

ICONS *from Poland*



A Review of:

Janina Kłosińska

ICONS FROM POLAND

translated by Magda Iwińska
and Piotr Paszkiewicz
(Warsaw: Arkady Publishers, 1989)
150 pages

by
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In late winter 1990 the present writer was wandering around the book fair held on Sunday mornings in the parking lot of the supermarket on Grzegorzewski Street in Cracow, Poland. One particular book stood out because its covers carried reproductions of Poland's most famous Icon, that of the Mother of God Częstochowa (Matka Boska Częstochowska), a religious work highly revered by Poland's Roman Catholics, which probably was painted in Ukraine and transported into Poland proper in the 14th century. While thumbing through the book, Icons from Poland, it was discovered that the book was not at all about Icons in use in the Roman ritual of the Catholic Church but rather it concerned Icons, which were in Polish museums, that had been obtained from Carpatho-Rusyn churches in southeast Poland, see map on last page. (An Icon, or image, is a "representation or picture of a sacred Christian personage, itself regarded as sacred, especially in the tradition of the Eastern Churches.")

The book has a number of peculiarities not the least of which being that the Częstochowa Icon which appears on the covers is nowhere mentioned in the text. A second peculiarism is the fact that nowhere is it ever mentioned that the Icons pictured in the 70 full color plates all seem to have been taken from Greek Catholic churches. Whatever one may think about it, it is an objective fact that since

1596 there has existed a "Greek-Byzantine" rite Catholic Church, which used Church Slavonic as its ritual language, which was called "Greek-Catholic". Today this church is known as the Ukrainian Catholic Church, it uses modern Ukrainian in church services. This Church recognizes the Roman Pontiff as head of the whole church.

Based in the city of Lvov, with a Metropolitan as head, this church existed in Eastern and Central Europe until 1946 when it was uncanonically liquidated on Soviet territory by a pseudo-synod manipulated by the Soviet Secret Police (NKVD). The West European and North and South American portions, however, continued. While it is true no formal act of liquidation took place in People's Poland nevertheless the church ceased to exist as a separate legal entity. Its activities, however, were unofficially tolerated under the aegis of the Roman rite Catholic Church. Hence throughout this otherwise informative book we find the word "orthodox" used. One supposes this unusual and unhistorical terminology was caused by the still existing censorship of the Polish communist regime, which would not allow any mention of the existence of such a "Greek-Catholic" Church.

Another anomaly is the fact that this book appeared in only French, German and English (no Slavic text was produced). It is not altogether clear just how many copies of the book were printed. The publication data inside the

book cover mentions 6,000 copies but is it 2,000 or 6,000 for each language. An inquiry directly at the publishers office (Arkady publishers of Warsaw) in April 1990 elicited no concrete information, in fact when asked just what "market" the publishers had in mind, only "foreigners" were mentioned, but without a marketing plan.

Forty copies of the book were eventually located and purchased by this writer through dealers at the Cracow bookfair. Arkady officials could not tell say, in fact, just where the rest of the copies had gone. This poor publication history can probably be attributed to the chaotic changes going on in Poland in recent years. It appears that this valuable work may disappear without any wider notice than can be given here.

Regarding the Introduction to the text (pages 5-17) we may note the following unusual features:

1. The non-standard reference to the area known as the Boiko and Lemko regions (the North slope of the Carpathian Mountains in South East Poland) as the "Sub-Carpathians", this term is almost always, in English, used for the Carpatho-Rusyn area in the Hungarian portion of the old Austro-Hungarian Empire - that is, the so-called Subcarpathian Ruthenia or, today, the Transcarpathian Ukraine, while the area referred in the text was really part of Austrian Galicia, the pre-Carpathian region.

2. In the third paragraph of page 5 the author rehearses a theory put forth by Roman Reinfuss, et al., in the 1930s that Poles were the first in the pre-Carpathian region with mixed East Slavic and other groups arriving later, an interesting hypothesis but a not proven one. This theory is suspect for two reasons: first, its hard to differentiate "Poles" and other Slavs in the 14th century and second, the theory was manufactured to support the 20th century Polish government claim that the area rightfully belongs to the Polish patrimony.

3. The word "Bojko" is the Polish version of the word. In English the standard spelling for this people is Boiko (page 6).

4. Use of the word "Russia" and "Russian" such as Kievan "Russia" or "Russian" bishops, for the Kievan-Rus' area in the late middle ages is either the product of a translator's error or of ignorance.

5. The "Firenze Union" mentioned on page 8 is the Council of Florence Union of churches which occurred on 1439, not 1493 as printed.

6. At the bottom of page 8 the existence of the "Uniate (Greek-Catholic) Church" is acknowledged and the acceptance of union by the bishop of Przemyśl in 1692 is mentioned nonetheless the rest of the text continues to use the word "Orthodox". This could mean "pravoslavny" - "true belief," but in English "Orthodox" always refers to Byzantine rite

Christians not in union with Rome such as the Russian Orthodox Church, Greek Orthodox Church, etc. While it is true that the Byzantine-Slavonic rite churches in union with Rome continue to use the word pravoslavny in rituals they are not referred to as "Orthodox" churches in English.

7. The "Sejm" referred to is the Sejm, that is, the parliament of Nobles that existed in Poland up to 1795.

8. The word "Ukrainian" is not noted in the text proper, as if such a term did not exist, although the words Ruthenian and Russian are used. Several Ukrainian works (citations 19,20 and 21) do, however, appear in the Bibliography (p.19) but strangely the titles are not translated into English although the other titles (the Polish ones) are.

9. Pages 10-17 of the Introduction clearly indicate that there was a particular Carpatho-Rusyn variety of Icon painting, from Carpathian Icon workshops. This is interesting to note along with the research of Sr. Joan Roccasalvo CSJ which deals with the existence of a particular "Carpatho-Ruthenian Plain Chant" church music (for examples see the records of Trans World Distributors, 24 West Sheffield Avenue, Englewood N.J. 07231)

The 70 Icons portrayed in the book were probably confiscated/looted from Carpathian churches after WWII, most likely during the Operation Vistula (Akcja Wisla) period in 1947, when the Lemko and Boiko inhabitants of the region

were deported to the USSR or Western and Northern Poland. These Icons are now in the collections of museums in Cracow, Nowy Sącz, Przemyśl and Sanok. For some unknown reason no Icons are pictured from the Łańcut collection which is maintained in a separate building at Łańcut. This building is not generally open to the public, as the aforementioned museums are. For a discussion of what happened to the church buildings themselves see the richly illustrated 350 page book of Oleh Wolodymyr Iwanusiw, Church in Ruins (St. Catharines, Ontario, Canada: St. Sophia Religious Association, 1987)

The above is not meant to be a negative review of the book as a whole since the book contains beautiful copies of priceless icons now in the possession of museums in Poland. Also the introductory materials are not without merit, since there is no Polish text to compare with the difficulties found in English are perhaps, charitably, the result of translators who were not familiar with the proper rendition of certain terms into contemporary English. Thus the writer can recommend the book, if a copy can be found anywhere, with the above caveats. One hopes that a new edition may yet appear, in non-communist Poland, which will be more accurate in confronting the existence of these beautiful icons in Poland.

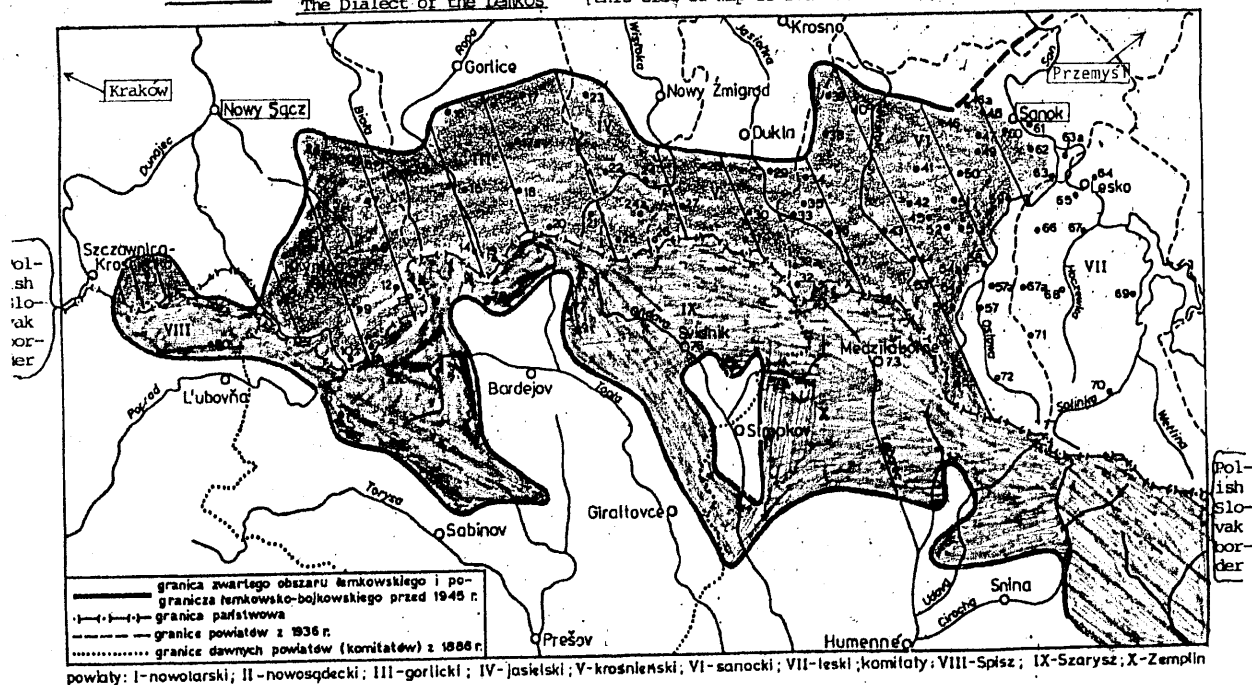
The Western Carpathian-Rusyn Area
(in Poland and Slovakia)

[not shown, the Eastern
Carpatho-Rusyn Area
(Transcarpathian province
of Ukraine)]

Zdzisław Stieber, *Dialekt Łemków*

The Dialect of the Lemkos [this side of map is Southwest Poland]

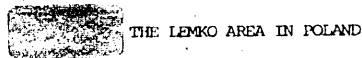
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[this side of map is Northeast Slovakia]



THE BOIKO AREA IN POLAND

ICONS

from Poland

JANINA KŁOSIŃSKA

TRANSLATED

BY: MAGDA IWIŃSKA
AND PIOTR PASZKIEWICZ



ARKADY

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INTRODUCTION

The icons presented in this album originate from the South-eastern part of Poland, mostly the Sub-Carpathians, and were painted between the 15th and 19th centuries.

In order to understand how paintings of the Orthodox Church were created in a country belonging to the sphere of Western culture one should not forget that Poland was a multinational state tolerant to all religions.

Nothing is known about the beginnings of icon-painting in this area; correspondingly, the first phases of its development have not been sufficiently explained. We know merely that it was connected with the history of both the land and its inhabitants. And to better appreciate the peculiarity of this phenomenon it is necessary to learn about the complex conditions of its development.

The process of settlement of the Eastern and Western Carpathians was extremely complicated. Till the mid-fourteenth century the western Sub-Carpathians down to the river Wisłok were inhabited exclusively by Poles; the areas east of the Wisłok, in turn, were populated by Poles mixed with the earlier Ruthenian colonists. It was in the second half of the 14th century that a new wave of settlers (i.e. the Vallachians) came from the South-eastern Carpathians and quickly spread all over Red Ruthenia. In the 15th and 16th centuries, however, the Vallachians denominated not only the Vallachian ethnic group for they fused with the Balkan, Transylvanian, Rumanian, and Ruthenian shepherds who were coming to the Eastern Carpathians from the South; at first those migrations were but seasonal (they occurred in the summer), though, later on the colonists started to establish permanent settlements. Moving to the West, the Vallachians founded numerous villages in the Przemyśl and Sanok regions in the 15th century. And traversing the mountains they reached the vicinity of Krynica in the next two centuries. The new population was fully accepted by both lay and church land owners, as those territories, devastated by wars, mostly frequent invasions of the Tartars, were in extreme need of a labour force. In the 14th and 15th centuries the term "Valachus" or "Ruthenus" was often encountered in the Polish foundation privileges in the Sub-Carpathians to define the ethnically differentiated colonists. In the light of the above documents it is known that Orthodox churches and priests were to be found in many villages, even in the lands owned by the Catholic Church. We are almost certain that the newcomers from the South brought with them icons which must have influenced later artistic production in this area. Owing to the common faith with the Ruthenians, the assimilation process of the "Vallachian" population was relatively fast; new settlers, however, formed culturally differentiated local

groups, the most significant of which in the 19th century were called Bojkos (Eastern Sub-Carpathians) and Lemkos (Western Sub-Carpathians). The ethnic differentiation was bound to exert certain influence on the painting of the area, and it may also account for the variety of the icons.

