A MEASURE OF GRACE: MEASURED ICONS OF THE RUSSIAN TSARS

by

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(Under the Direction of Asen Kirin)

ABSTRACT

During the reign of Tsar Ivan IV of Russia, a new form of icons were developed and created for members of the imperial family. Upon the birth of a prince or princess, the new child would be measured. The Tsar would then commission a likeness of their patron saint which used these measurements to determine the length of the painted panel. These icons uniformly incorporated a motif known as the Old Testament Trinity, which depicts the three angelic visitors who came to Abraham in the book of Genesis. By considering the extant literature on this practice, their particular iconography, and their relation to other forms of Holy images, it is the purpose of this thesis to demonstrate that these icons were part of a new model of Russian autocracy, developed during the reign of Ivan IV and maintained during the reign of the Romanov dynasty and involving the process of sacralization of the ruler.

INDEX WORDS: Russia, Icons, Measured icons, Tsars, Old Testament Trinity, Russian History, Russian icons, Russian Orthodoxy

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TO MY MOTHER AND FATHER

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Introduction

During the reign of Tsar Ivan IV of Russia (1547–1584), a new type of icon was developed for the exclusive use of members of the royal family. Whenever a new prince or princess was born, the child would be immediately measured, and an icon of that same length would be created depicting the child's patron saint. Above the representation of his patron saint, this "measured" icon would often incorporate a miniature depiction of the Old Testament Trinity, a scene from the Book of Genesis showing the angels who visited Abraham. While this scene was generally popular in Russian iconography of the time, the uniformity of its inclusion in measured icons is still striking. A measured icon was presented to a newborn at his or her baptism, and it remained with its owner throughout his life and even unto his death, when it would be placed above the royal's grave in the Archangel Cathedral of the Moscow Kremlin.

All currently known measured icons were created between 1554 and 1690, with the exception of one late example from 1860. The governing structure of Russia during this time was very turbulent, and the creation of measured icons can be viewed as a reponse to the changes that occurred during this period. A new style of autocratic rule, which consolidated power into the hands of a single leader, was adopted by Ivan IV, and with this expansion of his authority came also the need to ensure an unbroken line of succession. Measured icons developed as an attempt to meet this need by providing divine protection for the children of the tsar.

In his statements at Ivan IV's coronation in 1547, the Metropolitan Makarii (1482–1563) expanded the sacred duties and privileges that the Church conferred upon the young ruler and recognized his dominion over all of Russia. As he blessed the Tsar, the Metropolitan likened him to David, a king ruling by divine appointment, and upon crowning him, he addressed the

monarch as the "God-Crowned Tsar of all Russia." As part of the ceremony, Makarii also delivered an admonition to the Tsar, reminding him that his rule entailed the spiritual direction of the nation, and that it was from his religious responsibility to the Russian people that his authority was derived.[1]

The first measured icon was created for Ivan IV's second son, the Tsarevich Ivan Ivanovich (1554–1581). The Tsar's first son Dmitrii died in his infancy (1552–1553), potentially compromising the line of succession to the throne. The establishment of the measured icon tradition was designed to protect the new heir and to safeguard the dynasty. Though Ivan did not succeed to the throne, as he was killed by his father in a fit of rage, a measured icon was also created for his brother Feodor (1557–1598), who did assume the throne in 1584.

After Feodor's death and the end of the Riurik dynasty, there was a period of discontinuity in the dynastic rule of Russia. When Mikhail Feodorovich Romanov (1596–1645) was elected as tsar, however, the Romanov family embraced both the autocratic style of rule established by Ivan IV and the practice of creating measured icons. These icons had become a part of the newly established Tsardom and the privileges that it conferred.

During Tsar Aleksei Mikhailovich's reign (1645–1676), the monk Nikon (1605–1681) was raised to the Patriarchate of Moscow. Before he would accept this election, however, Nikon required the Tsar to swear an oath to him. This oath required Aleksei Mikhailovich to obey Nikon as his personal pastor and to bend to him in all matters of canon and dogma. This essentially barred the Tsar from making any decisions that would affect the Church or the interpretation of the Faith.[2] The phrasing of the oath was also almost a direct quote from a ninth

1 David B. Miller, "The Coronation of Ivan IV of Moscow," in *Jahrbücher fur Geschichte Osteuropas,* vol. 15, no. 4 (Franz Steiner Verlag, 1967), 567.

2 Paul of Aleppo, *Travels of the Patriarch Macarius of Antioch*, in *The Patriarch and the Tsar, vol. II*, William Palmer, ed. (London: Trübner and Co., 1873), 110

century Byzantine legal code known as the *Epanagoge.*[3] This reference demonstrates that even before he accepted the patriarchate, Nikon was already considering the Church, and its relation to the state, in terms of Byzantine models.

An integral aspect of Byzantine Church-state relations was the diarchical rule shared between the emperor and the patriarch, who both reigned as representatives of Christ. The emperor was the defender of the Faith, establishing and enforcing secular laws in accordance with Orthodoxy. The patriarch, on the other hand, had supreme authority in the interpretation of the Faith, and it was his responsibility to confront any who questioned his determinations, including the emperor. This is precisely the style of rule that Nikon imposed on the Muscovite tsardom. He established a separate court that was equal in splendor to that of Aleksei and even had an opulent palace built for himself within the Kremlin. He also styled himself as "Great Lord", acted as regent whenever Aleksei left Moscow, and insisted that no decision should be made by the Tsar without his advice. This dynamic solidified the idea that the Tsar was the inheritor of the Byzantine imperial throne, but it did so in such a way as to actually limit the power of the Tsar, requiring him to embody externally imposed religious standards in order to validate his rule.

In addition to protecting the line of succession, measured icons also attested to the royal family's adherance to these standards. The inclusion of the Old Testament Trinity in these icons suggested that their rule was divinely sanctioned by referring to both the biblical Abraham and to the Trinity-Sergius Monstery, one of the most revered spiritual centers in Russia. The unpresidented replication of a physial attribute of the royal children also implied an intimate

3 Matthew Spinka, "Patriarch Nikon and the Subjection of the Russian Church to the State", *Church History*, vol. 10, no. 4 (Dec., 1941), 351.

connection between the members of the family and the holy power that icons were believed to harness. This practice therefore legitimized the rule of the tsars in the context of Russian Ordothoxy.

When he took the throne, Aleksei Mikhailovich's son, Peter I (1672–1725) abolished the patriarchate entirely and took administrative control over the Church himself. This meant that his rule was no longer predicated upon his piety, but upon more worldly expressions of power like military might. Given the secular way that Peter I viewed his own rule and his general distaste for what he perceived as unnecessary or superstitious traditions within the Church, it is not surprising that no known measured icons were made for his descendants. A measured icon was created for him at his birth, but there is no indication that he continued the tradition with his own children.[4] The practice of creating measured icons for the Tsar's children seems thus to have survived precisely as long as did the propensity for the rulers of Russia to identify themselves as defenders of Orthodoxy whose authority was derived from their spiritual responsibility to the country.

By examining the iconography and historical context in which measured icons were created, this discussion intends to demonstrate that the phenomenon of measured icons was a response to the new theory of autocratic governance that was developed by Ivan IV and maintained by the Romanov tsars. This autocratic structure, which would eventually develop into imperialism, demanded that dynastic succession be a safeguarded privilege of the Muscovite rulers. In this framework, measured icons were intended not only to protect the individual heirs

4 Robert K. Massie, *Peter the Great: His Life and World*, (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1980), 22-23, and I. E. Zabelin, *Domashnii byt russkih tsarei v 16 i 17 stoletiyah*, vol. 2, (Moscow: Iazyki russkoi kul'tury, 1862), 51.

and scions of the ruling family, but also to make a theological and cultural statement about the divine sanctity of the rule of the tsars.

Part One

Formal Characteristics of Measured Icons

As they were to be painted for members of the royal family, the creation of measured icons was entrusted to only the finest icon-painters in Moscow. Though it is rare for any icon to bear the signature of its creator, there are other records that indicate the caliber of the artists who worked on measured icons. It is known, for instance, that Simon Ushakov (1626–1686), one of the most famous icon-painters in the history of Russian art, purchased a cypress board on which to paint the, unfortunately no longer extant, measured icon of Peter I (1672–1725). Ushakov fell ill before it was completed, however, and another painter was engaged to finish the icon.[5]

Under Ushakov's supervision, the Kremlin Armory School was established in the 1640s to paint frescoes and icons of all sorts for both the royal family and the court. After this point, measured icons seem to have been primarily created by artists from this workshop, at least one of whom did sign his work. Kiril Ulanov (mid 1600s–1731), who was appointed to the school in 1688, inscribed the back of the 1690 measured icon of Tsarevna Feodosia Ivanovna (1690–1691) with the simple phrase, "Painted on the 7th day of June by Kiril Ulanov."[6]

Each generation of royalty seems to have commissioned measured icons from multiple artists. As each painter had his own techniques for things like composing skin tones and executing drapery, this circulation of artists lent variety and vibrancy to the otherwise fairly uniform practice of creating measured icons.[7] For example, while the Old Testament Trinity is

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5 Zabelin, 51.

6 David and Tamara Talbot Rice, *Icons and Their History*, (Woodstock: The Overlook Press, 1974), 160, and V.I. Antonova and N. E. Mneva. *Katalog drevnerusskoi zhivopisi XI-nachala XVIII v.v.* Vol. 2. (Moscow: Gosudarstvennaya tretyakovskaya gallereya, 1963), 402-403, and Zabelin, 51, though in this instance the icon is attributed to Tikhon Ivanov.

