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From Petersburg to Shipka via Mount Athos: Slavic Saints on the Shipka Iconostasis

The Russo-Turkish War of 1877–1878 had important consequences for the political map of the Balkans in general, and the fate of Bulgarians in particular, as the Ottoman Empire lost huge areas of present-day Bulgaria that had been under Ottoman rule for five centuries (Yavuz, 2011). One of the war's most dramatic battles was fought by a joint force of Russian soldiers and Bulgarian volunteers on Mount St. Nikola at the foot of the Balkan Mountains, just above the town of Shipka. During the battle and subsequent harsh winter, about 10,000 Russian and Bulgarian fighters lost their lives (Бакалов, 2021, p. 19). The initiative for the construction of a war memorial church to commemorate the dead was launched right after the de facto liberation of the Bulgarian lands from Ottoman rule in 1879. In order to supervise the construction and ornamentation of this church, a special committee was elected, which took the decision to erect it in the town of Shipka, in close proximity to the scenes of these memorable battles. The initiative was the brainchild of General Mikhail

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Skobelev's¹ mother, Olga Skobeleva, who had been engaged in charity work in Bulgarian lands, together with the Russian ambassador to Constantinople, Nikolay Ignatyev² (Тодоров, 2021). For a variety of reasons, the construction turned out to be a lengthy process, with the church eventually being sanctified in 1902.

The structure of the iconostasis and the wood carvings were produced in Peterburg (Добрев, 2021, p. 121). Both the concept for the iconographic program and the choice of iconographers were discussed by the Committee, but the Chairperson, Count Nikolay Ignatyev, played a decisive role in the final selection. In his capacity as the Russian ambassador to Constantinople, Ignatyev's diplomatic career was inextricably linked with the Balkans. Over the course of forty years, he maintained close contacts with the monks at the Russian St. Panteleimon Monastery on Mount Athos; in the preserved lengthy correspondence between Ignatyev and the monks, he is extolled as a patron, counsellor and defender of the monastery's interests. In the selection process for the execution of the icons for the Shipka iconostasis, two options were considered: to either invite a painter who was working in the realm of academic religious painting, or to engage iconographers working within the traditional style of Orthodox art. Nikolay Ignatyev's familiarity with and appreciation of the monks at St. Panteleimon as the defenders of true Orthodox iconography had previously prompted him to commission them to produce some icons for the church on his estate (and he received other icons as gifts) (*Граф Игнатъев*, 2016, pp. 24, 25, 47, 153, 271). In 1898, Ignatyev wrote to the abbot of Saint Panteleimon to request that the icon-painting monks execute the icons for the Shipka church on the premises of the monastery. The abbot was at first unsure whether the monastery would fulfill Ignatyev's requirements as the icon-painters at Saint Panteleimon were all self-taught (*Граф Игнатъев*, 2016, p. 316). Ultimately, the monastery agreed to the commission, and a lengthy correspondence with Ignatyev followed (often complicated by the distance) to ensure the successful execution (Пахомов, 2016).

A number of the icons share inscriptions of the same kind, testifying to the place and year of their execution, such as "СѢА СВ. ИКОНА ПИСА НА АФОНѢ ВЪ РУССКОМЪ СВ. ПАНТЕЛЕИМОНА МОНАСТЫРѢ. 1901 Г". None of the icons indicate the names of the icon painters, but the preserved correspondence reveals that

¹ Mikhail Dmitriyevich Skobelev (1843–1882) was a Russian general who made a major contribution to the victories of the Russian army in the Russo-Turkish war of 1877–1878.

² Nikolay Pavlovich Ignatyev (1832–1908) was a Russian statesman, officer and diplomat, ambassador to the Ottoman Empire until the start of the Russo-Turkish war in 1877, and subsequently Minister of the Interior (1881–1882).

the main iconographer was Hieromonk Pavel, head of the monastery's icon painting school. Father Pavel came to St. Panteleimon in 1898 from the Holy Annunciation Nikandrova Desert Monastery in the Diocese of Pskov (*Граф Игнатъев*, 2016, pp. 324, 340; Пахомов, 2016, p. 608). The icons bear the date 1901, which marks their completion, but work on them probably started in 1899, when the monastery officially received the commission from the Committee for the Construction of the Shipka Memorial Church (Пахомов, 2016, p. 607).