The history of icon-painting was inseparably associated with the political and religious history of Red Ruthenia. Though it had early been open to the missionary activity of the Roman Church, the area together with the whole of Kiev Russia was christianized by the Byzantine Empire (988/989). It was also Bulgaria which along with the Empire played a decisive role in the first phase of Christianity in Russia. From Bulgaria there came not only liturgical books and the Old-Church Slavonic but also the first icons essential for the liturgy of the Eastern Church. Furthermore, the construction of the oldest churches, as well as the structure of the iconostasis point to close relations with Bulgarian art. Unfortunately, no icons from that period are preserved. What have survived are only a few Byzantine and Kiev icons from the 12th century. It was through the common organization of the Church that Kiev, till its decay at the beginning of the 12th century, exerted a great influence on the neighbouring principalities: all the Russian bishoprics, together with the one founded in Halicz in the mid-12th century, were subordinated to the metropolis established in the capital of Kiev Russia. The first Kiev metropolitans, mostly Greeks, were appointed by the patriarch of Constantinople. In the 13th century, however, the Bulgarian Church became independent and from then on Bulgaria began to influence the principalities of Russia. In the 14th and 15th centuries the Bulgarian patriarch sometimes ordained Kiev metropolitans, who were patronized by the Lithuanian or Halicz-Vladimir princes. And with the passage of time the bonds between Red Ruthenia and Bulgaria became. Henceforth, the art of the two countries must have somehow been related. After 1340 Red Ruthenia was subjugated by King Casimir the Great and her ties with Poland were soon consolidated by the Union of Poland with the Grand Duchy of Lithuania (1386). The above events no doubt precipitated the spread of Western culture; this was conditioned not only by the activity of the Polish-Latin administration and education, but also by the rural and urban eastward colonization of those lands, depopulated by numerous Tartar invasions. In Red Ruthenia several knightly families were granted royal estates by King Casimir the Great. There is also evidence that the existing monasteries of the Cistercians, Dominicans, and Franciscans intensified their activity. Worth emphasizing is the fact that thanks to the numerous marital bonds between Ruthenian and Polish princes both the Orthodox and Catholic faith had long enjoyed equal rights. To evaluate correctly the religious climate in Ruthenia it may be added that the first Latin church in Lvov was founded already in the 13th century by the wife of the Orthodox prince Lew, whereas Świętosława, a princess of Halicz,

became a clarist nun in Stary Sącz. Chapters of Orthodox bishoprics were organized in accordance with the Latin models, which proves a considerable influence of Western administration. In the 14th century numerous Ruthenian families converted to Roman Catholicism. To recapitulate, the "latinization" was carried out quickly from the very beginning.

Apart from ethnical and political relations it was also the changes in the organization of the Orthodox Church and in the conditions of religious life that ensured complete religious freedom; this significantly contributed to the development of icon-painting in this area.

In the 14th century a new ethnic group with its own bishop came to Ruthenia, this time from Armenia. In his Privilege of 1367 King Casimir the Great granted the Armenians religious freedom and confirmed the foundation of the bishopric in Lvov. It was just then that the King reactivated the Ruthenian metropolis in Halicz (founded in 1303) supervizing the bishoprics of Halicz, Vladimir, Przemyśl, Turów, and Chelmno that were independent of the Kiev metropolitan's jurisdiction; the reactivation was made possible through an agreement with Filoteusz, the ecumenic patriarch of Constantinople. It should be added that the Kiev metropolitan had long resided in Vladimir on the Kłazma or Moscow, for Kiev was totally burnt and destroyed. The first devastation of the town took place in 1169 when it was invaded by Andrzej Bogolubski, later on in 1204 during the civil war, and finally in 1240, that is after the Mongol conquest. In the light of the above facts it seems almost improbable that Kiev, continually ravaged by the Tartars during its incorporation into Lithuania or the Kingdom of Poland, could have artistically influenced the neighbouring lands. Therefore, in the 14th century the division of the Church into two independent administrations, namely the Kiev and Halicz metropolises, became a necessity. From that time on metropolitan of Halicz along with that of Bulgaria would ordain Orthodox bishops from some areas of contemporary Poland. Thus the Kingdom of Poland became the first and only state in the Christian Europe where followers of the three Christian faiths peaceably co-existed, enjoying equal rights and religious freedom.

The Union of Poland with Lithuania did not sever the contacts of King Władysław Jagiełło with the Constantinople court of Emperor Manuel II; the diplomatic talks concerned the union between the Greek and Latin Churches and the organization of the metropolis. In the 14th century Lithuania, inhabited mostly by the adherents of the Orthodox Church, also strove for an independent church organization. Let us add that envoys were frequently accompanied by priests and among the diplomatic gifts there were icons as well.

The contacts of Red Ruthenia with the northern lands of Russia, mostly Pskov and Novgorod, were also deep. In the 14th and 15th centuries friendly relations (political, economic, and in a sense also religious) were maintained particularly by Novgorod till its annexation to the Great

Principality of Moscow in 1478. Worth emphasizing is the fact that Novgorod always supported the Polish-Lithuanian side in controversies concerning the appointment of the metropolitan. During the reign of Władysław Jagiełło Novgorod with other parts of Russia was subordinated to Cyprian, the Bulgarian-born Orthodox metropolitan of "Kiev-Halicz and the whole of Russia", who was also appointed the Lithuanian metropolitan by the King. The Kiev-Lithuanian metropolis, independent of Moscow, was established at the Synod in Novgorod in 1415. It was headed by Grzegorz Camblak, who was also a Bulgarian. At the same time the Orthodox Church hierarchy in the Commonwealth never ceased their endeavours to unite the two Churches. This contributed much to the development of both the Lithuanian-Russian Church and icon-painting, particularly after the Firenze Union in 1493.

As early as in 1418 the participants of the Council in Constanza had an opportunity to watch the entrance of the extremely picturesque cortege of the Orthodox metropolitan Grzegorz Camblak, which consisted of numerous representatives of the Eastern territories of the Commonwealth (Lithuanians, Vallachians, and Tartars). However, the society was not sufficiently prepared for the Union's principles to be carried out. Thus the division of the Kiev metropolis into two independent provinces: Muscovite (northern) and Kiev (southern), which had been approved by the Constantinople patriarch, was readily accepted. The Kiev province comprised the following bishoprics of the Jagellonian state: Brańsk, Smoleńsk, Turów, Łuck, Vladimir, Przemyśl, Chełmno, Kiev, and Halicz (where the metropolis was dissolved); in 1539 King Sigismund I established a new bishopric in Lvov to be incorporated into the Kiev province. Hence the situation in the South-eastern part of Poland was exceptional. Contrary to contemporary Western Europe, where full rights were granted only to the "ruling" religion, the Orthodox Church and the Order of the Basilians were guaranteed numerous royal privileges, constantly renewed. It was already in 1443 that King Władysław III extended to the Eastern Church religious rights on a par with those of the Latin Church; later on they were confirmed by the kings Alexander and Sigismund I the Old.

The 16th century Poland witnessed a growing interest in religious matters. The ideas of the Reformation were adopted by some Polish and Ruthenian families, while at the same time the spread of strong pro-Union tendencies could be observed. The split and the permanent disputes among the Orthodox Church hierarchy, the increasing role of religious brotherhoods – all the above animated the interest in religious unity among numerous representatives of the Orthodox clergy. This prompted the acceptance of the union by the Synod in Brześć held in 1595 which, however, was soon rejected by the bishops of Przemyśl and Lvov. It was already before the ratification of the Union (1596) that the King and the Sejm granted the Uniate (Greek-Catholic) Church with all the former

privileges and property of the Orthodox Church. Nevertheless the rules of the Confederation of Warsaw (1573) proclaiming religious freedom in Poland had secured the existence of the Orthodox Church. From then on the Church maintained permanent ties with the Moscow patriarchate which supported and financed it. This period witnessed the greatest influence of Moscow in icon-painting. The Union also initiated, a century – long state of unrest in the Przemyśl and Lvov regions, resulting from the claims on church property made by both the Uniates and "schismatics". In short, the internal situation caused a significant lowering of the level of cultural life and Orthodox art. Although the organization of the Orthodox Church was reactivated at the turn of 1632, the unrest continued. Meanwhile, Piotr Mohyla, a descendant of the Moldavian voivodes and a relative of the greatest families of Polish magnates, was appointed metropolitan. Extensively educated and brought up in Paris, the young metropolitan desired to raise the low intellectual level of the Orthodox clergy. For instance, he founded an academy at Mohylevo, where the seminarists were taught several languages, including the Old-Church Slavonic. The metropolitan also attempted to curb the power of secular lords over the Orthodox Church. Together with the King, he planned to establish an independent patriarchate in Poland. Owing to the strong opposition of the Holy See the projects, however, were abandoned and the plans to unite the rest of the province with Rome were resumed. In 1692 the whole of the Przemyśl diocese was incorporated into the Greek-Catholic Church; it was followed by the dioceses of Lvov (1700) and Łuck (1701). Nonetheless, the period of peace and more favourable conditions to develop Orthodox art came too late, for icon-painting had already been occidentalized to a great extent or had become entirely folk.

An independent organization of the Orthodox Church in Poland was established in 1790 by the Grand Sejm with the approval of the patriarch of Constantinople. After the partition of the country the whole area of the Carpathians and Sub-Carpathians was annexed to Austria. Although all the Orthodox churches were united with the Western Church, the deteriorating economic conditions led to the complete decline of icon-painting in the 19th century. The peculiar situation of the South-eastern part of Poland: its openness to the East and West, the presence of trade routes linking the South with the North – all these created the politically and ethnically complex image typical of the borderland. Coming from the South and East, Byzantine culture exerted its influence through Moldavia, Wallachia, and Kiev Russia; similarly, there existed strong ties with Constantinople and the monasteries on the mountain of Athos. In addition, the Orthodox population was influenced by the bonds with Novgorod, particularly in the 15th century, and Moscow in the 17th and 18th centuries. However, it was the art and culture of Western origin, cultivated in Ruthenia at the same time, that significantly modified the

Russian-Byzantine character of the local art. This was possible thanks to the Church's great tolerance not only to religion but also to its own art. Contrary to the Church of Russia, the local Church did not strictly observe the Orthodox canons of religious painting, which was the result of its almost permanent aspirations to unite with the Catholic Church. Artistic production also declined in consequence of the attitude of the Ruthenian gentry whose numerous representatives abandoned the Orthodox Church and showed no interest in its art. Last but not least, the low intellectual level of the clergy and constant wars were bound to exert their negative influence on art.

When compared with icons from other centres, mostly Byzantine and Russian, the icons painted in the South-eastern part of Poland are characterized by a specific technique, style, and original iconographic modifications.

The panel was most commonly made of lime wood, though spruce and fir were occasionally employed. To prevent the panel from warping special precautions were taken. The reverse of the panel was therefore always strengthened with two splines, actually inset into the thickness of the wood itself, and spanning its two edges. In the Russian icons, in turn, the splines, wedged from the two opposite sides covered just over half the width of the painting. From the mid-17th century easels, although infrequently began to be used. From among the icons presented in this album only two were made by means of this technique: the Annunciation from Jastrzębik and the Passion. The others were painted in distemper on a chalk ground applied on the smooth front surface on the panel or on a canvas glued into the panel. On the later icons the thickness of the distemper is considerable. Curiously enough, the icons from Poland were never adorned with the ornamental metal sheets which were replaced by a golden or silver background. In such cases, the background was decorated with ornaments inscribed or impressed in the thick chalk ground. Relief haloes were sometimes carved in wood or impressed on the chalk ground. Those which were gilded resembled metal haloes. This custom, common in the Balkans, penetrated into the icon-painting of the Sub-Carpathians through Moldavia. To protect the surface of the picture and make the colours vibrant and translucent a special varnish mixture of resin and glair was used instead of the *olifa* applied mostly in Russia. Owing to this varnishing the icons did not blacken like the Russian ones did with time, however, their colours darkened and turned slightly yellowish. Inscriptions were traditionally included to define the icon's subject and represented persons, as well as to sanctify the painting. These written in the Old-Church Slavonic, from the 15th century reveal the influence of the Bulgarian-Serbian spelling and the Ruthenian and Polish languages. Late in the 16th century and particularly in the 17th century, the number of icon inscriptions considerably increased. Some of them display a lack of acquaintance with the Old-Church Slavonic, for written in this language

they transcribe Polish words (e.g. the icon of the Last Judgement from the Przemyśl region). The icons presented in this album can easily be distinguished from those painted in other centres. Though of Byzantine origin, the icons executed in the Sub-Carpathians are marked by their original tone, considerable simplification of forms, and growing folk character.