7 Vera Beaver-Bricken Espinola, "Russian Icons: Spiritual and Material Aspects," *Journal of the American Institute for Conservation*, vol. 31, no. 1, (Spring, 1992), 18-19.

included in the upper portion of nearly all measured icons, there is no regularity to the more specific placement or the execution of these miniature scenes. Decisions like these seem to have been left up to the discretion of individual painters.

The major vehicle for the decoration of a measured icon was its metal covering, or *oklad*. From as early as the middle Byzantine period (843–1204), these overlays were often used to further ornament icons that were made for members of the upper class. In addition to adding an element of luxury to an icon, these often intricately decorated coverings also provided a tactile and visual representation of the divine realm with their shining materials and their floriate, organic patterns.[8] In Russia, thin sheets of hand-stamped silver or silver gilt were being applied to select areas of icons as of the eleventh or twelfth century. By the time measured icons were being created, however, *oklads* were typically composed of thicker pieces of repoussée or chased metal and decorated with precious stones or pearls, and they also covered substantially more of the average icon's surface.[9] Measured icon *oklads* include a variety of decorative elements—including enameled surfaces, strings of pearls, inset gems, and foliate designs—that were also often used in the creation of jewelry and ecclesiastical metal-work at the time (Cat. 1, 3–9).[10] The figures of the saints in these icons are left largely uncovered, however, except where crescent-shaped decorations called *tsatas* have been placed over the painted images.

Measured icons were typically painted on very narrow boards, emphasizing the vertical axis, which was in most cases roughly three times the length of the horizontal axis. The use of

8 Bissera V. Pentcheva, "The Performative Icon," *The Art Bulletin*, vol. 88, no. 4, (December, 2006), 631. According to Pentcheva, relief icons were more popular than painted panels prior to the ninth century due to the way in which these icons managed to appeal to all five senses. The materiality which relief icons imparted was later expressed through the addition of metal covers.

9 Espinola, 19-20.

10 *Treasures of the Czars from the State Museum of the Moscow Kremlin*, exh. cat. (London: Booth-Clibborn Editions, 1995), 52, 76.

frontal facing saints on such a narrow space is unusual. Narrow compositions involving full-length depictions of saints can be found in iconostases on the Deisis tier, though in these instances the figures are often turned towards the side. Full-figure images of saints that are depicted frontally can be seen on the lower registers of mural or mosaic programs, but these images are generally presented on wide surfaces and rarely confined by narrow spaces. The prominent length of measured icons, however, demonstrates their distinguishing feature: the incorporation of an infant's birth-measurements. The entire length of a measured icon, not just the proportions of the patron saint, was determined by the length of the child.

Though the specific process of this birth-measurement is now unknown, it is likely that the shoulder-width of the child was not used and only his or her recumbent height was incorporated into the icon. This was certainly the case in the creation of a late example of the practice, made for the Grand Duchess Anastasia Mikhailovna (1860–1922) in 1860 (cat. 12). This piece was made centuries later than the other measured icons discussed here, and it differs considerably from those earlier works. Perhaps most notably, it is much wider than the others—far too wide to be reflective of the width of the Grand Duchess herself—but its length is still comparable to the lengths of measured icons made in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.[11] Meanwhile, earlier instances of the practice, while closer to the proportions of an infant, are still probably too narrow to have been based on an infant's shoulder-width.

The proportions of the more common measured icons can also be seen on a contemporary coffin-lid, made for Prince Georgii Vsevolodich of Vladimir (fig. 1).[12] A depiction of the prince is painted on the lid, and this image occupies the same space that a saint would occupy in a

11 The measured icon of Anastasia Mikhailovna is 37.5 cm wide, whereas other measured icons are between 15 and 18 cm wide.

12 Antonova, 367-368.

measured icon. Above his head there is also an icon of the Old Testament Trinity. The narrow format of the coffin-lid also alludes to the height of a human body, more specifically that of the corpse that it contained.[13]

The choice to use narrow panels does come with certain restrictions on the depictions of saints in measured icons, however. Because of the limited space, the saints are uniformly depicted frontally and with rather condensed postures. The military saints are shown in a stance of minimal contrapposto (cats. 2, 3, 7), though in most other icons they are shown in more exaggerated poses to convey their dynamism as men of action.[14] Those saints who are depicted in prayer are also shown with their hands joined in front of them rather than in the more traditional *orans* position with arms outstretched on either side (cat. 8). This frontal depiction lends a sense of intensity to the presence of the saints. They are depicted not in supplication to another figure or in scenes from their respective lives, but rather as figures whose focus is on the viewer. This feature likely facilitated a feeling of communion between the owner of the icon and his patron saint, as it allowed him to meet the holy figure's eyes as though the two were in direct conversation.

An exception to this use of frontal depictions can be seen in the measured icon of Alexis, the Man of God, that was made for Tsar Aleksei Mikhailovich (1629–1676) (cat. 4). On this icon, Alexis is depicted turned to his right with his hands outstretched before him in a gesture of supplication. Above him, rather than the Old Testament Trinity, is the Hand of God. This is the traditional way in which this saint is depicted (fig. 2). It is possible that this icon represents a new form of the practice, as it is the first measured icon known to be created after the Romanov

13 It is also worth noting, in comparison with this coffin-lid, that measured icons were placed above the tombs of their owners after their deaths. Thus they too decorate one's place of rest.

14 Henry Maguire, *Icons of their Bodies: Saints and their Images in Byzantium*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996), 50-51.

dynasty came to power. Alternately, it may represent an attempt to avoid the innovation of depicting Alexis frontally, choosing instead to maintain the time-honored format in which he is usually shown. Regardless of why this measured icon deviates from the practice, however, the change was short-lived. Measured icons created for subsequent children of Tsar Mikhail Feodorovich incorporate frontally posed saints and the Old Testament Trinity (cats. 5, 6), and the measured icon painted for Tsarevitch Aleksei Alekseevich (1654–1670) even shows Alexis, the Man of God, in this manner (cat. 8). If there were misgivings that a nontraditional frontal depiction of the saint would compromise its ability to be recognized, it would seem that the benefits of eye-contact and the inclusion of the Old Testament Trinity that the standard format of measured icons afforded outweighed these concerns in the end.

Part Two

Measurement

The feature that distinguishes measured icons as a distinct practice is not the inclusion of particular saints, scenes, or decorative techniques, but rather the incorporation of their owners' birth-measurements. It is in light of this aspect that the other features of measured icons must be considered. The deliberate inclusion of the physical dimensions of the tsar's children must have served some supernatural purpose.

It is worth noting that there is no special significance attached to the precise lengths of measured icons except in so far as they reproduce an aspect of the people that they were created for. Numerological attributions are absent from the supernatural transaction that occurs through these icons. The measurement is simply an attribute of the child that is transferred to a painted panel, establishing a sympathetic connection between the child and the icon and embedding a signifier of the owner within the piece.

The practice of giving a measured icon to a child of the tsar was intended to protect the prince or princess from harm. Measured icons accompanied their owners wherever they went, allowing the perpetual presence of their patrons to ward off dangers both physical and spiritual via the icon.[15] In this way, measured icons function much like other personalized icons, which secure holy favor for their owners through the use of different signifiers.

Before the advent of measured icons, it was not uncommon for individuals to try to focus the divine assistance that icons were believed to provide by incorporating personal references into them. This personalization was most commonly accomplished through the addition of epigrams or donor portraits. Epigrams were usually painted directly onto the surface or the

15 Zabelin, 51.

reverse side of an icon, inscribed onto its frame or metal covering, or embroidered onto a veil that covered it.[16] These inscriptions could take the form of simple statements that referred to the commissioner or donor of the icon, or they could be prayers, often in verse, that requested particular forms of aid for the supplicant. In many cases, written records of inscriptions survive, but the icons to which they were attached have been lost.[17] As an alternate method of personalization, an individual could also have a miniature depiction of himself added to an icon. These depictions are now generally referred to as donor portraits, regardless of whether or not the icon was donated or given as a personal gift.[18] Donors in these portraits are typically depicted in a posture of supplication to the main subject of the icon. These figures are also often relegated to the frames or metal covers, and do not interrupt the main composition of the image.

Both of these elements of personalization were independent of the fundamental core of the work and could potentially be appended to or removed from an icon long after its creation. With measured icons, however, the element that focuses them towards a particular person is instead inherent in their very construction. Measured icons also do not convey the same concept of the supplication of the owner to the subject that both epigrams and donor portraits do. While the incorporation of an individual's birth-measurement is a less obvious reference to the owner than is the inclusion of his name or face, it is also a more potent way of connecting the icon to the spiritual identity of the owner.

The use of particular measurements in the painting of icons is always a vehicle for the conveyance of supernatural power. Rather than simply referring to the owner by label or image,

16 Bissera V. Pentcheva, "Epigrams on Icons," *Art and Text in Byzantine Culture*, ed. L. James, (New York/Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 120.

17 Wolfram Hörander, "Epigrams on Icons and Sacred Objects: the Collection of Cod. Marc.gr. 524 Once Again," *La Poesia Tardoantica e Medievale*, (Allesandria: Edizioni dell'Orso, 1998), 124.