While the Shipka iconostasis is of an impressive size, in Bulgarian literature the great number of iconographic representations on it are only enumerated (Добрев, 2021), without being properly analyzed in terms of content, ideas and aesthetic messages.

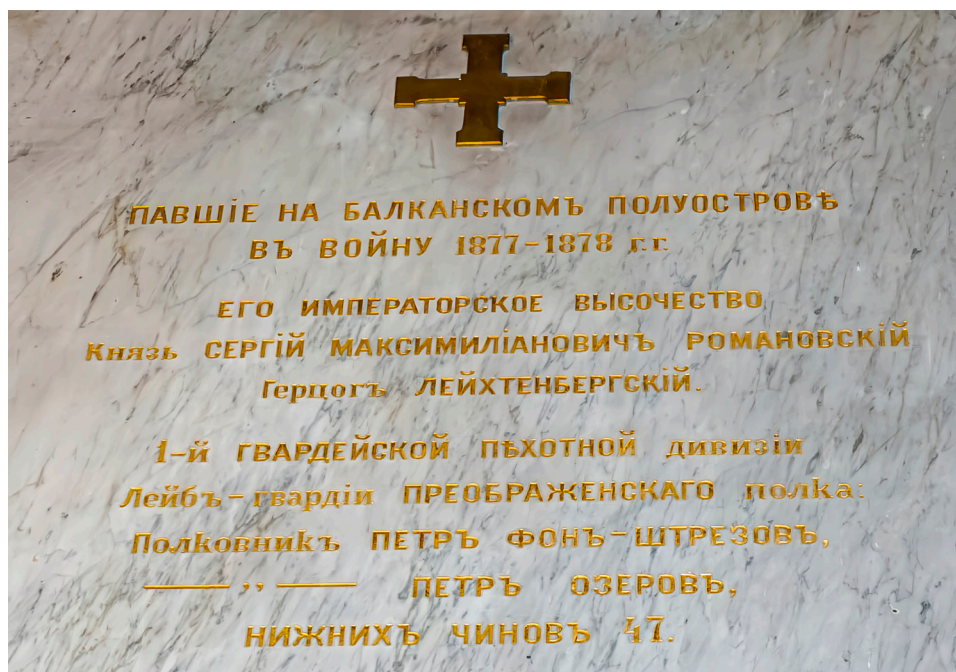
During its meetings, the Committee decided that the iconostasis's top third tier would depict saints of the same name as the military commanders of the Russo-Turkish War of 1877–1878 (*Граф Игнатъев*, 2016, p. 386; Пахомов, 2016, pp. 607–608). In addition, Count Ignatyev suggested that “local Bulgarian and other Slavic saints” also feature among the icons, which the abbot would select at his own discretion (*Граф Игнатъев*, 2016, p. 390; Пахомов, 2016, p. 611; Чеснокова, 2016, p. 239). The iconographer monks carefully heeded this recommendation, and the outcome is so fascinating that it deserves special attention.

Executing the plan to select saints whose names coincide with the names of the war heroes, the Committee sent to Saint Panteleimon a list of the saints to feature in the third tier of the iconostasis, including 1. Blessed Nicholas Kochanov, 2. St. Vladimir, Equal of the Apostles, 3. St. Peter the Apostle, 4. St. Paul the Apostle, 5. St. Joseph Obruchnik, 6. St. Demetrius of Thessaloniki, 7. St. Theodore Stratelates, 8. St. John the Baptist, 9. St. Victor the Martyr, 10. St. John of Rila, 11. St. Sergius of Radonezh, 12. St. Boris, 13. St. Clement, 14. St. Panteleimon, 15. St. Alexius, 16. St. Olga (*Граф Игнатъев*, 2016, p. 388; Пахомов, 2016, pp. 610, 611).