In the 15th and 16th century icon-painting of this area two main tendencies may be observed. The first one reveals a more painterly approach: the form is delicately contoured and marked by soft colour patches which are subtly differentiated, and sometimes translucent, covered with several coats. The icons from this group are distinguished by their monumental, yet simple composition. The proportions of the presented figures are generally correct, only occasionally elongated. Sometimes the shapes of the figures, as well as their costumes and movement make one relate them to the Byzantine models. Their high artistic quality undoubtedly proves a knowledge of Byzantine works. Icons of such sublime quality were most probably painted in monastic workshops in which the craft was taught by monks, the newcomers from the South. From the 15th century a considerable migration of the Balkan population could be observed, including both clergymen and lay men. The visible Serbo-Bulgarian characteristics in the spelling of the icons' inscriptions resulted from the second wave of the South-Slavic influence. Although the existence of numerous monastic schools was recorded as late as in the 17th century, they must have been active much earlier, as in other countries, since the icon was an essential element of the Orthodox Church liturgy. However, no documents have been preserved such as, for instance, foundation acts, which would allow the establishing of the age of the icons or the linking of some of the painters' names, known from judiciary records, to particular works. The second tendency in the icon-painting of the time is opposed to the first one as definitely graphic. The paintings created in this convention have a strong contour which demarks the interior and the exterior of the figures, whereas the thickly laid colour surfaces are vividly contrasted. The folds of the gowns and the flesh tints are clearly modelled by means of parallel and centrifugal white lines. Despite these effects, the artist did not achieve the illusion of the figures' solidity; on the contrary, their shape and gesture are stiffened. The representatives of this trend eventually tended to work out decorative and simplified forms. That is to say, the monumental compositions were most frequently split into a number of motifs. The figures were shorter and broader, sometimes with excessively conspicuous limbs. Such icons were executed in the second half of the 16th and the first decades of the 17th century. Their authors are assumed to have been secular painters of local origin working in town workshops.

This hypothesis is proved by several dated and signed icons kept in the museum of Lvov. It is clear that not all the 15th- and 16th-century works fit

within these two main tendencies. There are also some paintings which are on the margin of the two trends. Thanks to the variety of the applied means the artists were not compelled to adhere to a single scheme. Regardless of their countries, artistic schools, workshops, and the time of their creativity, there was still some room left for artistic individuality. And thus a multiplicity of formal solutions emerges from the stylistic analysis of some of the best works from the area.

The figure of the holy martyr of Paraskeva is set against a creamy-golden background. An ample gown softly covers the whole of the figure. The lines are lightly drawn, and they subtly reinforce the colour surfaces, which, passing from darker to lighter shades, only delicately model the deep green of the robe and the folds of the wide red coat. The visual effects achieved in this way are so insignificant that they do not affect the „unreality“ of the figure which hardly touches the ground. Similarly to other early icons, the lines marking the facial features of the saint are equally subtle. The ascetic face of Paraskeva turns unreal particularly through the extremely dark, homogenous brown of her complexion, only slightly enlightened up by a strip on the nose and chin. The border-scene figures are even more synthetic than the main silhouette. The expressiveness of the icon is thus enhanced by the succinctness of their presentation.

The icon of the standing Pantocrator still belongs to the first trend, although it reveals a different approach. Monumental composition is preserved in it, and the figure is presented through a harmonious interplay of lines and colour surfaces. Christ's robe hangs down softly in the folds, characteristic of the late Byzantine painting. When the line contouring details disappears the volume of the figure, as well as the folds of the green robe and coat are marked merely by a number of tonal transitions. The flesh tint is rendered by the gradual intensity of ochre patches, ranging from the darkest to light ones. The patches also form the wrinkles on the forehead and the lines on the wide neck. Moreover, the same soft, painterly approach to the objects and figures dressed in gowns of Byzantinizing design can be observed in the icons of the Transfiguration and that of St Peter and the Archangel Michael. However, the Nativity and the Dormition of the Virgin, while painted on a single panel and most likely in the same workshop as the above discussed icons, bear distinctly different features. The contour is here of secondary importance, and despite the use of multicolour and light-and-shade modelling, subtle transitions are not achieved. Therefore, the gowns, though of Byzantinizing design, flow less smoothly, occasionally arriving at sharp angles. A greater importance of the line in the presentation of the figures can be found in the 15th-century Deesis icon. The figures are shown rhythmically by means of an excellent contour reminiscent of the Byzantine prototypes. The details, however, were simplified, whereas the bigger surfaces were divided by lines into minute, often parallel fields-folds, sometimes

overstylized. The growing role of the line in these paintings does not render them graphics-oriented, since the line, coloured or white, smoothly changes into thick, yet tonally differentiated colour surfaces. The icons: the Crucifixion from Rychwałd and St Paraskeva of Tyrnovo from Ujście Gorlickie are the works of the same artist. Although the analysis of the applied methods dates the paintings back to the 15th century, the paleographers reading the inscriptions on the icon of St Paraskeva place them in the 16th century. Both icons belong to the linear-pictorial group, since both stylistic tendencies can be observed at the same time. Some gowns are rendered by means of surfaces and lines, although without a strong contour. Others are obviously meant to create a three-dimensional illusion achieved through the tonal differentiation of the colour patches. The paint layers are superimposed respectively from darker to lighter, up to the final whitening. In the smoothly modelled flesh tints the function of light is taken up by the strokes of white. The certain stiffness of the modelling, particularly of the gowns, as well as the different silhouettes and faces reflect a distinct tradition represented by the artist, and must have been "non-Byzantine". The artist is presumed to have been of local origin, influenced most probably by the painting of Northern Russia. Linear and pictorial forms are also characteristic of the icons created by another talented artist, active in the same period who was similarly following the 15th-century tradition. We mean here the Mandilion, St Nicholas with scenes from his life, St Paraskeva from Zohatyn, and the Saints Cosmas and Damian. The colour composition of the latter icon achieved through rhythmically contrasted, vast colour surfaces in three shades of red and green is astonishingly daring in its conception. Considering the iconography, as well as certain stylistic means employed by this excellent artist it seems almost certain that he had been familiar with North-Russian icons. Instead of copying them, however, he merely transformed several elements and some of them he intentionally deformed. The later icons also represent a great stylistic variety. In several of them line and surface are far more expressive than colour (e.g. the Virgin Hodigitria with Angels and the Nativity from the National Museum in Cracow, larger size). Others are of a typically pictorial character (e.g. the Enthroned Virgin in mandorla, the Virgin Hodigitria from Paniszczevo) or belong to that type of icons in which contour and modelling colour patches perform equal functions (e.g. the Holy Trinity, Simeon the Stylite, the Akatistos to Our Lady).

From the mid-16th century there appeared icons tending towards graphic presentation and decorativeness. In the course of time geometrical ornaments on the golden haloes and background became more frequent and while some the scenes acquired a clearly genre character, the role of details increased, the architecture developed into more complex and fantastic forms, and the flowers multiplied (the Nativity of the Virgin from Veremin). The form of the gowns gradually stiffened to finally achieve

geometrization (the Dormition, Cracow). A considerable simplification of style became more frequent and accounted for the growingly provincial character of the painting.

This trend had already been heralded. It was represented by the icon of the Virgin Hodigitria from Polana. The medallions, placed symmetrically on the three sides of the broad frame of the painting stress the ornamental character of the composition. The stylistic linearity is accentuated by the strong, black contour of the figures, facial features, and gown folds. It is also emphasized by the highlighting of the flesh tints by means of exceptionally thick white lines applied parallelly and symmetrically. Stiff and flat, the folds of the Virgin's maphorion flow to form an unnatural yet decorative, radiating lay-out. The varied, though incongruous, reds and the rather plebeian features of Our Lady's face with its irregular nose point to the local provenance of the icon.

A distinct, linear-decorative tendency can be observed in, e.g., the icon of St Nicholas from Uherzec. This concerns not only the figure of the holy bishop or the contour of his halo and clothes with their many-hued ornaments, but also the small border scenes where the buildings are embellished with sinuous and cogged lines and fancy architectural elements. The architecture in the icon from Jasieniec comprises fanciful domes, balconies, and openings. A similar tendency sometimes led to the deformation of the figures, e.g. the Archangel Michael in the centre of the Jasieniec icon.

In the second half of the 16th century, particularly during its last decade, in a considerable number of icons the role of the contour was increasingly emphasized. Gradually harder and thicker, the contour shapes sharp bends to finally subordinate the form. In the above icons the colours and whites of light were painted with thick, stiff strokes which made the costumes resemble metal rather than woven fabric. The paintings are sometimes marked by an excessive decorativeness of colours, lines, and light that reveals the Mannerist geometrical tendency followed to a different degree by particular workshops in the Sub-Carpathians (e.g. the Deesis from Bartne, St Nicholas and the Prophet Elijah from the National Museum, the Anastasis from Cewkowo).

For various reasons the beginnings of the 17th century witnessed a rapid decline in icon-painting. The rich founders of Orthodox churches, namely the Ruthenian magnates and gentry, converted to Catholicism or supported the Reformation, whereas townsmen were gradually losing their wealth and importance. Moreover, the almost century-long conflict between the partisans and opponents of the Union did not create an atmosphere conducive to Orthodox art. The establishment of the Union with Rome and the partial Latinization of church liturgy facilitated the penetration of Western art. It was already in the 16th century that, under the influence of Renaissance art, icon-painters were more eager to use various Renaissance details or spatial forms. In the Baroque the process of

the "Latinization" of icons was almost completed. Nonetheless, the traditions of the old art, fostered in various ways, were still alive throughout the 17th century, and sporadically even until the 19th century. Older, traditional compositions were copied, with their forms considerably simplified and some realistic details occasionally added (The Deesis from the National Museum, the Last Judgement from Hankowice, St Paraskeva, St Theodosia). Certain workshops, in turn, applied thick distemper on large surfaces of the icons. Particularly important in this respect were the works from the Nowy Sącz region, whose decorativeness was achieved through the stylization of not only the floral ornaments but also figures, which was typical of the area (e.g. three icons from Szczawnik, St Michael from Stawisz, St Demetrius from Leluchowo, Christ the Pantocrator from Jastrzębnik). The icon-painter from Szczawnik was extremely popular in Slovakia, where some of his works are preserved. Several icons from the Nowy Sącz region are characterized by their entirely folk, yet genuine, stylization of decorative contours and colours (e.g. The Mandilion from Matysowa and the Annunciation from Jastrzębnik), whereas paintings from other areas bear the influence of either the Russian (the 17th-century Enthroned Pantocrator, Cracow) or South-Slavonic art (Crucifix). It must be remembered, however, that even the artists who were under the influence of the new Baroque tendencies did not immediately follow the principles of realistic art. The conservative character of those icons is visible in their old iconographic schemes, as well as in the subordination of the architectural and landscape motifs to the figural ones. In spite of their Baroque or Baroquizing forms, the icons still preserved their traditional, partly unreal, though rather naive, atmosphere. This was achieved by means of flat figures and objects, as well as by the contour (e.g. the Nativity of Christ, the Magi). It was quite common to either increase the number of elements derived from the Western iconography (The Adoration of the Shepherds) or to borrow whole motifs from the Baroque book illustrations. In both cases the costumes were rendered realistically. From among the works typical of the above convention most of the preserved paintings were executed in the Rybotycze town workshop. The Rybotycze artists had enjoyed great fame and popularity since the 17th century, for their icons even reached the Southern side of the Carpathians, that is Rumania and Slovakia (eg. The Passion, the Last Supper). However, the production level of the folk or semi-folk workshops quickly deteriorated. The number of applied colours diminished, the paints of poorer quality faded, and instead of gold the artists used silver, tin glazed to yellow, or ochre of a golden shade. On the other hand, town painters with their better artistic and professional training successfully strove to preserve the peculiar character of the Orthodox painting rather than to adapt do Baroque realism. Schematic or semi-abstract forms were applied and there was no single source of light. Although Baroque in contour, the face and gowns were

always modelled flat by means of flat light patches or contours. Hence the holy figures were slightly unreal, in accordance with the principle adhered to in the art of the Eastern Church (e.g. the 17th century icons: Christ the Pantocrator, the Virgin Eleusa, St Michael with scenes from his life, St George). Although sporadically, even in the 19th century entire compositions and shapes of figures were taken from Western pictures, the linear treatment of forms was typical of the 17th century (e.g. the Crucifixion of Jastrzębnik). When the forms began to be naturalistically modelled and lit from a single source the icon completely lost its "unnatural" character inherent in the faithful and unchangeable, as well as its unrealistic portrayal of the divine or holy personages; it lost its peculiar character of a painting which was to reflect its divinity on the contemplating worshipper. In short, the icon became so similar to the Western religious painting that it was only the Church-Slavonic inscriptions that bore the testimony to its Eastern origin.