18 Annemarie Weyl Carr, "Donors in the Frames of Icons: Living in the Borders of Byzantine Art," *Gesta*, vol. 45/2, (Chicago: The International Center of Medieval Art, 2006), 189.

the reproduction of the owner's measurements in the creation of measured icons creates a contiguous sympathetic relationship wherein an established connection remains in effect perpetually. Measured icons are not the only instance in which supernatural links are established through the use of measurements or proportions. In both architecture and the icon tradition at large, measurement has been used to convey the reproduction of the spiritual essence of a valued prototype.

The incorporation of measurements as a tool for reproducing spiritual potency or for embodying absent forms is often employed in medieval architecture. If a church built during this time partook of the form or dimensions of an esteemed prototype, it was considered to have replicated the spiritual essence of the latter in a new, often distant, location. This was true in both the Catholic West and in the Orthodox East. Mathematical fidelity to the specific proportions and dimensions of the prototype, however, was not necessarily a factor in the building of these architectural "copies." Many churches that are the products of attempts to reproduce important structures contain similarities to their originals that are not very recognizable to the modern eye.

Churches built in emulation of the Holy Sepulcher, for instance, often bore little visual resemblance to one another or to their prototype in Jerusalem. The Anastasis Rotunda that they sought to copy was a round structure with an ambulatory surmounted by a gallery, the central room of which was surrounded by twenty supports. Many churches that claim to have been based upon the measurements of this structure, however, are polygonal or oblong rather than round, and they often eliminate the gallery entirely or include a different numbers of supports. There seems to have been a conflation of the concept of roundness with radial symmetry, and a polygonal structure could incorporate a numerologically significant number of sides. Eight was

believed to be symbolic of the resurrection, and "copies" of the Holy Sepulcher were Christ rose from the dead are often built on octagonal plans. Rather than dwelling upon visible similarities, it would seem that medieval architects prioritized the symbolic layers of building plans, and the dedications that were attributed to them.[19]

Structures that adhere to specific proportions are less common, though not unheard of. The church of St. Polyeuktos, which was built in Constantinople around 525 CE, was laid out as a 100 cubit by 100 cubit square.[20] Based upon these measurements and the decorative scheme—which included palm trees, pomegranates, lilies, and golden vines—it has been proposed that this church was designed as a reproduction of the Temple of Solomon in Jerusalem.[21] This is further corroborated by a poem inscribed on the church in which the patron, Anicia Juliana (462–528) is said to have "alone...conquered time and surpassed the wisdom of the celebrated Solomon, raising a temple to receive God."[22] The construction of this church is presented within the poem as a feat not just equal to but in fact greater than the creation of the Temple. This church, based upon the dimensions specified in the Bible, is rare in its adherence to the specific proportions of its prototype, however. The Church of St. Polyeuktos is also of particular interest to this discussion, as the aforementioned poem implies that Anicia Juliana may have embarked upon this building project as a statement in support of the dynastic legitimacy of her family and in protest of the accession of, first, the Emperor Justin (450–527) and later Justinian (482–565) as

19 This concept is best described by Richard Krautheimer in his article "Introduction to an "Iconography of Medieval Architecture"," *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes*, vol. 5, (1942), 1-33.

20 R.M. Harrison, "The Church of St. Polyeuktos in Istanbul and the Temple of Solomon," *Harvard Ukrainian Studies*, vol. 7, (1984), 276-279

21 These are the measurements and decorations which are described in the biblical accounts of the Temple. The church did not incorporate cherubim, which while present in the decorative scheme of the Temple were never clearly described in the Bible, but replaced these with peacocks which fulfilled a similar role as winged, many-eyed creatures which symbolize royalty. Martin Harrison, *A Temple for Byzantium: the Discovery and Excavation of Anicia Juliana's Palace-Church in Istanbul*, (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1989), 139.

22 Ibid., 138.

well.[23] Like measured icons, this church may have asserted a dynastic claim by referring to the perceived sacred authority of a particular lineage.

In the icon tradition as in architecture, measurement primarily is used to create copies of particularly valuable or powerful works. All icons were considered sacred objects, and as such they were the focus of veneration, but certain icons were considered to be especially imbued with grace, and they were thus the objects of particularly enthusiastic devotion. These pieces were associated with the performance of miracles, and they were thus perceived to demonstrate the active presence of the divine will. There were several ways in which an icon could be determined to demonstrate miraculous power. Some miracle-working icons made themselves known through physical phenomena such as the production of oil or the ability to repair themselves. Some made their locations known to the public through dreams and visions, while still others, the so-called "epiphanic" icons, were incidentally discovered in unexpected locations like wells or trees.[24] Regardless of the mode of their revelation, however, when these icons were discovered they became the focus of popular attention, and they would develop cults of believers who sought their aid for healing or protection. While ecclesiastical authorities were often at pains to suppress the observance of such cults that operated without the Church's verification and consent, many miracle-working icons were actually approved as authentic and even became regarded as national protectors and evidence of God's favor for Russia.[25]

Whenever an icon was established as miraculous, it also became common for it to be copied, as a reproduction of a miraculous icon was believed to possess the same potency as the original. This belief seems at first to confuse the issue of what differentiates miraculous icons

23 Ibid., 7, 138-139.
24 Vera Shevzov, "Miracle-Working Icons, Laity, and Authority in the Russian Orthodox Church, 1861-1917," *Russian Review*, vol. 58, no.1, (January, 1999), 28-29.
25 Ibid., 28.

from their counterparts and why they are thought capable of offering extraordinary aid. The theological basis for the veneration of all icons, however, clearly establishes that the object of veneration, and hence the source of any miraculous aid, is not the physical object itself but rather the holy prototype depicted upon it. As such, the attribution of miraculous powers to a particular painted panel would be heretical and idolatrous. Instead, the supernatural power of miracle-working icons is believed to be a response to compositions that recreate the image of the prototype with exceptional faithfulness. Supreme among these compositions are those that have a direct connection to their subjects, like the icons of the Mother of God that were based upon a legendary icon painted from life by St. Luke or the "image-not-made-by-human-hands" that represents the face of Christ as it was imprinted upon a piece of cloth.[26] If such compositions were faithfully reproduced, it was supposed, then the miraculous power that their original icons had harnessed would be equally present in all subsequent copies. Pavel Florensky asserts that "the spiritual content of these copies is not something new (when compared to the prototype) nor is it something similar; rather the spiritual content is exactly the same."[27]

Instances of ecclesiatical architecture and the icon tradition frequently copy one or more physical attributes of a potent forerunner in order to replicate its spiritual essence. Measured icons appear to confound this dynamic by incorporating the heights of individual persons rather than a visible aspect of an accepted and acknowledged source of religious power. A potential parallel to this practice can be seen in the veneration of the relics of saints, however. The height

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26 Hans Belting, *Likeness and Presence,* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994), 49, 58-59. See also *The Oxford Dictionary of Byzantium*, s.v. "Acheiropoieta," vol. 1, 12, for a discussion of all miraculously occuring images, and "Mandylion," vol. 2, 1282-1283 for the miraculous image of Christ imprinted upon a cloth towel.

27 Pavel Florensky, *Iconostasis*, trans. Donald Sheehan and Olga Andrejev, (Crestwood: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1996), 74. See also Vera Shevzov, "Icons, Miracles, and the Ecclesial Identity of Laity in Late Imperial Russian Orthodoxy," *Church History*, vol. 69, no. 3, (Sept., 2000), 625 for a discussion of historical perspectives on the spiritual content of copied icons.

of the owner is a physical trace of his time on earth, just as pieces of the bodies of saints attest to their worldly lives and provide access to their miracle-working powers after their death.

The family of the Muscovite tsar had a privileged connection to saintly relics. Relics in jeweled pectorals that were often shaped like crosses were used in the baptismal rites of all the tsars.[28] These cruciform *enkolpia* were generally worn by high ranking clergy-members over their vestments (fig. 3).[29] *Enkolpia* that contain relics are occasionally called *panagiai*, a term which is also used to refer to certain depictions of the Mother of God and to the vessel in which blessed bread dedicated to the Virgin during the liturgy is placed. While many members of the Russian Orthodox Church wore pectoral crosses, or *tel'nik,* under their clothes, only clergy and the family of the tsars wore these sumptuously decorated reliquaries.[30] The possession of this type of *enkolpion* thus became a symbol of one's royal status.[31] They were generally passed down as heirlooms from generation to generation, but on occasion they were donated to cathedrals or monasteries in order to commemorate important events in the family's history. Some of the most important relics the royal family owned were contained in these *panagiai*, including pieces of the true cross, the bones of St. John the Baptist, and the relics of various highly-venerated Russian saints. P*anagiai enkolpia* were believed to protect their owners and to assist them in all their undertakings, and within the royal family they were used both as part of parental blessings at wedding ceremonies and to bless infants at their christenings.[32].

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28 This practice ended during the rule of Peter I. *The Sacred Art of Russia from Ivan the Terrible to Peter the Great*, exh, cat. (Atlanta: Georgia International Cultural Exchange, Inc., 1995), 123.

29 *Enkolpia* refers to an icon or religious artifact worn about the neck.

30 *The Sacred Art of Russia,* 84, 123-124.

31 Yuri Piatnitsky, "Sinai, Byzantium and Russia," in *Sinai, Byzantium, Russia*, exh. cat. (St. Petersburg: Saint Catherine Foundation, 2000), 30-32.