At St. Panteleimon Monastery, the monks fully adhered to the request. Unfortunately, no records were preserved of the discussion that must have taken place in the Committee, which would shed light on how the composition and order of the selected saints were arrived at. An attempt to pinpoint the historical personalities that determined the choice of the specific saints would lead to some speculative results as it is entirely possible that several war heroes shared the same patron saint. In any case, most likely the idea was not simply to commemorate the glorious military leaders who distinguished themselves in the war. The presence of St. Olga, for example, clearly alludes to the personality of Olga Skobeleva, the initiator of the undertaking to build the Shipka

church. Even though she was killed in 1880 near Plovdiv, the organizers probably wanted to make sure that her contributions to the Bulgarian cause and to the construction of the Shipka Memorial Church would not be forgotten. Since St. John of Rila was not a patron of any of the commanders-in-chief, his image probably served to commemorate the Bulgarian volunteers killed in battle.

The most venerated Russian saint, Sergius of Radonezh, perhaps features as the patron saint of Sergei Maximilianovich Romanovsky, Duke of Leuchtenberg, who lost his life in battle in 1877 and whose name is inscribed on the marble commemorative plaque on the north wall, in front of the iconostasis.³ (il. 1). The fact that Duke Sergei's brother, Eugen Maximilianovich, was a member of the Committee for the Construction of the Memorial Church further corroborates this hypothesis (Тодоров, 2021, pp. 23, 24).



Il. 1 – Memorial plaque with the name of Prince Sergei Maximilianovich Romanovsky, Duke of Leuchtenberg (photo: Angel Nikolov)

³ Sergei Maximilianovich Romanovsky was a prince, member of the Russian imperial family and Duke of Leuchtenberg (1849–1877). He was killed in battle in the Russo-Turkish war of 1877–1878. I owe my thanks to art historian Alexander Preobrazhensky from Moscow State University for providing me with the information that St. Sergius of Radonezh was the Duke's patron.

Curiously, the Committee's list of namesake saints begins with the little-known fool for Christ, Nicholas Kochanov of Novgorod (il. 2). This saint is depicted with a cabbage in his hand – a reference to his name and to an episode of his life. This holy fool from Novgorod was the patron of the Grand Duke Nicholas Nikolaevich of Russia (1831–1891), who was commander-in-chief in the Russo-Turkish War of 1877–1878, and of his son, Nicholas Nikolaevich Junior (Преображенский, 2018, p. 288).



Il. 2 – Blessed Nicholas Kochanov (photo: Angel Nikolov)

Even though relatively few Russian saints are featured, it is striking that St. Alexius, Metropolitan of Moscow, is depicted twice: once in the iconostasis's third tier, and again in a large individual icon on an icon stand in the naos. The highlighted presence of St. Alexius must carry some special meaning, perhaps associated with the fact that Count Nikolay Ignatyev was a distant descendent of the Metropolitan of Moscow (Канева, 2008, p. 394).

According to the original plan, the third tier of the iconostasis was to be devoted to the patron saints of the war heroes, and the same concept was extended to the dedications on the side altars. Again on the suggestion of Count Ignatyev (Пахомов, 2016,

p. 603), the altar on the northern side was dedicated to St. Nicholas of Mira, and the southern one to St. Alexander Nevsky (Nikolov, 2021, il. 21). Both saints are highly popular and revered in Russia and are presumed to be the heavenly patrons of a large number of war heroes and victims. In addition to being the patron saint of Emperor Alexander II, St. Alexander Nevsky was also considered to have aided in the battles. The special personal veneration of one's namesake saint is a typically Russian phenomenon that is well-documented in Orthodox art.

As mentioned above, the Committee only provided a general guideline that the medallions should depict mainly Bulgarian and other local Slavic saints, entrusting St. Panteleimon's abbot with the concrete task of selecting the representative saints at his own discretion. The Committee additionally ordered a separate large icon with the images of Saints Cyril and Methodius (*Граф Игнатъев*, 2016, p. 390; *Пахомов*, 2016, p. 611). How the monks solved this complex assignment, what their sources of information about the local saints were, as well as what iconographic models they used are important questions that will be tackled in the next section.