No matter how significant the stylistic problems in icon-painting were, it would be erroneous to overlook the iconographic aspect, for each representation had its own fixed prototype it was to be faithful to. The most important iconographic aspects of particular pictures are dealt with in the catalogue. The preserved works permit the conclusion that painters confined themselves to presenting Christ, the Virgin and saints or historical subjects taken from their lives. None of the mystic and theological matters, so frequent in the Russian or South-Slavonic painting, were reflected in the art of this area, except for the icons of the Last Judgement, the Holy Trinity, and particularly the motifs derived from the Western iconography. In general, all the iconographic subjects followed Byzantine models, whereas Balkan or Russian prototypes were quite rare. From the 16th century particular motifs and, later on, entire subjects were already being derived from the Western art and their number, in the course of time, considerably increased. Certain figures or compositions were being repeated, sometimes precisely redrawn or copied with slight alterations only (e.g. St Paraskeva with scenes from her life, Christ the Pantocrator, the Deesis). This proves that pattern-books were used by the icon-workshops to compose pictures. The icons from Poland are distinguished from the Russian or South-Slavonic ones by, among others, the arrangement of the border scenes, which instead of encircling the main representation surrounded it from two or three sides. With the upper edge of the painting left open, the arrangement, as in the case of Bulgarian icons, did not destroy the monumentality of the central figure.

The presented paintings permit the conclusion that the icons in Poland, generally devoid of refined lines and a rich colour range, were executed by means of the simplest elements of the visual language. However, their indisputable value cannot be denied. It is the monumental and clear composition with rhythmically presented big and light surfaces of colour that constitute the most essential features of this art. The subjects were

rendered realistically, although with certain naivete. The mystic atmosphere typical of Russian and South-Slavonic icons, as well as the fairy-tale fantasy found in the Late Balkan painting of a folk character, were rather uncommon. Vivid colours, decorativity of the linear treatment, frequent floral and plant ornamentations – all these endow the dramatic scenes with a serene mood. Although the paintings adhered to important rules and patterns, they reflected the mentality of both the creator and worshippers, their life and imagination.

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THE HOLY TRINITY

15th–16th century, 107×112,5 cm

NATIONAL MUSEUM, CRACOW

The fancy, unusual shape of the panel with a quinquifoliate crowning, as well as its large size do not infallibly suggest the purpose of the icon. Equally exceptional is the combination of three subjects in one single painting. The central part is dedicated to the Holy Trinity of the Old Testament type. It depicts three wonderer-angels paying a visit to Abraham and Sarah by the oaks of Mamre (Gen 18. 1–16). The angels personify the Holy Trinity and in accordance to the principles of hierarchy are bigger than their hosts. Above, the Holy Trinity in mandorla is a New Testament presentation and points out to the distinctiveness of the three divine persons. Following Eastern tradition, the figure of God the Father was presented as the eternal Christ – Antiquus Dierum. However, God the Father does not hold Christ Emmanuel on his knees as in the Russian icons, but Christ showing his wounds, which corresponds to Western iconography. The Holy Spirit usually embodied by a dove is replaced here by the inscription “Swiatyj Duch”. The figures of the Virgin and St John the Baptist flanking the Holy Trinity form together the Deesis group. This extraordinary combination of the two iconographic versions of the Holy Trinity must have been caused by the necessity to oppose the antitrinitarian heresy widespread among the Poles and Ruthenians in the 15th and 16th centuries, which negated the oneness of God in the three persons of the Trinity.



THE HOLY TRINITY

17th century, 58,5×43 cm

NATIONAL MUSEUM, CRACOW

In the 13th and 14th-century Byzantine art the historic and symbolic presentation of the Holy Trinity as three wandering angels at Abraham and Sarah's tent was reduced merely to the angels. This iconography of the Holy Trinity underlying the dogmatic contents of the painting, popularized greatly by Andrei Rublev, soon spread to the other Christian countries of the East. The present icon illustrates such an iconographic type. Blessing angels sit around the table. An architectural fragment in the background, a tree, and a rock suggest the oaks and Abraham's house. Some scholars are of the opinion that the middle angel was to personify Christ, the one on the left – God the Father, whereas that on the right – The Holy Spirit.



CHRIST PANTOCRATOR

end of the 15th century, 120×86 cm

Provenance – the village of NOWOSIELCE

HISTORICAL MUSEUM, SANOK

Although already known in Cappadocia, the presentation of Christ Pantocrator, Lord of the Universe, enthroned and in a triple mandorla (rhombus, oval, quadrangle) surrounded by the heavenly hosts, became popular through the works of Theofanes the Greek and Andrei Rublev.

Such an image of the Pantocrator enthroned, placed in the centre of the iconostasis, was to symbolize the greatness and universality of divine power. The red rhombus encircling Christ reflects his divine glory. The green oval, in turn, signifies heaven with the hosts of cherubs and seraphs. Christ's leg-rest, missing however in the presented icon, ought to be supported by the heavenly powers – thrones in the form of flaming wheels and decorated with open eyes. The flaming red quadrangle with the emblems of the Evangelists in the corners (angel, eagle, lion, ox) refers to the Earth. The inscription above: "Lord of Glory (King of Glory) Jesus Christ" is occasionally found in the local icons of the Pantocrator.



CHRIST OF THE PANTOCRATOR TYPE

15th century, 101,5×65 cm

HISTORICAL MUSEUM, SANOK

The full-length presentation of a standing Pantocrator is the rarest of the three types of his iconography; in the Sub-Carpathians such a variant is almost unique. The majestic figure of Christ, his frontal pose, golden cross halo, blessing gesture, as well as the Evangelical words: "I am the light of the World" (Jn 8. 12) are some of the typical elements of this presentation. Also worthy of note are the facial features, which are frequently encountered in the icons of this area.



CHRIST PANTOCRATOR

end of the 16th century (?), 130×110 cm

PROVENANCE – THE SUPRAŚL REGION?

NATIONAL MUSEUM, CRACOW

The representation of Christ Pantocrator in bust is one of the oldest variants of the type, and can be found either in the icons or mosaics and frescoes of the church domes and conchas. Such paintings, however, are not known in the Polish collections. Although depicting a half-length figure of Christ, the discussed work by the monumentality and the expression of power and severity on the face does refer to the earliest presentations of the Pantocrator. The inscribed words are also most frequently quoted in the iconography of the type: "... I am the door; if any one enters by me, he will be saved" (Jn 10, 9).

A certain simplification or even clumsiness in the rendering of the figure of Christ are secondary here to the genuine mural-like painting manner which only enhances the expressiveness of the work.



CHRIST PANTOCRATOR

17th century, 109×107 cm

PROVENANCE – THE VILLAGE OF JASTRZĘBIK

DISTRICT MUSEUM, NOWY SĄCZ

The iconography of the enthroned Pantocrator in a triple mandorla, so prevalent in the 16th and 17th-century icon painting (particularly the Moscow school) can also be found in the semi-folk icons from the Nowy Sącz region.

Although following the traditional pattern of the composition, the Jastrzębik painting does not convey the meaning of the Pantocrator's effigy, namely its majesty and power. The idea of the Pantocrator as omnipowerful and consolidating the whole of the universe is here subdued to the decorative tendency. The latter can easily be detected in the drawing of Christ's face, hand, and robe, as well as in the form of the mandorla and background with its dense floral and plant ornamentations.



CHRIST PANTOCRATOR

mid-17th century, 118×100 cm

NATIONAL MUSEUM, CRACOW

The presentation analogous with the late 15th-century icon (il. 3) of the enthroned Pantocrator in a triple mandorla was also repeated by the 17th-century Sub-Carpathian workshops, where North-Russian icons were being followed. The only difference is to be seen in the formal approach. Christ's face, smooth and quite natural, is not wrinkled as in older icons. Striking is also the decorative tendency visible in the robes modulated by golden lines, the arrangement of the seraphs in the mandorla, as well as in the ornamental character of the thick framing. The latter is adorned with a sinuous line of dry acanthus leaves against a golden background interrupted by corner squares with rosettes.



THE MANDILION

beginning of the 16th century, 48×93 cm
NATIONAL MUSEUM, CRACOW

The portrait of Christ representing only his visage on cloth ranks among the most interesting representations of the Saviour; the Byzantines thought it to have been of miraculous origin and to possess miraculous powers, since "it was not created by human hands" (Greek *Acheiro poiotos*). These words are inscribed on every icon of the type. After the 10th century it was known as the Mandilion in Byzantium, which means "a shawl" or "a shroud". This type of icon originated from the story of Abgar V, King of Edessa in Syria. When Christ could not personally accept Abgar's invitation, he sent him the impression of his face on a piece of linen, which healed the king of an incurable disease. It is known from the written sources that the first painting was taken from Edessa to Constantinople in 944. Numerous copies of the icon fulfilled various functions. Most frequently they were believed to protect the state and the faithful. Despite the obligatory pattern, certain iconographic variants can also be found. Characteristic for the Sub-Carpathians is the horizontal elongation of the spread cloth supported by two archangels.





THE MANDILION

mid-17th century, 48x78 cm

PROVENANCE - THE VILLAGE OF MATYSOWA

DISTRICT MUSEUM, NOWY SĄCZ

The folk artist was faithful to the iconography of the Saviour's painting "not created by human hands", though certain peculiarities of the Sub-Carpathians can also be found, e.g. the horizontally elongated shape of the icon and the Archangels Michael and Gabriel holding the mandilion.

Astonishing, however, is the genuity of the painting's form. The clumsiness of the drawing and unusual deformation combined with the decorative tendency are, as a matter of fact, quite common in the painting of the Nowy Sącz region. Nonetheless, it is rather the combination of the above mentioned features, with the faithful presentation of the icon's contents that are absolutely exceptional here.

The Mandilion was executed in the same workshop as the painting dated 1640.





THE DEESIS

15th century (?), 38x189 cm

DISTRICT MUSEUM OF THE PRZEMYŚL REGION, PRZEMYŚL

The term Deesis comes from the Greek and signifies supplication. In art it relates to a composition with the centrally placed figure of Christ accompanied on both



sides by the Virgin and St John the Baptist turning towards him (the so-called Trimorfon). With inclined heads and outstretched arms they venerate Christ the Judge, they implore His mercy, yet believe that the sinful will be saved through the saints' mediation.

The subject significantly developed in the 10th century and culminated in a multi-figural Deesis (the so-called Great Deesis) with archangels, apostles, martyrs, and saints. At the turn of the 10th century the independent till then representation was included in the iconostasis. At first, the Deesis, generally a three-figure composition, was placed over the royal doors of the altar screen, as well as over the front doors of churches and houses. From the 14th century the Deesis composition was enlarged and occupied the second or even third tier of the iconostasis.

All the figures in the presented icon were depicted and situated according to traditional patterns. The centrally seated Christ is approached from the left by the Virgin, the Archangel Michael, and St Peter, and from the right by St John the Baptist, the Archangel Gabriel, and St Paul. The Archangels hold staffs signifying power and circles symbolizing the sphere of the world. All this makes one realize that the Deesis was considered as a synthetic version of the Last Judgement.



THE DEESIS, CENTRAL PART

end of the 16th century, 110x201 cm

PROVENANCE - THE VILLAGE OF BARTNE

HISTORICAL MUSEUM, SANOK

In the Sub-Carpathian icons it is mainly the archangels Gabriel and Michael, who flank Christ's throne; the Virgin and St John the Baptist, with their traditional imploring gesture come after them. The coffered ornament of the golden background, rich decoration of the haloes, flowers at the saints' feet—all of these are frequent elements of the local icons of the period.





THE DEESIS, RIGHT FRAGMENT OF THE ROW

end of the 16th century, 110x201 cm

PROVENANCE – THE VILLAGE OF BARTNE

HISTORICAL MUSEUM, SANOK

The 16th-century Sub-Carpathian icons of the Deesis most frequently depicted 12 apostles. The presented icon constitutes a fragment of the Great Deesis (cf. il. 11) and the apostles from left to right are: Paul, Matthew, Mark, James, Bartholomeus, and Philip. The first two are holding the Scripture, the others are holding scrolls.





13.

THE DEESIS

end of the 16th – beginning of the 17th centuries, 89,5×104,5 cm

NATIONAL MUSEUM, CRACOW

The icon constitutes the central part of the main tier of the iconostasis. The Enthroned Christ assisted by the Archangels Michael and Gabriel has the imploring Virgin on the right and St John the Baptist on the left. It was only at the very beginning that Mary was presented on the right side. The painter may have reversed her figure when copying the pattern. The monograms are placed above the presented figures, we therefore can identify the Archangel Michael on the left and Gabriel on the right. They are both holding special staffs, symbols of their power. The folk, hardly refined facial features, thick contours, geometrization and schematism of lines, all reveal a provincial, mediocre, yet totally genuine workshop.



THE DEESIS

1643, 137×127 cm

PROVENANCE – THE VILLAGE OF KREMPNA
MUSEUM OF FOLK ARCHITECTURE, SANOK

The Sub-Carpathian tradition to present in the Deesis Christ accompanied by the archangels is also preserved in the discussed icon, though they are reduced to small busts above the back of the throne. The depicted according to the Western iconography Virgin and St John the Baptist have their arms crossed on the bust. The strongly mannerist form, its deformation, excessive ornamental character of lines and framing (arch decorated with cabochons and supported on columns) point to a provincial workshop which quite freely transformed the tradition of both Eastern and Western art.

The usual Deesis quotation from the Gospel reads: "Come, O blessed of my Father..." (Mt 25, 34). Under the inscription identifying St John the Baptist can be read the date "1643" in Old – Church Slavonic.