32 *Sinai, Byzantium, Russia*, exh. cat. (St. Petersburg: Saint Catherine Foundation, 2000), 264, 286-287

Relics in general were prominent features of the baptismal rites of the Muscovite royal family. The *Stepetsnaia Kniga* provides an account of Ivan IV's baptism. This event was apparently marked by "unusual holiness" (*ne obychnoyu svyatostiyu*) as compared to the baptisms of other Russian princely children.[33] On September 4th, 1530, ten days after his birth, Ivan IV was taken to the Trinity-Sergius Monastery,[34] where he was baptized by the highest ranking monks, who also acted as his godfathers. After he was lifted from the font, he was then placed in a creche in front of the relics of the monastery's founder, St. Sergius of Radonezh. This act used the relics to sanctify the newly-baptized child as an heir to the Grand Prince of Moscow, but it also placed the physical child into the sacred space that was reserved for the relics of a venerated saint. The royal child's admission into this space signifies a closer connection to these spiritual artifacts than even the clergy possessed.

Also present at the baptisms of royal children were their measured icons. These works, while not precisely relics, were very similar to them in some ways. The incorporation of the children's birth-lengths into their respective measured icons attested to their earthly forms in the same way that the bodily remains that comprise a relic attest to the life of a saint. Unlike bodily remains that are adopted as relics, however, the dimensions of measured icons are defined at the time of the owner's birth. Emphasizing the time of birth was rare at this time in Russia, when the date of one's death was often considered a more important event. Birth represented only the beginning of the transitory and ephemeral earthly life, but death marked the beginning of eternal life in the divine world. This emphasis on the time of one's death can be seen on the tombs of the royal family in the Archangel Cathedral, where death-dates are recorded but dates-of-birth are

33 Zabelin, 15-16.

34 The importance of this monastery and its founder to the Grand Princes of Moscow is further discussed in the next section.

omitted.[35] The dimensions of the measured icons above these tombs are the only references to the births of the royal personages interred therein.

Measured icons were presented to their owners at their baptisms, however, which represented a symbolic death and rebirth into the faith. These icons may thus be considered to relate to the times of their respective owners' deaths in an indirect sense. The measurement of the infants may also have related more to their spiritual bodies than to their physical forms. In icons of the Dormition of the Mother of God, the soul of the Virgin is represented as an infant, thus likening the purified soul to a newborn child.[36] The purpose of measuring the children of the tsar when they were infants may then have been intended to create an image of their spiritual, eternal bodies rather than their transitory and physical natal forms.

This theory is further supported by another birth-practice of the royal family. In addition to being measured, royal infants each also had a lock of their hair removed at birth. These locks would subsequently be encased in wax, placed into medallions (fig. 4), and transferred to a cathedral (presumably the Annunciation Cathedral or the Archangel Cathedral in the Moscow Kremlin) for safekeeping.[37] This practice was intended to protect the children from suffering. The exact mechanism presumed to underlie this protection is today unknown, but it seems to also be predicated on the assumption of the connection between the physical body in its infancy and the spiritual self. By preserving a piece of the infant body intact, they may have hoped that the spirit would be similarly defended. These medallions have also been preserved even after the deaths of their owners, much like the physical remains of saints are retained and afforded special veneration.

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35 I.L. Buseva-Davydova, *Hramy moskovskogo kremlya: svyatyni i drevnosti*, (Moscow: MAIK Nauka, 1997), 115.
36 *The Oxford Dictionary of Byzantium*, s.v. "Dormition," vol. 1, 651–653.
37 *Czars: 400 Years of Imperial Grandeur*, exh. cat. (Memphis: Wonders, 2002), 64.

In addition to protecting their owners during their lives and sanctifying their tombs after their deaths, measured icons also demonstrated the exalted spiritual position that the Muscovite royal family sought to occupy in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. By incorporating the physical heights of the scions of the family, these icons replicated metaphysical prototypes, just as copies of icons and churches reproduced the power of their originals. In the case of this practice, however, the prototype was the royal lineage of Orthodox Russian rulers.

Part Three

The Holy Trinity

The inclusion of a miniature depiction of the Old Testament Trinity is another distinctive aspect of measured icons. The presence of this scene is useful in identifying examples of the practice, as it presents a relatively unique composition that is comprised of a narrow icon with a frontally depicted saint, above the head of which appears the Old Testament Trinity. Alternately referred to as the Holy Trinity (*troitsa*) or the Hospitality of Abraham, this secondary icon is present on every surviving measured icon except one: a late example of the practice that was created in 1860.

The Old Testament Trinity depicts the events of Genesis 18:1–15, in which God appears to Abraham on the Plain of Mamre in the guise of three men. As they rest at his tent, Abraham washes the feet of his divine visitors and has food prepared for them in accordance with the laws of hospitality as mandated by God. Having refreshed themselves, the visitors then reveal their divine natures and promise Abraham that his wife Sarah will bear a son, and that he will be the progenitor of a great nation.[38]

This section provides a comprehensive reading of the Old Testament Trinity in the context of measured icons. By the time measured icons were first created, depictions of this scene had already been used in several historical and theological arguments. What follows is an overview of this conversation, which will explain the meaning that the Old Testament Trinity communicated to the Orthodox tsars of Moscow, and to reveal the application of this meaning to icons specific to the royal family. This reading will address not only the theological and iconographic meanings attached to the depiction of the Trinity, but also its historical connection

38 Genesis 18: 18

to Russian Orthodoxy and Muscovite power, as well as its narrative relationship to the aspirations of the tsars.[39]

There is a biblical and genitive aspect to this reading that directly relates to the practice of creating measured icons. The story of the Hospitality of Abraham deals specifically with the propagation of Abraham's line in spite of the difficulties presented by Abraham and Sarah's advanced age. The angels indicate that Abraham shall beget "a great and mighty nation," and that "he will command his children and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the Lord, to do justice and judgment." Thus, the promise of children to Abraham refers not only to the continuance of his line, but also to the establishment of a dynasty that will rule with God's blessing.

If the biblical narrative of God's promise to Abraham and Sarah is taken into consideration in the depiction of the Holy Trinity on measured icons, one can interpret the inclusion as an attempt to secure the same divine blessing for the royal family of Russia. By incorporating the Holy Trinity into icons given to each child born to a tsar, the family acknowledges God's power. With this action, the rulers of Russia hope for the same assurance of progeny that Abraham received, even under unlikely circumstances that may require miraculous intervention, and for divine support of their rule as Orthodox tsars who will "keep the way of the Lord."

The Hospitality of Abraham, as a biblical event and as an iconographic scene, was central to certain apologetic arguments concerning the Christian faith and the belief in a triune deity. When confronted with the expansion of Islam into Syria, Palestine, and Egypt, Byzantine

39 As evidence of the popularity of the motif in Russia, it is worth noting that the Holy Trinity was included in the center of the highest register of all traditional Russian iconostases. Leonid Ouspensky, *Theology of the Icon*, vol. 2, (Crestwood: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1992), 276.

theologians sought new ways to demonstrate the orthodoxy of their belief in the Trinity.[40] In 1360, John VI Cantacuzenus (1292–1383), who had by then abdicated his role as emperor and taken holy vows under the new name Joasaph, wrote a treatise entitled *Apology Against Islam* as a defense of the Trinitarian dogma and the divine nature of Christ.[41] While Islam does not accept the view of God as a being composed of three persons in one nature, it does consider the Old Testament to be its foundational text and Abraham to be its founder. Capitalizing on this, the treatise argues that God's apparition to Abraham in the guise of three visitors was a prefiguration of the tripartite nature of God, as Abraham refers to one of the angelic figures as "Lord." Since God himself cannot appear in human form, Cantacuzenus claims that the figure to whom Abraham spoke must have been Christ as one of the distinct persons of God in the form of an angel.[42] This argument reaffirmed the correctness of the Christian interpretation of the Old Testament in contradiction to the Muslim understanding of God as having a single person and nature. The frontispiece to the *Apology Against Islam* depicts Cantcuzenus as both Emperor John VI and as the monk Joasaph (fig. 5). Above the heads of these depictions of the author is a miniature depiction of the Holy Trinity, the visual manifestation of his argument. The format that would later be used on measured icons seems to echo this image.

The Trinitarian interpretation of the Hospitality of Abraham was a product of Byzantine theology, but it was accepted and discussed in Russia as well. At the Second Council of Moscow in 1553–54, this was once again confirmed as the proper interpretation of icons depicting the

40 Belting, 195.

41 Iohannis Spatharakis, *The Portrait in Byzantine Illuminated Manuscripts*, (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1976), 135-136.

42 This argument recalls the incarnational defense of icons put forth by St. John of Damascus, who stated that it was possible to "depict the invisible god, not as invisible, but as he became visible for our sake, by participation in flesh and blood" through the embodiment of Christ. St. John of Damascus, *Three Treatises on the Divine Images*, trans. Andrew Louth, (Crestwood: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2003).

visitors to Abraham at Mamre.[43] Several speakers even went so far as to condemn alternate depictions of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit as unnecesary innovations, and the Old Testament Trinity remained the preferred manner of depicting the Trinity in Orthodox Russia. It was decided at that same council, however, that it was not necessary to include the traditional label near the center angel that identified it as a representation of the Logos or Christ. This council took place shortly before the first measured icons were created for the children of Ivan IV, and it thus presents an understanding of the iconographic scene that is contemporary to the period in which they were created.