Il. 3 – St. Sava of Serbia and Sv. Gregory Dvoeslov (photo: Angel Nikolov)



Il. 4 – St. Eustathius of Serbia (photo: Angel Nikolov)



Il. 5 – St. Prince Vladimir of Serbia (photo: Angel Nikolov)

The images of Slavic saints are located mainly in the arches above the three entrances of the iconostasis. There are only three Serbian saints among them: St. Sava, St. Eustathius and St. Prince Vladimir of Serbia (il. 3, 4, 5). With the exception of St. Sava, who is the most revered and famous Serbian saint, the choice of the other two personalities appears at first glance a mystery. Eustathius wears bishop's vestments – an apparent reference to one of the two archbishops of Peč of the same name, who lived in the second half of the 13th century but did not leave a very lasting mark on the ecclesiastical history of Serbia. Prior to being elected archbishop of Serbia, Eustathius I had been the abbot at the Hilandar Monastery on Mount Athos (Павловић, 1965, pp. 79–81). As far as St. Prince Vladimir of Serbia is concerned, it is difficult to pinpoint the corresponding historical personality with any degree of certainty. The most plausible assumption is that this is St. Jovan Vladimir, the ruler of Duklja and son-in-law of Tsar Samuel of Bulgaria, who was posthumously recognized as a martyr and a saint. Traditionally St. Jovan Vladimir is depicted as a ruler wearing a crown, often holding his own severed head in his hands (including on monuments at Mount Athos) (Цветковски, 2016). Moreover, nowhere is he referred to solely by his second name. On the Shipka iconostasis, by contrast, St. Vladimir is depicted in bust, without a crown, and the little that can be glimpsed from his garments indicates that they are not royal.

However, both St. Eustathius of Serbia and St. Jovan Vladimir of Serbia make sense if we take Archbishop Philaret of Chernigov's book *The Saints of the Southern Slavs* as the main written source the icon painters at St. Panteleimon used as a model (Филарет, 1894, pp. 7–9, 104–108).⁴ Though the book features a number of Serbian saints, just these three are selected, perhaps at random. From Archbishop Philaret's book, one can corroborate that St. Eustathius was the first archbishop of Serbia of that name (in fact, the book starts with him) and that "Vladimir, Prince of Serbia" is indeed Jovan Vladimir (Филарет, 1894, pp. 7–9, 104–108). Another reason to assume that the monks used *The Saints of the Southern Slavs* as a prototype is that this would provide an explanation for the highly unusual iconography as the icon painters must have used illus-

⁴ It was common practice for the icon painters at St. Panteleimon Monastery to use printed sources as iconographic guides. For instance, when Count Ignatyev ordered three icons for the monastery on his estate in 1792, the monks sent him the book *Vyshnii Pokrov nad Afonom* [The Highest Cover Over Athos] so he could choose an iconographic style for the icon of the Virgin Mary (Граф Игнатъев, 2016, p. 47, No. 25).

trations painted by academician Fedor Grigoryevich Solntsev, which from an iconographic point of view are completely arbitrary and inconsistent with local Balkan traditions and monuments. As one of the leading painters commissioned by the Russian Holy Synod and professor of academic painting in the icon painting class at the St. Petersburg Theological Seminary, Solntsev was a person of great authority and popularity among icon painters (Аксенова, 2013).



Il. 6 – St. Kirin from Noric (photo: Angel Nikolov)

The image of Bishop Kirin from Noric on one of the iconostasis's medallions is another “borrowing” from *Saints of the Southern Slavs* (il. 6). According to Archbishop Philaret, this was an early Christian saint who lived in Krajna “between Serbo-Croats and Slovenes” and died in 309 (Филарет, 1894, pp. 234–236).