ST PETER AND THE ARCHANGEL GABRIEL

fragment of the Deesis

16th century, 64,4×50 cm

NATIONAL MUSEUM, CRACOW

The icon with St Peter and the Archangel Gabriel comes from the so-called Great Deesis tier of the iconostasis.

The drawing of St Peter's face, the shape of his figure, characteristic inclination, a suppliant gesture of the right arm, scroll held in the left hand, the presentation of the Archangel's figure holding a transparent circle with the cross and Christ's monogram – all these prove that the icon painter had followed a traditional pattern-book.



SS ANDREW AND THOMAS

17th century, 88,5×91 cm

PROVENANCE – THE VILLAGE OF BRUNARY WIELKIE
DISTRICT MUSEUM, NOWY SĄCZ

The icon comes from the Apostles' tier of the Great Deesis in the iconostasis. The inclination of heads and imploring gestures follow old patterns. In turn, the proportions of the rather short figures, big flat faces, excessively energetic motion, and the geometric stylization of clothes – all these were the original contribution of the provincial painter. His predilection for decorativeness, which clearly reflects the influence of Western art, can be seen, for instance, in the closing of particular surfaces with arcaded framings of stylized twigs. Equally ornamental are the inscriptions with the apostles' names.



THE ROYAL DOORS OF THE ICONOSTASIS

turn of the 15th century, 124×80 cm

PROVENANCE – THE VILLAGE OF BALUCIANKA

MUSEUM OF FOLK ARCHITECTURE, SANOK

During the liturgy the priest carried to the altar the Holy offering (bread and wine) through the middle double entrance (the so-called Great Entrance). After the transubstantiation he carried the body and blood of Christ out to the faithful. For it is the King of Glory – Christ, who passes through them so the doors are called “Holy” or “Royal”.

Since the end of the 11th century, the Royal Doors have generally been decorated with the Annunciation scene and four Evangelists underneath, who were portrayed while writing the Gospels. SS John and Mark are seated on the left, and SS Matthew and Luke on the right. The Annunciation scene here signifies the opening of the gate into the history of Salvation. “Open us the Gates, Holy Mother of God!”. With these words the priest prays before entering through the Royal Doors.

The whole of the presentation follows traditional pattern books. The proportional figures with refined facial features are aptly composed into the background of Hellenic architecture.



THE NATIVITY AND DORMITION OF OUR LADY

mid-16th century, 125×146 cm

PROVENANCE – THE VILLAGE OF TERŁO

NATIONAL MUSEUM, CRACOW

It is unusual to place two different presentations on such a large single panel. The icon may have once belonged to the first tier of the iconostasis where it illustrated the invocation of the church. It is more probable, however, that it decorated a side wall of a church. The Nativity composition based on apocryphal writings refers to the classical iconography of the subject from the late Byzantine period. The scene takes place in a chamber with no walls, and with the traditional Hellenistic architecture in the background. St Anne, resting on a bed and leaning on a maiden, is approached, as in court ceremonial, by three visiting women bearing gifts. Below two nurses wash the infant Mary. (The inscription "Mary" instead of the "Mother of God" is most unusual). St Joachim seated on a balcony in the background observes the scene.

The Dormition composition is equally Byzantine in character, and contains all the essential motifs of the presentation. The Virgin, resting on a horizontally placed bed, is surrounded on the inside by two groups of the apostles, and on the outside by bishops and women. Behind the bed standing Christ in the mandorla with angels holds the Virgin's soul symbolized by an infant (the so-called Assumption of the Soul). Above that the enthroned Mary is carried into Heaven by angels (the so-called Assumption of the Body). On twelve symmetric clouds on the sides the apostles are brought by angels to the dying Virgin. In front of the bed the Archangel Michael punishes the Jew, Yefoniash.



THE NATIVITY OF THE VIRGIN

end of the 16th – beginning of the 17th century, 116×84 cm

PROVENANCE – THE VILLAGE OF WEREMIEŃ
HISTORICAL MUSEUM, SANOK

Since the 16th century the iconography of the Nativity of the Virgin gained more a genre character. Increased the number of presented figures and the amount of buildings and small scenes completing the main event. The present icon exemplifies this tendency. The chamber-courtyard where the action takes place is surrounded by several high buildings. St Anne seated on the bed is approached by a group of women carrying goblets, jugs, bowls, and floral bouquets. St Joachim is also present among them, bowing in veneration. Underneath, three genre scenes can be found: a maiden going upstairs with a jug, making the bed for the infant Mary, and the first bath of the new-born infant. Although the buildings are decorated with fine ornaments and branches can be seen behind the houses, the cloth spread over the roofs (Hellenistic velum), as well as the antiquizing women's clothes and shapes of certain buildings attest that some old iconographic traditions were maintained. The frame is decorated with a Late Renaissance ornament of leaves, frequent in the icons of the period.



THE NATIVITY OF THE VIRGIN

second half of the 17th century, 119,5×102 cm

DISTRICT MUSEUM OF THE PRZEMYŚL REGION, PRZEMYŚL

The author of the icon, partially influenced by the Russian iconography, included in the Nativity of the Virgin a number of scenes occurring against the background of towered buildings of fanciful shapes. The excessive decorativeness of the forms and the impression of motion resulting from the arrangement of scenes affect the composition. Apart from the traditionally presented central scene of St Anne being visited by three women, in the upper part of the icon there are also two scenes from SS Anne and Joachim's life: The Prayer in the Garden – The Annunciation of the Virgin's Birth and Joachim and Anne Meeting at the Golden Gate. In the bottom part of the icon the scene of washing the infant Mary has an extra figure of a nurse with a towel, and behind it one can find the scene of Rocking Mary to Sleep. On the right side we see on a platform SS Anne and Joachim Cuddling the Infant, which is the favourite motif of the Russian presentations.



THE PRESENTATION OF THE VIRGIN IN THE TEMPLE

mid-16th century, 42×32 cm

DISTRICT MUSEUM OF THE PRZEMYŚL REGION, PRZEMYŚL

This great feast day in the Eastern Church and its many illustrations were inspired by an apocryphal writing called the Proto-Gospel according to James. Local differences in the text led to some changes in the iconography, e.g. the present icon. The main composition of the icon did not change and it contains the scenes with the angel bringing food to the infant Mary. She herself is enthroned in the background under the little dome of the ciborium. Apocryphal writings relate that Mary was three when she was taken to serve in the temple for twelve years by her parents, SS Anne and Joachim. At the door she is greeted by the highest priest, Zechariah. Mary is also accompanied by some girls, i.e. six "Hebrew daughters" in our icon. Contrary to the tradition they do not hold burning candles; two of them have their hair covered, four – plaited in ribbons. Here one of the girls instead of Joachim presents Mary.

In the background there are buildings with Hellenistic elements.



THE ANNUNCIATION

end of the 16th century, 48,5×35 cm

NATIONAL MUSEUM, CRACOW

The icon was created according to the canonical type of the Annunciation, derived mainly from Byzantine art and representing Mary talking with the Archangel Gabriel. Her gesture expresses uncertainty and hesitation. Following Western iconography the artist emphasized that the Virgin had been praying from a book on the pulpit. (The second, so-called apocryphal type, frequent in Byzantine iconography, presents the Virgin spinning). The Archangel Gabriel, a triumphant messenger of God, is attired in court dress. He approaches from the left and carries the cross heralding the Passion of Jesus whose birth he announces. The Holy Spirit embodied by a dove flying down on a ray represents the dogma of the incarnation. The Hellenistic architecture in the background is replaced by the domed Eastern church side by side with Western architecture, i.e. the gables of a Gothic church and tower crenels. The mediocre artistic quality of the icon, rather reminiscent of a coloured drawing, does not negate its value which consists mainly in the combining of various iconographic elements.



THE ANNUNCIATION

17th century, 76×56,5 cm

PROVENANCE – THE VILLAGE OF JASTRZĘBIK
DISTRICT MUSEUM, NOWY SĄCZ

The semi-folk icon presents the motif of *dextrarum iunctio* unusual in the Annunciation iconography, and in painting in general. The Old-Church Slavonic inscription "The Annunciation of the Holy Mother of God" (with the Latin "S. Maria" later added) leaves no doubt as to the subject of the representation. Followed after antiquity through mediaeval Western art, the motif of *dextrarum iunctio* illustrates the contraction of a marriage and symbolizes the feeling that was shown to God as a guarantee of the spouses' fidelity. There are also some engravings presenting the mystical marriage of Christ with the Church – Eve in which Christ's left hand is clasping Eve's right hand. Therefore, the clasped hands of the Virgin and the Archangel, not found in the Orthodox iconography, could occur only in the land where the Orthodox Church was already united with Rome. However, the folk artist chose this composition most probably in view of its simplicity and easiness rather than for a complex symbolic meaning. The icon must have been used as a feretory and gonfalon, since the Virgin Hodigitria is found on its reverse.



THE NATIVITY OF CHRIST

mid-16th century, 75×53,5 cm

NATIONAL MUSEUM, CRACOW

The presentation of the Nativity of Christ based on apocryphal writings evolved in the course of centuries into a characteristic iconographic type with several scenes influenced by ancient patterns. As in the present icon, the scenes are generally depicted against a rocky landscape in three zones. In the top row three or four angels announce the Nativity of the Lord to the shepherds. The central part of the middle zone is dedicated to the Virgin who lies in childbed like an ordinary woman. Rays radiating from a fragment of the sky point to the grotto where the infant Jesus lies in a manger between an ox and a donkey (symbols of the Jewish and pagan nations). On the right we can see a shepherd with sheep coming to the grotto, on the left there are the Magi. In the bottom left part St Joseph is talking to an old shepherd and two women (Salome and Maya) are busy washing the infant Jesus. The originality of the icon consists in the rendering of the fairy tale atmosphere of the event through a characteristic simplification of forms and the use of vivid gay colours.



THE NATIVITY OF CHRIST

16th century, 126×86 cm

NATIONAL MUSEUM, CRACOW

Another equally frequent type of the Nativity of Christ portrays the Magi with their gifts before the infant Jesus. In the discussed icon the Magi are depicted as kings wearing royal robes and crowns, according to Western iconography. Besides, our composition differs from the previous one only in slight details. Although the lowest part has been destroyed, the remaining head lines prove that the scenes with Joseph and the washing of the infant Jesus are placed identically.



THE NATIVITY OF CHRIST AND THE MAGI

turn of the 17th century, 114,5×75 cm

NATIONAL MUSEUM, CRACOW

The Magi are frequently presented in icon painting and are often connected with the motifs typical of the iconography of the Nativity and the Childhood of Christ. The folk author of the present icon genuinely combined motifs of the three presentations. Particular scenes are presented against landscape and architecture. Since their subjects are continued in zones they should be read from the top left: 1st row – The Three Magi follow the star across the desert; they are warned in a dream not to return to Herod. Then (2nd row) they offer their gifts to Jesus. On the right we find The Flight to Egypt. At the bottom (3rd row) Herod orders the soldiers to massacre children; Rachel and other mothers weep over their children's bodies, and Elizabeth is safe in a cave with the infant John the Baptist.



THE ADORATION OF THE SHEPHERDS

17th century, 119×107 cm

DISTRICT MUSEUM OF THE PRZEMYŚL REGION, PRZEMYŚL

The arrangement of the scenes composing the Nativity of Christ, His Childhood, and the Adoration of the Magi is explained in a way by the late date of the icon's origin. At the time iconographic motifs and whole scenes derived from Western art were not exceptional in the Sub-Carpathians, and are prevailing in the present icon. The Adoration of the Shepherds was depicted in the central part as a charming genre scene. Also of a genre character is the Annunciation of Christ's Nativity to the Shepherds illustrated on the horizon, which was known already in Early Christian art. The little scenes completing the main presentation are as follows (from left to right): 1st row – The Annunciation; the Journey of the Magi after a star; 2nd row – The Visitation of St Elisabeth; The Magi before Herod; 3rd row – Joseph Reproaches Mary; The Adoration of the Magi; 4th row – The Nativity of Christ; Herod Orders the Massacre of Young Children; The Massacre of the Innocents; An Angel Orders Joseph in a Dream to Flee into Egypt.



THE TRANSFIGURATION

16th century, 119×98 cm

PROVENANCE – THE VILLAGE OF WOREMIEN

HISTORICAL MUSEUM, SANOK

In Byzantine art the Transfiguration began to be depicted in the 6th century, that is when the feast was established. Particular iconographic details, especially representations of the apostles, varied according to the interpretation of the Gospels describing this unusual event on Mount Tabor. In the 14th century the so-called earlier Byzantine type of the presentation was established with differentiated poses of the apostles. Their dramatic emotions were thus rendered through the dynamism of the poses and gestures (e.g. our icon). Christ in shining white clothes is encircled by a cloud of heavenly glory, that is a mandorla. He is accompanied by the prophets: Elijah on the left and Moses on the right. Below the top John and James, losing their slippers, are presented lying on the ground with their faces covered. It is only Peter, depicted in the icon's left corner, who looks at Christ. Peter's out – stretched arm – the oratory gesture – reminds us of his words: "Our Teacher, it is a good thing to be here...".