The Trinitarian argument was not, however, the only intellectual dimension that was attributed to the Old Testament Trinity at this time. In the late fifteenth century, a work was published under the title *Message to an Iconographer*. Iosif Volotsky (1440–1515) is assumed to be the author of this work, and it was presumably directed to the master icon-painter Dionysius (1440–1502) and his studio.[44] While much of this work is concerned with addressing schools of iconoclastic thought which were circulating at the time, it also includes a treatise that specifically addresses the depiction of the Old Testament Trinity. This second treatise is "addressed to every Christian," and it asserts the need for images of the Holy Trinity. It claims that the Trinity cannot be described in words, despite the best efforts of prophets and theologians alike. Rather, the Holy Trinity must be visually represented as

> it appeared to Abraham in a sensory manner, in human form, as it wished to appear, as it demanded to be represented. Starting from this visible aspect, our mind and spirit ascend toward the love of God, object of all desire. What is

43 Ouspensky, 291-297.

44 Despite evidence put forth by Ia. S. Lurié that the author of the *Message* was more likely St. Nilus of Sora than St. Iosif Volotsky, St. Iosif did include the *Message* in his work *The Intstructor* (*Prosvetitel*). Ouspensky, 264.

> venerated is not the object, but the beholding and the beauty of the divine image.[45]

This passage concerning the Holy Trinity not only expresses the importance of the icon type to Russian Orthodoxy, but it also makes a statement about the very practices of painting and venerating icons.

Implicit in the idea that God demanded to be represented to our senses as he appeared to Abraham is the belief that it is the divine will that icons be created so that sacred truths may be expressed.[46] The visual and perceivable beauty of icons is here considered to be indicative of the spiritual beauty that they represent. In regarding an icon, the *Message* states that one is afforded the unique opportunity to perceive and contemplate the transcendent spiritual reality that it represents. The act of venerating an icon is therefore considered to be central to the spiritual rebirth of the faithful, allowing them to perceive the world of the senses in a spiritual manner.

The *Message* encourages the production of icons made according to ancient precedents as objects of devotion, and it is from this context that it addresses the iconoclastic trends of its time.[47] Much of the *Message* is directed towards a denial of "Judaizing" iconoclasm—which insisted that Judaic injunctions against graven images and idolatry be applied to Orthodox Christianity—and the assertion that icons are in line with the will of God reflects this denial. The Holy Trinity, as an expression of God's will that He be depicted visually and as an iconographic scene validated by tradition, is therefore employed once again as a polemical motif, though here it is directed towards a heretical movement rather than a foreign faith.

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45 Ibid., 267.

46 This again recalls the argument of St. John of Damascus concerning the incarnation of Christ as a justification for visible depictions of the divine.

47 Ouspensky, 270 and Mikhail Andreevich Ilyin, *Zagorsk*, (Leningrad: Avrora, 1971), 7-8.

The inclusion of the Holy Trinity also communicates a historical message of imperial importance, one which is intimately connected to the Trinity-Sergius Monastery. Located approximately 80 kilometers northeast of Moscow, this monastery was established by St. Sergius of Radonezh (1314–1392). It holds a privileged place in the history and identity of Russia, and it was long considered to be one of the spiritual hearts of the nation. The Grand Princes of Moscow and, later, the tsars all held St. Sergius and the monastery that he founded in particular esteem.

The hagiographic accounts of the saint's life state that he supported the Grand Prince Dmitrii Donskoi (1350–1389), urged the ruler to defend Russia against the Mongol forces of the Emir Mamai, and even miraculously interceded to secure Dmitrii's victory at the Battle of Kulikovo Field. In the dedication of his monastery, the Trinity came to be seen once again as a defense of the Orthodox faith against Islamic enemies, though this time those enemies were Tartar overlords instead of the encroaching Ottoman Turks who had threatened the Byzantine empire of John VI. As the cult of the saint rose in popularity, Sergius came to be seen as a sort of patron saint of Moscow autocrats, and he was formally recognized as a patron saint of Russia in 1422. The monastery that he founded was thus understandably dear to the Muscovite rulers.[48]

By the time of the reign of Ivan III in the latter half of the fifteenth century, it was common practice for the Grand Princes of Moscow to make pilgrimages to the monastery, both in supplication and in celebration. Most importantly to this study, the Trinity Monastery had also become the traditional location for the baptism of Moscow's royalty after the christening of Ivan III (1440–1505)[49] Measured icons were given to their respective owners as gifts at these ceremonies, and they would thus include a reference to the monastery where the ritual had taken

48 David B. Miller, *Saint Sergius of Radonezh: His Trinity Monastery, and the Formation of the Russian Identity*, (Dekalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 2010), 63 and David Miller, "The Cult of Saint Sergius of Radonezh and Its Political Uses," *Slavic Review*, vol. 52, no. 4. (Winter, 1993), 685-686.

49 Miller, *Saint Sergius*., 87.

place on the surface of the icon. Measured icons themselves could therefore be read as a reaffirmation of the intimate connection between the tsars and the monastery and cult of St. Sergius.

The time at which the practice of creating measured icons emerged may also reflect this connection. St. Sergius is said to have addressed Dmitrii as "our lord and Russian Tsar, thou art the pastor of the whole Christian flock."[50] According to St. Sergius's biographer, Epiphanius the Wise (mid 14th c.–1420), he dedicated his monastery as he did "so that contemplation of the Holy Trinity might conquer the fear of this world's detestable discord."[51] Whether or not the saint ever expressed such a position, he came to be seen as a symbol for the unification of Russia under the authority of Muscovite autocrats. St. Sergius's support of Dmitrii Donskoi was depicted as a call not only to throw off the Tartar yoke but also to end the conflicts between the various ruling families of Russia. The Holy Trinity, comprised of three persons in one nature, could be seen then as a cosmological parallel to the unification of "all the Russias" under the rule of Moscow's Grand Princes.

This concept would have been particularly appealing to Ivan IV, who instated the practice of creating measured icons, and again to the Romanovs who maintained the practice under a new dynasty. Ivan IV was consistently engaged, not only with expansion and the consolidation of new territories such as Kazan, but also with the suppression of threats to his authority within the empire, both real and perceived. The establishment of the *Oprichnina* was one such action, in which the power of the Boyar aristocracy was curtailed by land seizures, executions, and repressions, enforced by a secret police which answered directly and exclusively to the tsar.[52]

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50 Ibid., 64.
51 Ouspensky, 256.
52 Isabel de Madariaga, *Ivan the Terrible: First Tsar of Russia*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2005), 174-188.

Similarly the Romanovs came to power shortly after a period of civil war and usurpers to the throne, known as the Time of Troubles. It was during this time that Fyodor Nikitich Romanov (1553–1633), the subsequent Patriarch of Moscow and All Russia and father of Tsar Mikhail Fyodorovich Romanov (1596–1645), was stripped of his position among the aristocracy and forced to take holy vows, adopting the name Filaret. Fyodor Nikitich had been well placed to assume power after the death of the last Riurik tsar, but it was during his captivity among the Polish forces at Smolensk that his son Mikhail was elected to the throne by the *Zemsky Sobor*, or national assembly, and the Romanov dynasty was established. Upon his release from captivity, the newly appointed Patriarch and his royal son went about consolidating Russian power among the divisive aristocracy and repelling the Polish forces which threatened the sovereignty of Moscow.[53] It is at these points that the phenomenon of measured icons is most apparent. Measured icons, in referring to the Trinity Monastery, recall St. Sergius's support of Moscow's rulers against internal and external threats. Ivan IV and the Romanov Tsars Mikhail Fyodorovich and Alexei Mikhailovich were likening themselves to Dmitrii Donskoi as pious rulers whose authority was confirmed by the Trinity Monastery, just as Dmitrii was confirmed by the saint who founded it.[54]

The interpretation of measured icons as methods for assuring the continuance of a dynasty of rulers is further supported by the fact that St. Sergius was also believed to have

53 W. Bruce Lincoln, *Romanovs: Autocrats of All the Russias*, (Garden City: Anchor Books, 1981), 25-37 and J. L. H. Keep, "The Regime of Filaret 1619-1633," *The Slavonic and East European Review*, vol. 38, no. 91, (June 1960), 335-336.

54 It is notable that both Ivan IV and Mikhail Fyodorovich had powerful ecclesiastics associated with them, who in some ways shared the burden of rule and would probably have been consulted in the establishment of a new icon program, or the continuance of a recently developed practice. In the case of Ivan the Terrible, this man would have been the Archpriest Silvester, and in the case of Mikhail Fyodorovich it would have been his father, the Patriarch Filaret. See Keep, and Carolyn Johnston Pouncy, "The Blessed Sil'vestr and the Politics of Invention in Muscovy 1545-1700," *Harvard Ukrainian Studies*, vol. 19, (1995), 548-572.

miraculous powers of ensuring fertility. In 1499, Sophia Paleologa (1455–1503) donated an icon cloth to the Trinity Monastery in an attempt to solidify her son Vasilii's claim as heir apparent to Ivan III over Ivan's grandson from a previous marriage, Dmitrii. The icon cloth featured not only a depiction of the Old Testament Trinity among its embroidered panels, but also a series of intercessory and patron figures which Isolde Thyret has explicated as a directed message of confirmation for Vasilii's succession.[55]

In the 1560s, the circle of Metropolitan Macarius expanded the story of Sophia's donation to the monastery, claiming that the tsaritsa had also made a pilgrimage to the Trinity Monastery to pray for a son.[56] As she made her way to the monastery, she had a vision in which St. Sergius appeared to her and thrust a male child on her. By the time this story circulated, several subsequent tsaritsas had donated icon cloths that were inspired by Sophia's donation and that included depictions of the Holy Trinity, but these were all directed towards the hope for children rather than the confirmation of succession. Both of Vasilii's wives made donations and pilgrimages to the monastery in the hopes of conceiving male heirs, and the icon cloth that his first wife Solomoniia (1490–1542) donated included an appeal to God that He grant her "the fruit of the womb."[57] The connection between St. Sergius and the conception of heirs had already by this point become a matter of tradition.