The Bulgarian gallery of the iconostasis is by far the most extensive and intriguing, so special attention will be paid to the logic behind the selection of the Bulgarian saints and their depictions. A number of different categories of saints are represented, such as rulers, enlighteners, reverends and martyrs. With the exception of one of the martyrs, all the rest are included in Archbishop Philaret's book. Igumen Father Andrey and the icon painters approached the commitment to select the imagery of Bulgarian saints with

great responsibility as they apparently strove for both representativeness and exhaustiveness.



Il. 7 – St. Baian, Prince Bulgarian (photo: Angel Nikolov)

Three Bulgarian princes are represented on the iconostasis: Baian, Boris (Nikolov, 2021, il. 22) and Peter (il. 7, 8). The name Baian is an alternative transcription of Boian, the brother of Khan Malamir, for whom Archbishop Philaret cited written historical sources (Филарет, 1894, pp. 69–71). In fact, the given name of this proto-Bulgarian who adopted Christianity in pagan times and died for his faith was Enravota or Voin. There is a debate in Bulgarian literature whether a cult of Enravota developed in medieval Bulgaria, but the prevalent opinion is that there is no evidence to substantiate this (Чешмеджиев, 2015, pp. 466–484). It seems more likely that Archbishop Philaret himself ranked

him as a saint, and this was later adopted by the Bulgarian Orthodox Church (*Жития на българските светии*, 2002, pp. 449–450; *Жития на светите*, 1991, p. 164).

In addition, there is no scholarly consensus regarding whether the ruler under whom medieval Bulgaria adopted Christianity – Khan Boris, known by the Christian name of Mikhail – was canonized posthumously. During the Bulgarian Revival, he was introduced to the Bulgarian pantheon by Paisii of Hilendar as “Mikhail Ioan”, but later his name was defined more precisely, and “Boris, Equal to the Apostles” started to appear on some depictions, as well as on Bulgarian calendars (celebrated on May 2) (Гергова, 2004, pp. 236, 241). Philaret of Chernigov concluded the article on Prince Boris with the statement that the modern Bulgarian Church held in reverence its enlightener, Prince Boris-Mikhail, demonstrating that he was up-to-date with Bulgarian Revival cults (Филарет, 1894, p. 99).



Il. 8 – St. Boris, Prince Bulgarian; St. Anastasius; St. John Bulgarian (photo: Angel Nikolov)

As for the third ruler depicted on the iconostasis, the cult of Tsar Petar (Филарет, 1894, pp. 33–38) was virtually forgotten during Ottoman rule, and consequently Bulgarians did not venerate him as a saint during the Revival

period. His image, crowned by a halo, appeared only in the 1880s (Димитров, 2012, p. 223). In this case, too, Philaret of Chernigov and the icon-painting monks played a decisive role in the resurrection of St. Petar's cult.

In addition to the Bulgarian rulers, the Shipka iconostasis displays the images of venerable saints St. John of Rila (il. 9), St. Gabriel of Lesnovo and St. Prohor of Pčinja (il. 10, 11). St. Joachim of Osogovo, who is also included in Philaret of Chernigov's book, however, is missing from this group of saints. Out of the four Bulgarian hermits, St. John of Rila is the earliest known; the rest are considered his disciples or even brothers, so they are often venerated and depicted together. While the rest of the saints appear in bust, the place of St. John of Rila on the Shipka iconostasis is emphasized through his appearance in full length against a landscape background in the third tier of the namesake saints. The fact that St. John of Rila is depicted wearing an epitachelion (i.e., he is represented as a hieromonk, which he never was) against the background of a small Russian-looking church with bulbous onion domes suggests that the monks did not try to seek actual iconographic models for the more popular Bulgarian saints.



Il. 9 – St. John of Rila and St. Alexius, Metropolitan of Moscow (photo: Angel Nikolov)



Il. 10 – St. Prohor of Pčinja (photo: Angel Nikolov)



Il. 11 – St. Gabriel of Lesnovo (photo: Angel Nikolov)



Il. 12 – St. Kosmas the Zographite (photo: Angel Nikolov)

Another image belonging to this group is most likely that of Kosmas the Zographite. The second part of the inscription is not entirely legible, but some scholars have misinterpreted it as “Cosmas the Presbyter” (Добрев, 2021, p. 123). The latter is not an accurate reading because this medieval Bulgarian priest and writer was never canonized (Велчев, 1995). The saintly image on the Shipka iconostasis (il. 12) is most likely of Kosmas the Zographite, a 14th-century Bulgarian ascetic (Филарет, 1894, pp. 209–212) whose cult was maintained mainly in the Zograf monastery on Mount Athos (Гергова & Куюмджиев, 2002).