THE ENTRY INTO JERUSALEM

16th century, 39×25,5 cm

PROVENANCE – THE VILLAGE OF LININKA

DISTRICT MUSEUM OF THE PRZEMYŚL REGION, PRZEMYŚL

To present the triumphal entry of Christ in to Jerusalem Christian art followed an antique pattern illustrating the triumphal entry of the Emperor into a town. It is only in details that the oldest works, dated back to the 4th century, differ from the later ones.

The conciseness of the composition and the vertically rhythmical graduation of its elements were determined by the small, narrow format of the icon. Similarly to the group of the apostles following Christ riding on an ass, the group of Jews: men with palms and women is densely composed and towered. In the bottom right corner, two children, painted below the citizens of Jerusalem, are spreading a coat before the ass. This motif has been known in the Byzantine iconography since the 12th century. The high, rocky top of the mountain, a palm-tree, and town buildings in the background – all these with the centrally placed figure of Christ emphasize the symmetrical composition.



THE LAST SUPPER

beginning of the 18th century, 48x76 cm

PROVENANCE – THE VILLAGE OF USTIANOWA

MUSEUM OF FOLK ARCHITECTURE, SANOK

In art historical (i.e. based on the Gospels) representations of the Last Supper in the form of a feast were already known in the 15th century. Their origin is to be sought in ancient paintings. In the earliest Byzantine presentations Christ and St John were depicted at the right corner of the table, itself of a sigma shape. Judas, his right hand reaching for a bowl, should sit at the middle of the table. With the centuries, however, constant changes in the figures' poses and gestures can be observed. From the 14th century onwards icons were more frequently to follow the Western compositional scheme, similar to that of our icon. Surrounded by the apostles, Christ is seated at the centre of the table. St John rests his head on Christ's arm. Judas holding a bag of money sits motionless on the opposite. Although the means the folk artist made use of were very simple, they enabled him to express the moment of astonishment, sadness, and wonder of the apostles when Christ announces that one of them has betrayed him.





THE CRUCIFIXION

16th century (?), 78×54 cm

PROVENANCE – THE VILLAGE OF WOLA KRZYWIECKA

DISTRICT MUSEUM OF THE PRZEMYŚL REGION, PRZEMYŚL

The paintings depicting the Crucifixion can be compositionally divided into three kinds: three-figural, many-figural, and with many scenes. The simplest scheme including three figures (e.g. our icon) represents Christ on the cross accompanied by the Virgin and St John with the wall of Jerusalem in the background. A rocky mountain with the cross signifies the site of this dramatic event, Golgotha, and Adam's skull symbolizes the triumph of the cross over death. This is the very place where, according to tradition, Adam, the first man, was to have been buried.

In the Sub-Carpathian icons, the three-figural composition is rarer than the many-figural one, whereas the poses of the Virgin and St John covering their faces with a hand to express the suffering they are sharing with Christ are the most typical of the local art. Although in the icons depicting the Crucifixion the gestures of the hands are slightly differentiated, it is the Virgin who always looks at Christ; the motif constituting the stable iconography of the Crucifixion.

From the stylistic point of view, the present icon is frequently dated back to the 15th century. However, the considerable deformation of the figure of Christ, which is not to be found in earlier icons and the peculiar character of the inscription would suggest a rather later dating for this icon.



THE CRUCIFIXION

beginning of the 16th century, 87×65 cm

PROVENANCE – THE VILLAGE OF RYCHWAŁD

HISTORICAL MUSEUM, SANOK

To illustrate the Crucifixion Byzantine artists followed the settled shape of the cross with three transverse arms. Since the 9th century Christ was presented as dead, with closed eyes, and a perisionium around his hips. The calm pose of his body and facial features do not express any suffering and there is no crown of thorns on Christ's head. His feet are nailed side by side along the lower arm of the cross (suppaedaneum) with two nails. The body, straight at the beginning, used to be slightly bent, but never droops on the outstretched arms. The palms and fingers are always straight. Except for the net perisionium, the presentation of Christ in our icon closely adheres to the patterns.

The composition depicting several figures is closer to the description of the event in the Gospels and their characteristic arrangement resembles the Greek and Cretan icons depicting the Crucifixion from the 16th and 17th centuries.



THE CRUCIFIXION

1st half of the 17th century, 102×79,5 cm

PROVENANCE – THE VILLAGE OF SZCZAWNIK

DISTRICT MUSEUM, NOWY SĄCZ

This multi-figural presentation of the Crucifixion with the three Marys standing at the foot of the cross, St John, and a centurion holding a spear and a sword, includes several new elements. Here are meant the symbols of the Sun and Moon, which from the 16th century began to appear sporadically in the icons of the Crucifixion, bonds of blood (a particular evidence of life, characteristic of the Byzantine presentations), and finally the diagonally placed suppaedaneum, with the arrangement typical of Russian crosses. There is an inscription "NIKA" on the suppaedaneum which together with the monogram of Christ IC XC renders the Byzantine formula "Jesus Christ triumphs". Occasionally on the highest arm of the cross there are the letters IN U I signifying "Jesus of Nasareth the Tsar of Israel" and the inscription "The Crucifixion of Our Lord Jesus Christ" in the background.



THE CRUCIFIXION

19th century, 82,5×51 cm

PROVENANCE – THE VILLAGE OF JASTRZĘBIK

DISTRICT MUSEUM, NOWY SĄCZ

The iconography of the present painting is so typical of Western art that only some formal qualities permit us to regard it as an icon. Its author created forms by means of black contours and flat colour patches, and applied white lines in the light effect. A certain plasticity is visible only in the arms of the cross and the line of the hills. The bottom part of the cross, itself echoing "the tree of life", the flattering perisonium of Christ, and the figures of the Virgin and St John are some of the most important elements of Western iconography. Neither the Virgin, nor St John rest their gaze on Christ, but with their hands joined in prayer they look down as in Western art. Moreover, one does not find here the walls of Jerusalem and Adam's skull in the opening of the rock under the cross (the open sepulchre), which are essential in the Eastern iconography of the Crucifixion.



THE CRUCIFIX

end of the 16th – beginning of the 17th century, 177×99 cm

NATIONAL MUSEUM, CRACOW

The big crucifix may have crowned the iconostasis in a high church, whereas the characteristic diagonal suppaedaneum of the painted cross accounts for its origin in the lands influenced by Ruthenian painting. However, its decoration also reveals certain iconographic elements close to the South-Slavonic, Byzantine, and Western traditions, e.g. the delicate crown of thorns on Christ's head (frequent in the Cretenian and Dalmatian crucifixes), the seated figures of the four Evangelists (Byzantine pattern), caricatured figure of the fallen death with a scythe (Western iconography). The preserved fragments of sculpted decoration imposed along the borders of the cross resemble the framings of the Moldavian crucifixes. In view of the variety of patterns as well as its characteristic style (perfect drawing, flat colour patches, and moderate linearity) it may be presumed that the present crucifix was created somewhere in the Eastern Carpathians by a talented artist well acquainted with the Byzantine and South-Slavonic works. In Polish collections the crucifix is almost unique.



THE PASSION

Beginning of the 18th century, 179×229 cm

RYBOTYCZE WORKSHOP, NATIONAL MUSEUM, CRACOW

This unusual icon represents the centrally placed Crucifixion surrounded by twenty three border scenes, four times smaller than the main motif; arranged in rows, the border scenes refer to the Passion and illustrate both the prologue and the epilogue of this dramatic event. Paintings based on the Passion iconography and enhancing the idea of the Passion are exclusively typical of the Sub-Carpathians. The 1st row: The Raising of Lazarus; Christ Entering Jerusalem; The Last Supper; Christ Washing his Disciples Feet; the Agony in the Garden; 2nd row: Whom Do you Seek?; The Betrayal of Christ; Christ before Annas; Christ before Caiaphas; 3rd row: Christ before Herod; Christ before Pilate; the Flagellation; Judas's Thirty Pieces of Silver; Judas Hanging Himself; 4th row: The Crowning with Thorns; Ecce Homo; Christ Falls under the Weight of The Cross; the Nailing to the Cross; The Deposition; 5th row: The Entombment; The Resurrection; Christ in Limbo; the Three Marys at the Sepulchre; Christ with Two of his Disciples on the Way to Emmaus.

Particular scenes of the icon are enriched with numerous elements of Western iconography; we may also see whole compositions derived from Western art, e.g. Christ's Fall under the Weight of the Cross. According to the tradition of Eastern art, all the scenes have at the top inscriptions which explain their contents.



THE DESCENT INTO LIMBO

end of the 16th – beginning of the 17th century

MUSEUM OF FOLK ARCHITECTURE, SANOK

The iconography of the Descent into Limbo (Greek Anastasis which means Resurrection) gloryfying the Resurrection of Christ developed in the 7th–9th century under the influence of psalms and apocryphal writings. The initially concise composition indicates the ancient origin of the representation. Christ treads on the personification of Hades and pulls Adam out of Limbo as Heracles did with Cerber. With time numerous figures, details, and whole scenes were added. The symmetrical composition of the present icon is typical of the post 15th-century iconography. Standing on the broken doors and chains of Limbo Christ gives his hand to Adam who comes out of the sarcophagus. On the opposite side Eve rises from her grave. On the left four prophets with the inscription “Solomon” above them are presented, whereas four apostles with the similarly placed word “Ivan” are grouped on the right. In the lower zone the three Marys talking with two angels at the open sepulchre of Christ are painted. On the right the artist illustrated the meeting of Our Lady with the Resurrected Christ. Contrary to Russian icons inscribed with the words “The Descent into Limbo” the inscription here reads as follows: “The Resurrection of Our Lord, Jesus Christ”.



THE DORMITION OF OUR LADY

end of the 16th century, 47×36 cm

NATIONAL MUSEUM, CRACOW

A great number of icons presenting the Dormition of the Virgin have been preserved. According to the tradition and apocryphal writings the event took place in Jerusalem in the Virgin's house on Mount Sinai. Byzantine iconography of the Dormition (Greek *Koimesis*) was considerably simplified and reduced here to its essential elements, which was quite a common practice in later centuries. The composition brings out the figure of Mary and even more so the centrally placed figure of Christ standing amidst the angels in the mandorla. Such a presentation illustrated an apocryphal writing which maintains that Christ in glory, surrounded by angels and in clouds, as on Mount Tabor, came to take Mary's soul to heaven. The icon lacks the scene of the Assumption of the body and the apostles on clouds. Also their number around the Virgin's bed is reduced to ten. Surprisingly, there is room for the story of the Jew Jephoniash who, according to the apocryphal writing, was punished for overturning the litter with the Virgin's body: the Archangel Michael cut off Jephoniash's hands which after his conversion grew back into his arms. Contrary to the traditional iconography the Archangel is not holding a sword.



THE LAST JUDGEMENT

16th century, 182×144 cm

PROVENANCE – THE VILLAGE OF POLANA

NATIONAL MUSEUM, CRACOW

The representation of the Last Judgement was obligatory in every church of the Orthodox rite. The scene derived its literary contents not only from the Scripture, apocryphal and other religious writings, but also from the works of Ephrem of Syria. The iconographic source of the representation is to be sought in the early Christian art based on Hellenistic tradition. Characteristic for the Last Judgement is a considerable number of scenes arranged in zones. Christ's glorious arrival to the Judgement among angels, the Virgin and St John the Baptist is preceded by the scenes with angels rolling up the scrolls of heaven, and other less important presentations. In our icons they are as follows: the Virgin meets Jesus in the Heavenly Jerusalem and the Overthrow of the Rebellious Angels (39). Sometimes,





THE LAST JUDGEMENT

beginning of the 17th century, 207×163 cm

PROVENANCE – THE VILLAGE OF HANKOWICE

NATIONAL MUSEUM, CRACOW

the scroll of heaven contains the representation of Antique Dierum, i.e. eternal God Christ (40).

Underneath, a throne is prepared for the coming of the Lord (the so-called Etimasia), with the book of the Gospels and sometimes the cross and the dove, i.e. the Holy Spirit. Similarly to early Byzantine icons the Sub-Carpathian ones present Adam and Eve adoring the Etimasia. God's hand reaching out from under the Etimasia holds the Balance of Souls and the Archangel Michael observes the correctness of the balance. The apostles are seated on both sides and underneath proceed the representatives of various nations and classes, with the damned on the right and the redeemed on the left. Under them on the left a circle frames the Garden of Eden with the Virgin, the Penitent Robber, and three patriarchs: Abraham, Isaac, and James (the so-called Abraham's bosom). On the right we can see the dead being awakened for the judgement. In the bottom row SS Peter and Paul admit the redeemed into heaven; beside we find various infernal tortures in special fiery chambers, and finally the Limbo with the figure of Leviathan seated on a one- or two-headed monster; Leviathan holds the soul of Judas or the Antichrist on the knees. In the icons following the Russian iconography the serpent of sin crawls out of the monster's mouth and in a couple of coils it reaches for Adam's heel with its mouth. The rings around the serpent's body symbolize the





THE LAST JUDGEMENT, CENTRAL PART

end of the 16th – beginning of the 17th centuries, 214×65 cm

PROVENANCE – THE PRZEMYŚL REGION (?)