For these reasons, the Trinity Monastery and the image to which it was dedicated would have been very appealing at the time in which measured icons first surfaced. The father of Ivan IV, Vasilii III (1479–1533), had to compete with his nephew Dmitrii for succession to the throne,

55 For more information on the icon cloth of Sophia Paleologa, see Miller, *Saint Sergius,* 84-86 and 182-183, Ilyin, 68-71, and Isolde Thyret, "Blessed is the Tsaritsa's Womb: the Myth of Miraculous Birth and Royal Motherhood in Muscovite Russia," *Russian Review*, vol. 53, no. 4, (October, 1994), 480-484.

56 Miller, *Saint Sergius,* 192.

57 Ibid., 183. This appeal was not successful, and Solomoniia was divorced by Vasilii for failing to provide heirs.

and his claim was often called into doubt. At the time of Vasilii's death, Ivan IV was only three years old, and his reign and life were placed under the often tenuous protection of a corrupt and vicious council who had sworn an oath to his father. Ivan's son Dmitrii even faced a potential coup in 1553, when Ivan fell ill and the boyars feared the rule of another infant tsar. This crisis led to Ivan's final break from the Archpriest Silvester and his cousin Vladimir Staritsa (1533–1569), the two of whom he believed had orchestrated this insurrection.[58] In such times of dynastic uncertainty and contested rule, any measure of divine assurance for the continuation of one's line would have been an invaluable source of comfort.

In this respect, measured icons may have addressed the same concern as did the icon cloths donated by the tsaritsas to the Trinity Monastery. The Holy Trinity, both as shorthand for the reverence of St. Sergius and his monastery and as a reference to the miraculous propagation of Abraham, can be seen as a form of thanksgiving for the child to whom the icon was given as well as an appeal for the dynastic continuance of the bloodline and tsardom through them. It is notable, therefore, that the only measured icon which was not created for a direct descendent of the tsar is also the only known icon of this sort to omit the Old Testament Trinity in the upper register of the icon. The absence of the Holy Trinity on this instance of the practice from 1860 (cat. 12) confirms that the scene did in fact have imperial and dynastic connotations.

The presence of the Holy Trinity on measured icons cannot be read exclusively in terms of either its theological and iconographic meanings or its applicability to the autocrats of Moscow, as both of these aspects would have been equally present to those who created and owned the icons. Taken in concert however, these various layers of meaning reveal a cohesive statement on the role and nature of the royal family. The image of the Old Testament Trinity

58 De Madariaga, 107-111.

refers both to the fundamental belief of Orthodox Christianity in the three persons of God and to the practice of creating icons which were so central to the observance of the faith. The tsars came to be seen as defenders of the Orthodox faith, whose rule was divinely confirmed according to their piety and the extent to which they upheld those beliefs to which the Old Testament Trinity refers. This exalted role as well as the dynastic implications of measured icons and the growing connection between the Imperial family and the Trinity Monastery speak to the aura of sanctity which the tsars began to develop at the time.

Conclusion

Measured icons responded to the time in which they were created. As the royal family of Moscow became the autocrats of all Russia, these icons provided confirmation and protection of the newly established tsardom.

Measured icons were certainly luxury items particular to the ruling family. Their silver gilt *oklads*, encrusted with precious stones and finely worked by metalsmiths, demonstrated the wealth that the powerful Muscovite rulers had at their disposal. The fine quality of their construction, accomplished by the finest icon-painters in Russia, demonstrated the tsar's patronage of the arts and his appreciation for the theologically and culturally important icon tradition.

Measured icons also provide insight into the spiritual dimensions of the tsardom itself. By incorporating the height of a princely infant, these pieces embody the exalted essence of the Orthodox rulers and their families, much as copies of churches and miraculous icons are believed to be able to replicate the potency of the most highly valued cornerstones of the Orthodox faith. In this way, measured icons function in a manner similar to relics, an identification that demonstrates the spiritual authority of the ruling family that informs their secular power even as it remains separate from it.

The divine right of the tsars is made further evident by the inclusion of the Old Testament Trinity on the surface of these icons. The tsars are likened to Abraham, to whom God promised a lineage of powerful and holy kings. Like the Old Testament patriarch, the tsars hoped to enjoy divine protection for their dynasty, the rule of which was ordained by God. The miniaturized Old Testament Trinity also refers to the Orthodox tsar's responsibility as the defender of the faith, by

recalling the use of this scene in apologetic arguments in support of the belief in the tripartite nature of god and against Islam. Furthermore, this scene is indicative of the Church's support of the rulers of Moscow, as it associates measured icons with the Trinity-Sergius Monastery that had supported the Grand Princes of Moscow since the time of its founder and that remained a focal point in the religious identity of the Russian capital.

It is likely true that the Riurik and Romanov dynasties could have achieved the political and ideological goals of unifying Russia under a single ruler without the assistance of measured icons. These works did uniquely provide a statement of identity for the newly established autocrats, however, that concisely expressed various layered meanings in a way that could stay with each member of the family throughout his life. For the modern scholar, they also provide a lens through which to make sense of the drastic changes that were occurring in the political and ecclesiastical climate of Russia during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, as the nation adopted a unified identity in which the rule of the tsars would play an integral role.

Fig. 1 Coffin–lid of Prince Georgii Vsevolodich of Vladimir, 1645

Fig. 2 Icon of Alexis the Man of God and St. Mary of Egypt, Rudakov Jacob Kazanets, 1648

Fig. 3 Jeweled Cross used in the christening of tsarevitch Ivan Ivanovitch

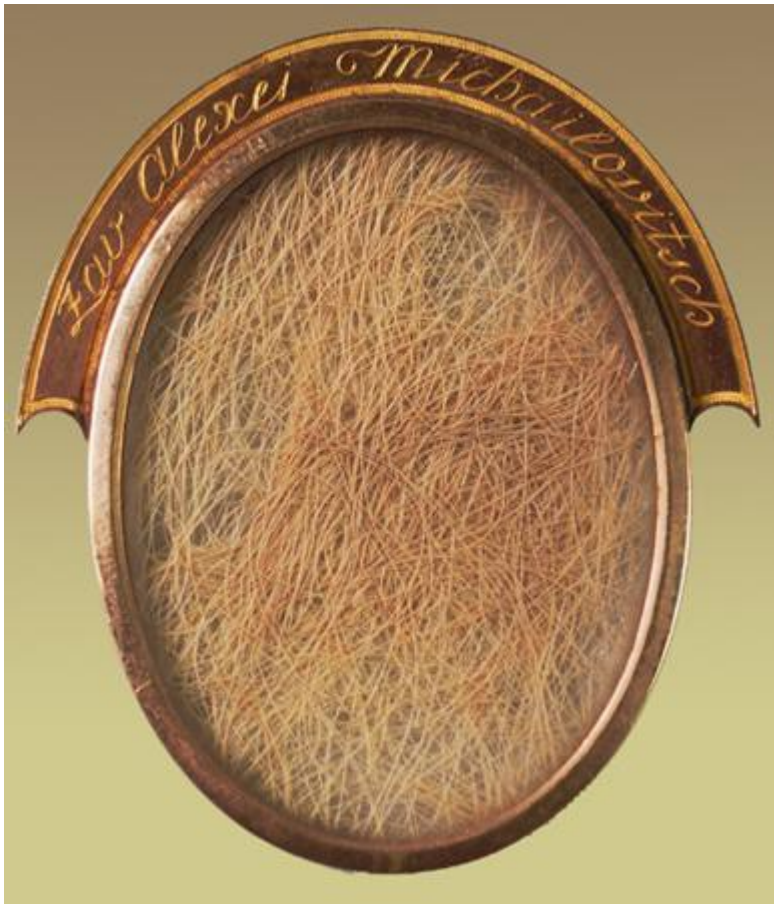


Fig. 4 Medallion containing the hair of Tsar Aleksei Mikhailovich

Fig. 5 John VI as emperor and monk Joasaph

Catalogue

1. Icon of St. John Climacus

Russia, Moscow, Moscow Kremlin workshops 1554

Wood, gesso ground, egg tempera, pearls, fabric, gold, embossing, precious stones, filigree, enamel, niello.

48.3 x 14.5 cm

Archangel Cathedral, State Museum of the Moscow Kremlin

Oklad:

The *oklad* is gold or gilt–silver with filigree, decorated with enamel and precious stones. The enamel forms floral patterns. The precious stones are inlaid along the frame and in the saint's halo. A narrow strip connects the frame to a metal decoration surrounding the depiction of the Old Testament Trinity. The inscription identifying the saint is placed just below the register containing the Old Testament Trinity.