Il. 13 – Saints Cyril and Methodius (photo: Angel Nikolov)

In the naos of the church, there is a large icon (il. 13) of Saints Cyril and Methodius, painted in full body (Nikolov, 2021, il. 24) according to the Russian

iconographic model that was popular at the end of the 19th century (Иванникова, 2013, il. 83–86, cat. 8). It is difficult to determine what particular model was used, but in the monks' correspondence with Count Ignatyev they apologized for the delay with the two large icons (those of Saints Cyril and Methodius and of Saints Archippus and Philemon) for they did not have proper iconographic models at their disposal (*Граф Игнатъев*, 2016, p. 334) Whatever models they found in the end were not very accurate as St. Cyril is erroneously signified in the icon as “Bishop of Moravia” (Nikolov, 2021, p. 325). Out of all Cyril and Methodius's students, the only one represented in Archbishop Philaret's book is St. Clement (il. 14). As Angel Nikolov has noted, the image of St. Clement is bifurcated, as Clement of Ohrid and Clement Velichki are depicted side by side (Nikolov, 2021, p. 325, il. 23). Archbishop Philaret did not make such a mistake, and Clement is represented in his book as bishop of Drembica and Velika (Филарет, 1894, p. 154). The monks at St. Panteleimon probably decided that Clement of Ohrid – the name by which this saint is popularly known, especially in images – and Clement of Velika are two different persons (Грозданов, 1983, pp. 38–112).



Il. 14 – St. Clement of Ohrid and St. Clement Velichki (photo: Angel Nikolov)

St. Mihail Voin (Michael the Warrior, il. 15) also found a spot in the iconostasis. While his depiction suggests he is wearing military clothing, he is rendered without the helmet he is wearing in Solntsev's illustration (Филарет, 1894, pp. 291–293). This medieval Bulgarian dragon-slayer saint was almost forgotten during the centuries of Ottoman rule, but his image was recovered during the Revival period.

Finally, we also find the images of two holy neomartyrs: John the Bulgarian, who died for his faith in 1784 (Филарет, 1894, pp. 60, 61) and St. Lazarus of Debel Del, whose name we do not find in the book used by the icon painters. St. John the Bulgarian, as the author of the book notes, was martyred at the age of 19.



Il. 15 – St. Michael the Warrior (photo: Angel Nikolov)

Academician Solntsev did not take this into account and painted a middle-aged man with a rather long beard for his illustration. Perhaps the monks did not read the text thoroughly and simply painted the icon based solely on Solntsev's illustration. As far as the other neomartyr is concerned, St. Lazarus became quite popular via the publication of the Greek book *Νεον Λειμωνάριον/Neon Leimōnarion* in 1819 in Venice, which perhaps was available at the Russian monastery on Athos. Although St. Lazarus of Debel Del died in Asia Minor, his cult spread to the Bulgarian lands soon after his death in 1802 (Stefanov, 1984).



Il. 16 – St. Abraham of Bulgaria (photo: Angel Nikolov)

One rather imaginative representation is that of St. Abraham of Bulgaria (il. 16), a martyr of the Volga Bulgarians who died for his faith in the 13th century and whose relics were transferred to Vladimir. The memory of this saint surfaced in the 19th century in Bulgarian calendars, undoubtedly because of the epithet “Bulgarian”. This saint is missing from Philaret of Chernigov’s book.