NATIONAL MUSEUM, CRACOW

deadly sins. Next to them angels with souls in their hands are being stopped by devils. This is one of the iconographic variants illustrating the purification of the soul before it reaches heaven. On both sides of the serpent of sin a number of genre scenes are found, e.g. the death of the righteous poor man accompanied by an angel and king Davies, as well as that of a sinful rich man with a devil at his bedside (40, 41). There also appear animals to symbolize sinful countries. In the icons based not on the Russian, but the Byzantine tradition, one cannot find the serpent of sin nor the symbols of sinful countries, but a flaming river flowing from under Christ's feet, which carries the damned to hell. In that case on the left there is a ladder or tower with people climbing up and falling down, or with angles carrying souls (40), which represents another iconographic type of the Purification. In such a type of the Last Judgement, Christ is not depicted in robes as the Pantocrator, but in accordance with Western tradition, as the Resurrected Christ, who partially naked, shows his wounds. He is carried by angels in the mandorla (40). Some of the Sub-Carpathian icons combined Russian and Byzantine iconographic motifs by placing the flaming river next to the serpent of sin (39), and in order to soothe the menace of condemnation they introduced some Western motifs, e.g. the lamb – symbol of Christ the Saviour (39) and a great number of small comical scenes with devils (all the three paintings). In the icons of the Last Judgement from the Eastern part of Little Poland, Byzantine, North-Russian, and Western motifs are chosen and transformed so as to emphasize the glory and power of Christ's coming (Western influence), as well as the idea of the Redemption, Resurrection, and Ascension, rather than the menace of judgement or condemnation, crucial for Byzantine, and particularly Russian representations of the Last Judgment.



THE VIRGIN HODIGITRIA

end of 15th – beginning of the 16th century, 115×82,5 cm

NATIONAL MUSEUM, CRACOW

The icons of the Virgin Hodigitria, the Guide, are among the oldest and most frequent representations of Our Lady. Tradition says that its prototype was painted by St Luke the Evangelist and found by Eudokia, the wife of the Emperor Theodosius. The icon of the Virgin Hodigitria, kept at the Constantinople „Ton Hodigon” church (hence its name), was famous for its miracles. The sacrosanct icon was a palladium of the Byzantine Empire, patron of the blind and travellers. The Virgin Hodigitria was most frequently painted in half-length. Always frontally presented, she holds Christ-Emanuel on her left arm. The Virgin's right hand, directed towards her son, shows the King of the World to people. The Child, frontally posed as well, blesses with his right hand, whereas in his left he holds a scroll with the Gospels. The Archangels Michael and Gabriel, painted in the upper corners, have their hands covered by their robes in veneration. The monumental composition, beautiful facial features following Byzantine designs, refined colours – all these point out to a 15th-century workshop painting of a high artistic quality.



THE VIRGIN HODIGITRIA WITH THE APOSTLES

16th century, 130x97 cm

PROVENANCE – THE VILLAGE OF TARLO

NATIONAL MUSEUM, CRACOW

In the Sub-Carpathians the icons of the Virgin Hodigitria are distinguished not only by the figures of the Archangels in the background but also by the apostles or prophets surrounding the central image of Our Lady. This tradition derived from Balkan painting. In the present icon all the figures of the apostles are placed in medallions. The ornamental character of the composition is enhanced by the circular form of the medallions and their symmetrical arrangement. From left to right: 1st row – James and Andrew; 2nd row – Matthew and John; 3rd row – Mark and Luke; 4th row – James and Andrew; 5th row – Simon, Thomas, Anne, Joachim, Philip, and Bartholomew (the last two destroyed). The inscriptions with the apostles and Archangels' names as well as the monograms of Christ and the Virgin in the background are skillfully composed into the painting.



THE VIRGIN HODIGITRIA WITH PROPHETS

16th century, 106×89 cm

PROVENANCE – THE VILLAGE OF SZKLARY

HISTORICAL MUSEUM, SANOK

The poses of the Archangels Gabriel and Michael presented in half-length in the centre of the icon, on the height of the Virgin's halo, were meant to venerate Our Lady. At the border the prophets and saints glorify the Virgin. From left to right: 1st row – Moses and Aaron; 2nd row – David and Solomon; 3rd row – Gideon and James; 4th row – Amos and Ezechiel; 5th row – Jeremiah, Joseph, Eliseus, Joachim, Anne, Stephen, John of Damascus, and Daniel.



THE VIRGIN ENTHRONED WITH PROPHETS

16th century, 119,5×86 cm

PROVENANCE – THE VILLAGE OF FLORYNKA

HISTORICAL MUSEUM, SANOK

The original character of the painting's iconography consists in the placing of the Virgin in the mandorla whose shape was exclusively reserved for the Holy Trinity and Christ Pantocrator. The mandorla points out the idea of the icon, that is the Theophany (Revelation of God). The Child is God from His birth and the Virgin is His throne. The prophets painted at the sides of the icon hold scrolls with the inscriptions glorifying the Virgin Theotokos (Mother of God). The prophets from left to right: 1st row – Moses and Aaron; 2nd row – David and Solomon; 3rd row – Gideon and Ezechiel; 4th row – Micheas and Isaiah.



THE VIRGIN PERIBLETOS

16th century, 120×87 cm

PROVENANCE – THE VILLAGE OF KOSTAROWCE

HISTORICAL MUSEUM, SANOK

The representations of the Virgin Peribletos (i.e. The Admirable) differ from the frontally depicted, severe and hieratic Hodigitria by the feeling of tenderness noticeable in the inclination of the Virgin's head towards Jesus and that of the Child turning towards the Virgin.

The effigies of the Virgin Peribletos known between the 9th and 10th centuries were particularly venerated in the 11th and from the 13th to 14th century. Her image was a palladium of militant emperors and brought them victory. Psellos, a humanist, described her painting with words full of admiration and adored her as the liberator of the Emperor Roman III. The faithful believed that the Virgin Peribletos provided more for the things of this world than for eschatological matters. The Peribletos representations are also popular in the West and Slav countries. In the present icon the Virgin is glorified by the Archangels Michael and Gabriel and two prophets, David on the left and Solomon on the right.



THE VIRGIN AND CHILD

1631, 120×95 cm

PROVENANCE – THE VILLAGE OF SZCZAWNIK

DISTRICT MUSEUM, NOWY SĄCZ

The Virgin with Child represents the middle type between the Virgin Hodigitria and Peribletos. The crown on her head supported by two angels symbolizing her royal dignity is an iconographic novelty derived from Western art. The prophets and Mary's predecessors appear along the borders of the painting. 1st row – Moses and Aaron, 2nd row – David and Solomon, 3rd row – Gideon, Ezekiel, 4th row – Zechariah(?) and Jacob, 5th row – Jonathan, Jeremiah, Joachim, Anne, Isaiah, Daniel. The icon derives from the same workshop as the picture of the Archangel Michael from Szczawnik and that of the Crucifixion from the Szczawnik church (ill. 33, 65).



THE VIRGIN ELEUSA

first half of the 17th century, 97×72,5 cm

NATIONAL MUSEUM, CRACOW

The icon is one of the numerous variants of the iconography of the Virgin called Eleusa (Merciful). Such a type depicts the Virgin in half-length with the Child on the left arm (rarely the right), cuddling Him with both hands, and resting her face on His cheek. In the present icon the child is in a peculiar pose, i.e. with a twist of the neck, back, and legs, gesture of the left hand holding the hand of Mary, and the right hand holding a scroll resting on the knee. Besides, the Virgin is wearing maphorion in an unusual way and all these point out to the iconographic variant of the Eleusa called Maria Romana. This is frequent in Italian-Byzantine painting. Legends have it that the prototype of the icon was miraculously created on a column of the Lydda church. During the iconoclasm the icon of the "Roman Virgin" found shelter in the papal palace in Rome, and when the persecution stopped it miraculously returned to Constantinople. The legends published in Russian and Polish in the 17th century greatly popularized this iconographic type throughout Eastern Little Poland and attributed a miraculous power to the Werhrata-Krechowo painting.



THE AKATHISTOS TO OUR LADY

16th century, 55,7×28,5 cm

NATIONAL MUSEUM, CRACOW

In Byzantine liturgy the Greek word “Akathistos” (“unseated”) denominated a hymn in praise of the Virgin which was sung while standing so as to show respect for the mystery of the Incarnation which the hymn glorifies. Twenty four troparions constituting the akathistos were illustrated to create a cycle of paintings which adore Mary in a poetical way, yet render the dogmatic contents of the hymn. The present icon is the 19th-century troparion “You protect Virgins, Mother Virgin, Mother of God”. According to the customary iconography, the Virgin should be presented against architecture and landscape with the infant Jesus on her arm, and accompanied by virgin-martyrs on the left and nuns on the right. Our painting faithfully follows the mandatory pattern except for the presentation of Christ in swaddling-clothes. The right side of the painting is unpreserved. As a matter of fact, the Akathistos type is very rare in the Sub-Carpathians.



ST ALEXIS, A MAN OF GOD

17th century, 72×47 cm

PROVENANCE – THE VILLAGE OF BANICA

DISTRICT MUSEUM, NOWY SĄCZ

The legend says that Alexis, son of a Roman patrician, left his family and went to the Holy Land, later to Edessa in Mesopotamia, to live the life of “a Man of God”. He died at Edessa in 417. The cult of St Alexis had a wide-spread popularity and in the 12th century reached Russia. The patron of pilgrims and beggars, Alexis is among the saints most popular with the Lemkos. The clothes of St Alexis in the present icon are a combination of a folk costume with begger’s rags. The saint holds a scroll with the inscription: “Purify your thoughts to live a virtuous life, flagellate yourself as He was flagellated, and embellish your life with suffering.”



ST BASIL THE GREAT

end of the 15th – beginning of the 16th century, 99×74,5 cm
HISTORICAL MUSEUM, SANOK

St Basil was born at Caesarera, ca 330 and died there in 379. Bishop, doctor, teacher, and Father of the Greek Church, he was a reformer of liturgy. He laid out the principles for the monks later to be called the Basilians. As the metropolitan of Cappadocia St Basil for many years opposed the Arian heresy. The icon presents scenes from his life. From left to right: 1st row – The Birth of St Basil; St Basil Ordained Priest; 2nd row – The Baptism of St Basil; The Healing of a Man Possessed by Devils; 3rd row – The Death of St Basil; The Translation of St Basil's Relics; 4th row – The Healing of the Sick; The Entombment of St Basil.



ST DEMETRIUS THE GREAT MARTYR

17th century, 106×89 cm

PROVENANCE – THE VILLAGE OF CZARNA

DISTRICT MUSEUM, NOWY SĄCZ

A legend says that St Demetrius, the Roman proconsul of Achaia, was transfixed with a lance during a prosecution of Christians by the Emperor Maximian in Salonika (ca 306); finally, he was martyred in prison. The icon presents the saint in an antiquizing robe. From left to right: 1st row – St Demetrius in Prison; The Execution of Nestor; 2nd row – St Demetrius Blesses Nestor; The Martyrdom of Nestor by the Emperor's Order; 3rd row – Nestor asks to be allowed to fight with Lyaeos; The Entombment of St Demetrius; 4th row – Nestor slays Lyaeos with a lance; The Miraculous Healing on St Demetrius Sepulchre.



ST DEMETRIUS

17th century, 125×83 cm

PROVENANCE – THE VILLAGE OF LELUCHÓW

DISTRICT MUSEUM, NOWY SĄCZ

Venerated in the Greek Church as the patron of soldiers, St Demetrius is most commonly presented as a Roman warrior with a lance, arrows, and a shield decorated with a cross and roses. When working on his icon, the painter stylized the figure of the saint to resemble a big flower against the stylized flowers and leaves in the background.



THE PROPHET ELIJAH

end of the 16th century, 87,5×51 cm

NATIONAL MUSEUM, CRACOW

Icons representing the prophet, Elijah, are rare in the Sub-Carpathians. He may have not been so popular there as in Russia or in the Byzantine Empire, where the icons illustrating his life were far more prevalent. The present painting follows his traditional schematic iconography to depict his standing, hieratic figure frontally and assisted by half-length figures of the Archangels Michael and Gabriel. The painting reveals a symmetrical composition and geometric ornamentality in singular elements like the robes and hair of the Saint, or even the grass. The inscription on the scroll held by the prophet relates to Mount Carmel: "Then Elijah said to all the people, come near to me, and all the people came near to him. And he repaired the altar of the Lord" (1 Kings 18. 30).