Saint:

This icon depicts St. John Climacus, a monk and theologian from the *Vatos* monastery at Mount Sinai, now known as St. Catherine's Monastery. St. John is depicted in a monk's robes of dark blue and brown, with a stole depicting the Cross of Golgotha in the front. His beard is long, with a defined mustache and his hair is parted in the middle. The hair is painted in dark shades of gray. The skin tone of the saint is dark and his features are heavily shaded, emphasizing features such as his prominent cheek–bones. St. John is often depicted holding a scroll which represents his treatise "the Divine Ladder," but on this icon he is shown holding his hands in front of him, his palms towards his chest. The painted portion of this icon was restored in the nineteenth century.

This icon was made for Ivan Ivanovich (1554–1581), the second son of Ivan IV, who was killed by his father in a fit of rage.

Old Testament Trinity:

The angels of the Old Testament Trinity are depicted against a blue background which recalls the highlights of the saint's robes. They are arranged around a circular table, the features of which are largely communicated by the metal covering.

Bibliography:

http://www.kreml.ru/en/virtual/exposition/wordChildhood/Christian_relics/ (April 5, 2013)

2. Icon of St. Theodore Stratelates

1555

Wood, gesso ground, egg tempera

Measurements not listed

Archangel Cathedral, State Museum of the Moscow Kremlin

Oklad:

The *oklad* is missing or no longer extant for this icon.

Saint:

St. Theodore was a military commander in Heraclea–Pontia, who was martyred for destroying pagan idols. A warrior saint, the figure is depicted in Byzantine military garb with a red cape over golden and silver armor. His hair and beard are brown and curled. While frontally posed, St. Theodore is shown standing in a slight contrapposto with his right shoulder slightly raised and his hips slightly swaying to his left. To accommodate for the narrow field of the icon, the saint's shield is depicted as though from the side and the spear is held diagonally in front of him. The saint is shown against a green background.

This icon belonged to Feodor Ivanovich (1557–1598), the second son of Ivan IV and his successor as Tsar.

Old Testament Trinity:

The Old Testament Trinity is shown in a rectangular register above the saint's head. The three angelic visitors are arranged around a low rectangular table, as Abraham and Sarah look over their wings from behind.

Bibliography:

http://www.kreml.ru/en/virtual/exposition/wordChildhood/Christian_relics/ (April 5, 2013)

3. Icon of St. Demetrius of Thessaloniki

1582

Wood, gesso ground, egg tempera, silver, gilding, repoussé

Measurements not listed

Archangel Cathedral, State Museum of the Moscow Kremlin

Oklad:

The *oklad* on this icon is beaten silver, with floral decorations in repoussée. It is in disrepair, with flaking on the frame and surrounding the halo, which appears to be a newer addition. Small silver halos are placed around the heads of the Old Testament Trinity, and the building, tree, and mountain in the background are outlined by the *oklad.* The inscription identifying the saint is set at the saint's shoulder.

Saint:

The saint depicted on this icon is St. Demetrius of Thessaloniki. This warrior saint is shown lightly armored in golden and red tunics, with a dark cape decorated with golden stars tied under his left arm. He is depicted beardless and balding, with brown hair. He holds a sword by his left side, and in his right hand he holds a Russian Orthodox cross, with a slanted footrest and no top crossbeam.

This icon was made for Tsarevitch Dmitry Ivanovich of Uglich (1582–1591), the fourth and last son of Ivan IV. Following his mysterious death in Uglich, the Riurik dynasty ended, though several pretenders attempted to claim the throne claiming to be the dead Tsarevitch. When the Romanov dynasty came to power, he was canonized as a saint and martyr.

Old Testament Trinity:

The angels of the Old Testament Trinity are seated around a rectangular table, with the details of Abraham's settlement prominently depicted behind them.

Bibliography:

http://www.kreml.ru/en/virtual/exposition/wordChildhood/Christian_relics/ (April 5, 2013),

Christian Relics in the Moscow Kremlin, 203, fig. 54

Exhibitions:

"Christian Relics in the Moscow Kremlin," State Museum of the Moscow Kremlin, 2000.

4. Icon of Alexis the Man of God

1629

Gold, precious stones, pearls, wood, glass, silk, gesso ground, egg tempera, chasing, niello

48.3 x 14.5cm

State Museum of the Moscow Kremlin

Oklad:

The golden *oklad* of this icon is chased in tight floral patterns. St. Alexis' halo is raised, and connects to a *tsata* around his neck. The halo and *tsata* are each decorated with three inset precious stones. The inscription on the icon is placed along the top border of the frame.

Saint:

Alexis, the Man of God, was an ascetic Roman saint. Born to a patrician family, Alexis left his family and wealth to live the life of an ascetic before returning to his father's house where he lived in anonymity until the Lord directed the Pope to seek him out. He is shown dressed in a simple brown tunic, similar in hue to the saint's flesh–tones. His hair is matted and long, as is his beard. He hold his hands up before him in a gesture of prayer. His gaze is directed towards the Hand of God, which extends from a cloud in the upper left corner of the icon.

This icon belonged to Alexei Mikhailovich (1629–1676), the first son of Tsar Mikhail Fyodorovich Romanov and his successor.

Bibliography:

Tsar Alexis Mikhailovich and Patriarch Nikon,
http://www.kreml.ru/en/exhibition/visit/2005/AlMihandNikon/ (April 5, 2013)

Exhibitions:

"Tsar Alexis Mikhailovich and Patriarch Nikon," State Museum of the Moscow Kremlin, 2005.

5. Icon of St. John Belogradsky

Russia, Moscow, the Moscow Kremlin workshops, 1633

Wood, gesso ground, egg tempera, fabric, silver, chiselling, embossing, gilding, carving

Measurements not listed

Archangel Cathedral, State Museum of the Moscow Kremlin

Oklad:

The *oklad* on this icon is chased gold, decorated in a flowing vegetal motif. The inscription is at the saint's shoulders.

Saint:

This icon depicts St. John Belogradsky, a martyr also known as the New Martyr John of Sochi, died in the fourteenth century in what is now the city of Bilhorod–Dnistrovskyi in the Ukraine. The saint is elegantly dressed in a dark green robe trimmed in gold and a red cloak over his right shoulder. In his right hand he holds an Orthodox cross, and in his left hand he holds a sheathed sword by his side. This probably refers to the instrument of his martyrdom, as his head was cut off by a sword after being beaten and dragged behind a horse. His hair is short and curls slightly over his broad forehead, and his beard and mustache is trimmed short.

This icon belonged to Tsarevitch Ivan Mikhailovich (1633–1639).

Old Testament Trinity:

The Old Testament Trinity is depicted in a particularly small square register above the saint's head, which resembles the "stamps" or *klejma* which depict scenes from a saint's life on didactic or hagiographic icons.

Bibliography:

Buseva-Davydova, (unnumbered);

http://www.kreml.ru/en/virtual/exposition/wordChildhood/Christian_relics/ (April 5, 2013)

6. Icon of St. Vasily of Ankyra–Galatian

Russia, Moscow, the Moscow Kremlin workshops, 1639

Wood, gesso ground, egg tempera, fabric, silver, embossing, carving, engraving

Measurements not listed

Archangel Cathedral, State Museum of the Moscow Kremlin

Oklad:

The *oklad* is particularly well–preserved, clearly demonstrating the technique and pattern of the beaten–metal vegetal pattern. The saint's halo extends into the register where the Old Testament Trinity is depicted. The inscription is placed on either side of the saint's head and halo.

Saint:

This icon depicts the priest–martyr Vasily of Ankyra Galatian who was slain for defying the emperor Julian the Apostate. The saint is depicted in rich ecclesiastical robes of green, gold, and brown. His head is bald and his beard is long and straight, coming to a point half–way down his chest. His right hand is raised in a gesture of blessing, and he holds a closed codex in his right hand. The codex is depicted with a richly decorated cover with a cross, similar to those created for gospel–books at the time.

This icon belonged to Vasily Mikhailovich (1639–1639).

Old Testament Trinity:

The Old Testament Trinity is shown in a very broad register above the saint's head. The poses and drapery which the angels wear are clearly based upon the composition created by Andrei Rublyev.

Bibliography:

http://www.kreml.ru/en/virtual/exposition/wordChildhood/Christian_relics/ (April 5, 2013).

7. Icon of the Great Martyr Dmitry Solunsky/St. Demetrius of Thessaloniki

Russia, Moscow, 1648

Wood, gesso ground, egg tempera, gold, pearls, enamel

Measurements not listed

Archangel Cathedral, State Museum of the Moscow Kremlin

Oklad:

The *oklad* is enameled in blue, green, and white against the gold setting, and strings of pearls line the frame and the saint's halo and *tsata.*

Saint:

This icon also depicts St. Demetrius of Thessaloniki. The saint is dressed in banded armor, with a dark cloak trimmed in gold which drapes elegantly over his left arm. In his left hand he holds a sheathed sword, and his right hand is held before his chest, though it is obscured by a crescent shaped metal decoration, called a *tsata.* The saint is bald and beardless, and his features are close–set, emphasizing his broad, round forehead. The skin–tones are redder than most icons of the period.

This icon belonged to Tsarevitch Dmitry Alekseevich (1648–1649), the first son of Tsar Aleksei Mikhailovich, who died at the age of one.

Old Testament Trinity:

The Old Testament Trinity is placed in a small *klejma* on the upper frame of the icon. The angels are arranged behind a long table, with a wide tree spreading over them.