Il. 17 – Tikhvin Icon of the Mother of God, preserved in the Skete of Prophet Elijah on Mount Athos (photo: Angel Nikolov)



Il. 18 – Image of the Most Holy Mother of God the Annunciator of Akathist, who is on Athos (photo: Angel Nikolov)

The Russian icon-painting monks deemed it necessary to make replicas of two widely known miraculous icons of the Mother of God that were venerated on Mount Athos but were not mentioned in their correspondence with Count Ignatyev. It is not surprising that one of them (il. 17) is a reproduction of the Tikhvin Icon of the Mother of God, preserved in the Skete of Prophet Elijah on Mount Athos. The Tikhvin icon reportedly shed tears on February 17, 1877 and has been held in awe ever since (Герова, 2022, p. 156, il. 85; *Чудотворни икони*, 2006, pp. 132–134). It is plausible that this miraculous event was subsequently associated with the Russo-Turkish war declared shortly thereafter. It should be noted that the account of the miracle was recorded immediately after it occurred, on February 21, and was signed by the skete’s abbot Hieromonk Andrey (*Чудотворни икони*, 2006, p. 133), who later became the igumen of St. Panteleimon monastery and, as we have seen, would be in charge of execution of the icons for the Shipka church, and partially of the iconographic program. The Shipka replica Tikhvin Icon of the Mother of God was placed south of the iconostasis.

In addition, there are three identical icons in the three parts of the iconostasis titled “Image of the Most Holy Mother of God the Annunciator of Akathist,

who is on Athos” (il. 18, 19). Although there are several icons of the Virgin Mary on Athos called “the Annunciator”, as well as several “Of the Akathist” (Μαντζαρίδης & Τσιγαρίδας, 2013, pp. 132, 144, 193), the Shipka icon is a replica of Theotokos of the Akathist in the Zograf Monastery, who is believed to have prophesied the attack of the Latins in 1276, which caused the martyrdom of a group of Zografian monks (Μαντζαρίδης & Τσιγαρίδας, 2013, p. 193; *Чудотворни икони*, 2006, pp. 85–89). This icon indirectly expands the realm of Bulgarian saints in the Shipka church.

The Shipka Church was from the very beginning conceived as a Russian memorial church where Bulgarians would commemorate the dead in the Russo-Turkish war. The architecture is wholly Russian in style, and the selection of imagery for the iconostasis reflects a carefully thought-out concept, for which Count Ignatyev assumed “moral responsibility before the emperor, Russia and Bulgaria” (Пахомов, 2016, p. 612). As we have seen, the choice of local Slavic saints was left to the monks on Mount Athos. The icon painters approached the task with utmost pragmatism and professionalism, relying on Archbishop Philaret of Chernigov’s *The Saints of the Southern Slavs* as their main source. At the same time, Philaret had put a great research effort in collecting and utilizing diverse historical sources, so his book reflects the current state of historical science at the time. Were it not for Philaret of Chernigov’s book, the monks of St. Panteleimon would have encountered major difficulties in collecting information about the Bulgarian and Serbian saints represented on the Shipka iconostasis. At the end of the 19th century, the St. Panteleimon monks still lived in relative isolation from the other monasteries on Mount Athos. They maintained friendly contacts predominantly with the Monastery of Zograf, but even if they could obtain some general knowledge about the saints revered by the Bulgarians at Zograf Monastery, their information on the depictions of these saints would have been scarce. It is possible that the icon-painting monks themselves decided to include Neomartyr St. Lazarus of Debel Del, who is not part of Philaret of Chernigov’s book. But while this is only a hypothesis, the presence of the miraculous icon from the Zograf Monastery is a definite expression of the contacts and mutual honor and respect between the Russian and Bulgarian monasteries on Mount Athos, as well as recognition of the important contribution of the Zograf monastery in raising the funds for the construction of the Shipka Memorial Church (*Граф Игнатъев*, 2016, p. 199, No. 109).