ST GEORGE AND THE DRAGON

15th–16th century, 83x54 cm

PROVENANCE – THE VILLAGE OF WYSOKIE

DISTRICT MUSEUM OF THE PRZEMYŚL REGION, PRZEMYŚL

A beloved saint of the Eastern Church, St George for many centuries embodied the ideal of the knight struggling with evil. His victory over the dragon symbolized the defeat of the spirit of darkness, that is the enemies of Christianity. A legend, derived from the Greek mythology, created a new literary version of the struggle with the dragon. Icons concerning this subject became extremely popular from the 13th century. Similarly to earlier representations, St George slays the dragon; he also rescues a beautiful princess and liberates her town. The young maiden is usually presented as standing at the castle gate, while her parents, who hold the gate keys, watch the struggle from a balcony or a window. The victor is blessed by the Manus Dei visible in the upper part of the icon. Astonishing here is the mask with human features placed on the dragon's back. A relic of antique motifs, it most probably symbolizes the lowest instincts of the dragon – devil.



ST GEORGE AND THE DRAGON

2nd half of the 17th century, 45,5×34,5 cm

NATIONAL MUSEUM, CRACOW

The icon illustrates the 12th-century legend of St George slaying the dragon and rescuing the princess and her town from the blood-thirsty monster. Beside its generally traditional iconography, both the Byzantine and Western elements are merged in the painting. For instance, the antique knight is replaced by a young boy with Slav features who holds a spear with a knob typical of the Polish winged hussars from the 2nd half of the 17th century. Other details like the stirrup, harness, and the princess's coat and ruche also point to the costume of the Polish knights and gentry. The golden frame decorated with cabochons and the stylistic manner are particularly evident of the prevailing influence of Polish guild painting.



COSMAS AND DAMIAN

beginning of the 16th century, 135×108,5 cm

PROVENANCE – THE VILLAGE OF JABLONICA RUSKA

MUSEUM OF FOLK ARCHITECTURE, SANOK

The twin brothers and holy physicians from Cilicia, Cosmas and Damian were put to death in Syria during the persecution of Christians under Diocletian. The present icon depicts them according to traditional iconography: young men of the same facial features, with short beards, and long robes, hold boxes of medicines and spoons to measure them with. The border scenes from their lives and miracles from the top: 1st row – The Birth of St Cosmas; The Birth of St Damian; 2nd row – The Initiation of Cosmas and Damian into Learning; The Saints Heal the Blind; 3rd row – The Saints Heal a Man pressed of Demons; The Healing of a Woman; 4th row – The Healed Woman Gives Three Eggs to Damian; Christ Visits Cosmas in his Dream and Tells Him not to Hate Damian for Having Accepted the Gift; 5th row – The Entombment of the Saints Cosmas and Damian; St Cosmas Drives Demons out of a Camel.



ST NICHOLAS

beginning of the 16th century, 113,5×79 cm
NATIONAL MUSEUM, CRACOW

An open book of the Gospels held by St Nicholas (Jn 10. 11–12) in his hand which is not covered with cloth, and a blossoming meadow under the Saint's feet are the elements characteristic for the Saint's icons in the Sub-Carpathians. Border scenes from left to right: 1st row – The Nativity of St Nicholas, St Nicholas is Ordained Bishop; 2nd row – The Deliverance of the Boy from the Saracens, The Healing of a Man Possessed by Devils; 3rd row – St Nicholas Comforts Three Men in Prison, St Nicholas Appears to King Constantine; 4th row – The Entombment of St Nicholas, The Translation of St Nicholas's Relics from Myra to Bari; 5th row – The Miracle of the Sailors, The Deliverance of Demetrius (The painting was been mutilated and damaged at the bottom).



ST NICHOLAS

end of the 16th century, 135×107,5 cm

PROVENANCE – THE VILLAGE OF UHERCE

HISTORICAL MUSEUM, SANOK

The scenes from St Nicholas's life are as usual shown at random. From left to right:
1st row – The Nativity of St Nicholas, The Baptism of St Nicholas; 2nd row – The
Deliverance of Basil from the Saracens, St Nicholas is Ordained Bishop; 3rd row – St
Nicholas Returns the Rug to the Old Man's Wife, St Nicholas Buys a Rug from and
Old Man; 4th row – The Entombment of St Nicholas, The Translation of St
Nicholas's Relics to Bari, The Deliverance of Demetrius, The Miracle of the Sailors.



ST NICHOLAS

end of the 16th century, 61,5×34,8 cm

NATIONAL MUSEUM, CRACOW

St Nicholas, bishop of Myra at the turn of the 3rd century, patron of the poor and suffering, is one of the most popular saints of the Orthodox Church. He is also known as the miracleworker. The icons in which he is depicted in various poses, but always in bishop's robes, are the most numerous and as obligatory in the Orthodox Church as those of Christ and the Virgin.

The presented icon distinguishes itself by the Mannerism of form revealed in the unnatural figure of the Saint, the exaggerated gesture, as well as in the decorative and geometrizing contours, modelling, and colour composition.



ST NICHOLAS

first half of the 17th century, 126×105,5 cm

PROVENANCE – THE VILLAGE OF STAWISZ

DISTRICT MUSEUM, NOWY SĄCZ

St Nicholas is accompanied by scenes from his life placed on two sides of the icon. From left to right: 1st row – The Nativity of St Nicholas, St Nicholas Is Ordained Bishop; 2nd row – St Nicholas restores the Son Ransomed from the Saracens to his Parents, St Nicholas Appears to King Constantine; 3rd row – St Nicholas Appears to the Three Men in Prison, The Deliverance of the Three Innocent Men from Execution; 4th row – The Miracle of the Sailors, The Entombment of St Nicholas.



ST NICHOLAS

mid-17th century, 94×67 cm
NATIONAL MUSEUM, CRACOW

The painting was created in accordance with the common iconography of St Nicholas. The blessing figure of the bishop in the liturgical robes characteristic of the Eastern rite, with an open book of the Gospels, covers the entire upper part of the icon's background. At the bottom, on the two sides of the Saint there are two scenes from his life presented against architecture and gentle hills. In the left one St Nicholas delivers the three innocent men from execution, on the right – he consoles three prisoners. Characteristic frame with painted and sculpted Late Renaissance ornaments, crowning the icon in the shape of an arch, proves that it once belonged to an iconostasis.



THE ARCHANGEL MICHAEL

second half of the 16th century, 110x82 cm

NATIONAL MUSEUM, CRACOW

The Eastern Church venerates four Archangels, with St Michael, the Divine Archistrategus of the angels' hosts, being the most popular of them. His clothes change according to his task. A fighting knight, he wears armour and carries a sword. He is usually depicted frontally, standing on some cloth, since the person of his high dignity cannot touch the ground. This is how he appears in the described icon. The border scenes from left to right: 1st row – The Women at Christ's Grave, The Appearance in a Dream to King David; 2nd row – The Appearance of the Archangel to the Prophet Daniel, The Overthrow of Sodom; 3rd row – The Miracle at Chonae, The Showing of a Monk's robe and Hood to St Pachomius; 4th row – The Aiding of Gideon and the Victory over Median, The Archangel Michael's Church.



THE ARCHANGEL MICHAEL

beginning of the 17th century, 135×101 cm

PROVENANCE – VILLAGE OF JASIEŃ

HISTORICAL MUSEUM, SANOK

For some unknown reasons the Archangel Michael is depicted in the centre of the icon in the place of St Nicholas. The border scenes illustrate the life of St Nicholas. From left to right: 1st row – The Nativity of St Nicholas, The Saint's Baptism; 2nd row – St Nicholas Ordained Bishop, The Healing of a Man Possessed by Devils; 3rd row – St Nicholas Appears to King Constantine with the Order to Liberate the Innocent, The Deliverance of the Three Innocent Men from Execution; 4th row – scene damaged, The Translation of St Nicholas's Relics to Bari.



THE ARCHANGEL MICHAEL

1631, 128×97 cm

PROVENANCE – THE VILLAGE OF SZCZAWNİK

DISTRICT MUSEUM, NOWY SĄCZ

The Archangel Michael, traditionally depicted in a frontal pose with a sword in his hand, is surrounded by scenes of his deeds. From left to right: 1st row – Christ Blesses the Archangel Michael, The Archangel Michael Expells Adam and Eve from the Garden of Eden; 2nd row – The Sacrifice of Isaac, Jacob Wrestling with the Archangel Michael; 3rd row – The Archangel Michael Saves the Three Youths From the Fiery Furnace, The Overthrow of Sodom; 4th row – The Archangel Michael and Hababuk Bring Food to Daniel in the Lions' Den, The Archangel Michael's Victory over Median's Army, The Archangel Michael with a Flaming Sword Keeps Guard at a Town Gate (Constantinople). In the bottom left corner the foundational inscription in Old-Church Slavonic reads: "AD 1631 the painting was donated by Marcyi, the servant of God, for the Szczawnik church and the church of St Michael to ensure his health and the remission of sins".



ST PARASKEVA THE GREAT MARTYR

15th century, 110×84 cm

NATIONAL MUSEUM, CRACOW

The Orthodox Church venerates several saints of this name. The represented Paraskeva was of Greek origin. She was tortured to death in Iconion under Diocletian. St Paraskeva was already worshipped in Greece in the 4th century and her cult soon spread all over the Christian East. The patron of family life and home, she was a very popular saint. Her feast day is on Friday and she herself is often depicted as the embodiment of Good Friday or Friday in general. The Greek "paraskewe" signifies preparation for a feast day, i.e. a day before Saturday. The border scenes: 1st row – The Nativity of St Paraskeva, St Paraskeva before the Emperor; 2nd row – St. Paraskeva Tortured with Torches, The Flagellation; 3rd row – St Paraskeva Popples Idols, The Imprisonment; 4th row – St Paraskeva Boiled in a Cauldron, St Paraskeva Hung by the Hair and Stabbed; 5th row – The Entombment, St Paraskeva Beheaded, The Sawing of St Paraskeva, The Emperor's Fall (scene partly destroyed).



ST PARASKEVA, THE GREAT MARTYR

beginning of the 16th century, 134×88 cm

PROVENANCE – THE VILLAGE OF ŻOHATYN

MUSEUM OF FOLK ARCHITECTURE, SANOK

The central figure of St Paraskeva with the crown of a martyr and the gesture of confession is surrounded by scenes from her life and martyrdom. From left to right: 1st row – The Nativity of St Paraskeva, The Saint Given to a Dragon Slays It With Her Prayer; 3rd row – St Paraskeva's Body Mutilated with Drawknives, St Paraskeva Burnt with Candles; 4th row – The Entombment of St Paraskeva, St Paraskeva Beheaded, The Fall of the Emperor, St Paraskeva in a Dungeon Visited by St Juliana.



ST PARASKEVA OF TYRNOVO

beginning of the 16th century, 134×89 cm

PROVENANCE – THE VILLAGE OF UŚCIE GORLICKIE

HISTORICAL MUSEUM, SANOK

The icon does not depict St Paraskeva the Martyr. It is a 9th-century presentation which comes from Bulgaria, where the Saint was called "Petka". St Paraskeva's relics brought to Tyrnovo in the 12th century by a Bulgarian king were frequently moved – they were kept respectively in Constantinople, Belgrade, and Jassy. The border scenes from left to right: 1st row – The Nativity of St Paraskeva, St Paraskeva Appears to George and His Wife Revealing the Place of Her Grave; 2nd row – The Prayer in the Desert, The Finding of St Paraskeva's Relics, The Miraculous Healing of the Halt and the Blind; 3rd row – St Paraskeva at the Gate of Constantinople; 4th row – The Death of St Paraskeva, The Translation of St Paraskeva's Relics to Belgrade; 5th row – The Entombment, The Translation of the Relics to Tyrnovo, A Welcoming Procession at Tyrnovo's Gate.



ST PARASKEVA AND THEODOSIA

beginning of the 17th century, 110×87 cm

NATIONAL MUSEUM, CRACOW

Although since the end of the 16th century the cult of all the Paraskevas merged into a single cult of St Paraskeva, it seems probable that the depicted Paraskeva called "Petka" (from the Bulgarian) depicts the 9th-century Bulgarian Saint (il. 68). Accompanying her is St Theodosia in antiquizing robes and the white veil characteristic of maidens, who most probably represents St Theodosia the Martyr (killed in Palestinian Caesarea in 308). The frontal poses, held crosses, and raised arms (confession) can be found in this type of icon constituting as it were representative portraits of the saints. The originality of the icon derives from its monumental composition, mural-like painting manner, and the typical deformation of the faces.



ST SIMEON THE STYLITE

end of the 16th century, 106×81,5 cm

PROVENANCE – THE VILLAGE OF KOSTAROWCE

HISTORICAL MUSEUM, SANOK

The Syrian ascetic was born in Cilicia ca 390. In 412 he took refuge in a deserted monastery near Antiochia, in which he lived immured. The legend says that in trying to achieve a more austere asceticism he lived on a pillar for 37 years until his very death. The most famous of the Stylites is presented in icons in half-figure on top of a column. In our icon he is enthroned on the top of the pillar. It is surrounded by monks coming most probably from the monastery Kalaat Seman presented nearby, and established in the 5th century. The figure of a sick person at the foot of the pillar awaits a miraculous healing by St Simeon.



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