is based on colour-tone relations, with light coming from within the form in all the icons.

The meaning of all these methods becomes clearer when the St George icon from the Kremlin is compared with the icon of St Panteleimon from the Sinai, which is most likely a replica of an older image of this saint created in the 10th or 11th centuries. Unlike his predecessor, the icon painter of the early 13th century uses the principle of light-and-tone rather than colour-and-tone relations in modelling dimensional forms. As a result the thin layers of white give the impression of light shining on the surface of the face and not coming through from the depth of carnation.

As closer examination shows, these seemingly purely technical details are inextricably linked with the innermost layers of the imagery of the icons in question. For the author of the St Panteleimon icon one of the main aims was to create an image of not only the saint himself, but also of the space he faces and from which comes the light shining on his face. The concentrated expression of his countenance and the gestures of his hands brought closer to each other focus on the temporal and spatial point of their relationship. On the contrary, one of the main features of the Kremlin icon is a conscious violation of the synchrony between St George's gestures and his glance. He does not address the world as St Panteleimon, but opens to the viewer an infinite world in which he resides and whose light he carries.

A similar image, but in a more strict ascetic manner, was created by the author of the Sinai icon of St Nicholas.

Thus, the analysis of just a few paintings created at the turn of the 12th century and the turn of the 13th century gives an insight into the complex and sensitive system of their stylistic orientation, which depended on many often imperceptible nuances. But precisely these nuances show that in the first case the artists sought to embody the unchanging ideal of holiness, as if existing a priori, and in the second they showed worshippers a more intimate and concrete ideal of the images of people who had committed a feat of holiness and received a reward for it from the Saviour's hands – a crown of holiness, and admittance to heaven.

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[1] Ostashenko, E. Y., *Ikona Svyatoi Georgy iz Uspenskogo sobora i eyo mesto v russkoi zhivopisi do-mongolskogo perioda* (Icon of St George from the Assumption Cathedral and Its Place in Russian Painting of the Pre-Mongolian Period) // Uspensky sobor Moskovskogo Kremlya. Materialy i issledovaniya (Assumption Cathedral of the Moscow Kremlin. Materials and Research, Moscow, 1985, pp. 141–60.