Nikolay Ignatyev's general idea "to give priority to local Bulgarian and Slavic saints" (*Граф Игнатъев*, 2016, p. 390) could be interpreted as an expression of 19th-century Pan-Slavism. For instance, Pan-Slavic ideas (Рылец, 1879, p. 104) were entrenched in the frescoes of the Main Church of Rila Monastery, where we find a number of Bulgarian, Serbian and Russian saints depicted in the 1840s (Кююмджиев, 2015, pp. 338–350). However, in the aftermath of the Reunification of the Principality of Bulgaria with Eastern Rumelia and the ensuing Serbo-Bulgarian war of 1885, it was unlikely that embodiments of such notions would be feasible in the Balkans. Perhaps precisely because the monks were familiar with the political context in the Balkans, they limited the number of Serbian saints on the iconostasis. As far as the Russian saints are concerned, they were selected either based on their personal connection with heroes of the war, or in reference to the key individuals responsible for the building of the Shipka church. The depictions of the Bulgarian and Serbian saints follow a certain political and religious logic. Because they are small in size and positioned quite high, with inscriptions that are illegible against the gold background, they are not immediately accessible for the viewer to fully perceive and appreciate. Nonetheless, the Shipka iconostasis constitutes the first extensive and rich ensemble of depictions of personalities from the Bulgarian pantheon that emerged in the immediate context of Bulgaria's liberation from Ottoman rule.

The igumen of the Russian monastery on Mount Athos, Father Andrey, and the icon painting monks not only took their work to heart, but they executed it, as they write, "by the gift and blessing of our holy monastery", as they were exposed to extreme dangers during the Russo-Turkish war, but "God preserved them throughout the hardships" (Пахомов, 2016, p. 614).⁵

Translated by Veneta Ivanova

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Z Petersburga do Szipki przez Górę Athos. Słowiańscy święci na ikonostasie w Szipce

Przedmiotem uwagi są wizerunki słowiańskich świętych na ikonostasie w Cerkwi pw. Narodzenia Pańskiego w Szipce w Bułgarii, które powstały w latach 1899–1901 w rosyjskim klasztorze św. Pantelejmona na Górze Athos. Celem artykułu jest analiza ram koncepcyjnych ikonostasu, znaczeń stojących za wyborem świętych, a także głównych wykorzystanych modeli ikonograficznych. Członkowie Komitetu ds. budowy świątyni upamiętniającej wydarzenia na przełęczy Szipka, wraz z przewodniczącym, hrabią Nikołajem Ignatjewem na czele, wymyślili rząd wizerunków świętych przedstawiających bohaterów wojny rosyjsko-tureckiej z lat 1877–1878. Kilka mniejszych ikon miało przedstawiać lokalnych bułgarskich i słowiańskich świętych, wybranych przez mnichów. Głównym źródłem i wzorcem dla tych przedstawień było dzieło arcybiskupa Filareta (Gumilewskiego) *Święci południowosłowiańscy*, zawierające rycinę Fiodora Sołncewa.

Słowa kluczowe: Cerkiew pw. Narodzenia Pańskiego w Szipce; ikonostas; święci słowiańscy; hrabia Nikołaj Ignatjew; Monaster św. Pantelejmona na Górze Athos; Filaret Gumilewski

From Petersburg to Shipka via Mount Athos: Slavic saints on the Shipka iconostasis

The article explores the images of Slavic saints on the iconostasis of the Russian Memorial Church in the town of Shipka in Bulgaria, which were completed in 1899–1901 at the Russian Saint Panteleimon Monastery on Mount Athos. Its main objective is to analyze the iconostasis's conceptual framework, the meanings behind the selection of the saints, as well as the main iconographical models utilized. The Committee for the Construction of the Memorial Church and its chairperson Count Nikolay Ignatyev conceived of one tier of images of saints depicting the heroes of the Russo-Turkish War of 1877–1878, while a number small icons would feature local Bulgarian and Slavic saints that were to be selected by the monks themselves. The icon painting monks mainly relied on Archbishop Philaret of Chernigov's book *The Saints of the Southern Slavs* with engravings by academician Fedor Solntsev as the main source and model for their depictions of saints.

Keywords: Russian Memorial Church in Shipka; iconostasis; Slavic saints; Count Nikolay Ignatyev; Saint Panteleimon Monastery on Mount Athos; Philaret of Chernigov

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