Bibliography:

http://www.kreml.ru/en/exhibition/Kremlin/?id_4=220&from_4=2 (April 5, 2013)

Exhibitions:

"Icon painters of the Tsar Michael Romanov," State Museum of the Moscow Kremlin, 2007

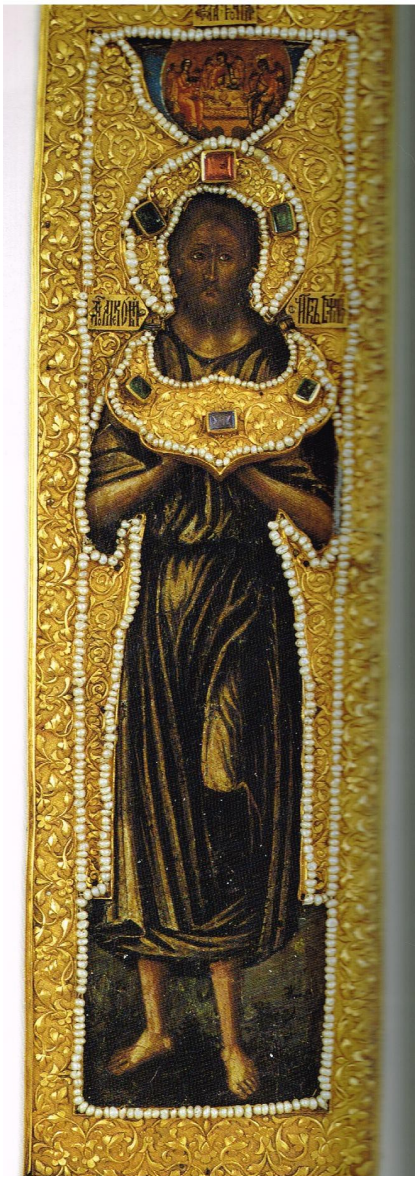
8. Icon of Alexis the Man of God

Russia, Moscow, Kremlin Workshops, 1654

Gold, silver–gilt, precious stones, pearls, silk, wood, gesso ground, egg tempera

48.3 x 14.5 cm

State Museum of the Moscow Kremlin



Oklad:

The *oklad* is decorated in beaten–gold in a foliate design. The saint, halo, Old Testament Trinity, and frame are lined with strings of pearls, and the *tsata* and halo are decorated with inset precious stones. The inscription is set at the saint's shoulders.

Saint:

This icon also depicts the ascetic saint Alexis, the Man of God. He is depicted dressed in simple brown robes, with bare feet. His hair is long, and his beard is unkempt and slightly forked. His face is lined and haggard. He holds his hands before him, but they are obscured by a *tsata.*

This icon was created for Tsarevitch Aleksei Alekseevich (1654–1670), who had been declared heir to the throne before his death at the age of sixteen.

Old Testament Trinity:

The Old Testament Trinity is shown in a medallion, surrounded chalice–shaped register in the *oklad* above the saints head. The angels are seated around a small square table.

Bibliography:

Treasures of the Czars, 76; *Czars: 400 Years of Imperial Grandeur*, 72

Exhibitions:

"Treasures of the Czars from the State Museum of the Moscow Kremlin," Florida International Museum, 1995; "Czars: 400 Years of Imperial Grandeur," Wonders Memphis, 2002.

9. Icon of St. Sophia

Russia, Moscow, Kremlin Armory School, 1657

Silver-gilt, wood, gesso ground, egg tempera

46 x 15.2 cm

Novodevichy Convent Museum

Oklad:

The *oklad* is chased and granulated silver, with gilding on the surface around the saint. The silver and silver–gilt are decorated in a flowing foliate pattern. The inscription sits at the saint's shoulders.

Saint:

The saint is dressed in a maphorion of ochre and red, and a light pink cowl. In her right hand she holds an Orthodox cross, and in her left hand she holds what appears to be a small piece of paper. Her face is softly rounded and youthful.

It is not immediately clear which saint this icon depicts. Isolde Thyret has proposed that the Tsareevna was named after the mystical figure of the Holy Wisdom of God. The Tsareevna did commission frescoes of this figure to be painted in her personal quarters, as part of a program of decoration which was intended to convey the potential right of a woman to hold the throne by virtue of her piety.[59] However, the saint depicted on Sophia Alekseevna's measured icon is not shown with the attributes of the Divine Wisdom such as a crown or red skin. It is also possible that the Tsareevna was named in honor of Solomonia Saburova, the first wife of the Grand Prince Vasili III, who was the father of Ivan IV. Solomonia was exiled to a convent for failing to provide heirs. Having assumed the name Sophia after taking her vows, she quickly developed a reputation as a miracle worker and was subsequently canonized. However, Sophia Alekseevna's patron saint shown on her measured icon is an Italian martyr, whose three daughters Faith, Hope, and Love (Pistis, Elpis, and Agape) were slain by Hadrian's soldiers in the second century. After

59 Isolde Thyret, "The Queen of Heaven and the Pious Maiden Ruler: Mariological Imagery in the Iconographie Program of Sofiia Alekseevna's Prayer Room," *Harvard Ukrainian Studies*, vol. 28, no. 1/4, 2006, 631–632.

burying her daughters, St. Sophia passed away following three days of mourning at their graves. In 1685, Sophia Alekseevna (1657–1704) commissioned the icon painter Karp Zolotarev to create an icon of this saint and her daughters for a side chapel of the Cathedral of the Mother of God of Smolensk in the Novodevichy Convent in Moscow.[60] St. Sophia is depicted on this icon wearing the same color clothes and holding an Orthodox cross in the same manner as on the measured icon of the Tsareevna. This saint is almost always depicted with her three daughters and their absence on this icon is likely the source of the confusion in attributing the measured icon to this particular saint.

Old Testament Trinity:

The Old Testament Trinity is depicted in a wide register over the saint's head, and her halo extends into the field of the miniature icon. The angels are arranged around the small table in the style of Andrei Rublyev.

Bibliography:

Konrad Onasch, 395; *Holy Russia*, 183–4, fig. 225.

Exhibitions:

"Sviataya Rus'," State Russian Museum, 2011.

60 *The Sacred Art of Russia from Ivan the Terrible to Peter the Great* 29, 70.

10. Icon of St. John the Baptist

Russia, Moscow, Stepan Ryazanets, 1666

Wood, egg tempera, gesso ground

46.7 x 15.6 cm

State Museum of the Moscow Kremlin

Oklad:

The *oklad* is missing or no longer extant on this icon.

Saint:

This icon represents St. John the Forerunner. The saint is depicted wearing a silver robe over a gray fur shirt. He is shown with golden wings, lined in a light pink. His beard is long, and his unruly hair falls over his shoulders. In his left hand, he holds an unfurled scroll, upon which is an inscription in Church Slavonic. With his right hand he gestures to his left, over the scroll. His halo is white, like the background against which he stands. Like the icons of St. Vasily and St. Sophia, the halo extends into the frame of the wide Old Testament Trinity above his head.

This icon was made for Ivan Alekseevich (1666–1696), who became co–tsar with his half–brother Peter.

Old Testament Trinity:

The angels are seated around a circular table. The tree behind the angels in the miniature icon extends beyond the borders of its register, and onto the frame of the icon.

Bibliography:

http://www.kreml.ru/en/exhibition/Russian/index.php?id_4=356 (April 5, 2013).

Exhibitions:

"Icons Painted by the Masters of the Tsar's Court in the XVIIth Century," State Museum of the Moscow Kremlin, 2012.

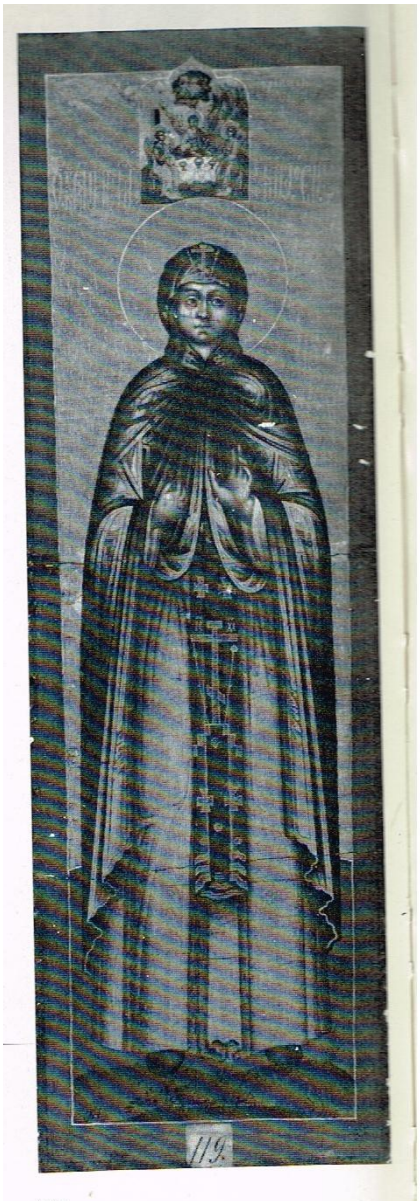
11. Icon of St. Theodosia the Blessed

Russia, Moscow, Kremlin Armory School, Kiril Ulanov, or Tikhon Ivanov, 1690

Wood, gesso ground, egg tempera

48.9 x 17.8 cm (*Domashnii byt)*

Tretyakov Gallery, Moscow, originally housed at the Ascension Convent in the Moscow Kremlin



Oklad:

The *oklad* is no missing or no longer extant for this icon.

Saint:

This icon depicts St. Theodosia, a Constantinopolitan nun martyred in the defense of icons. She is dressed in a long robe and hooded cloak, with a monastic stole embroidered with a representation of the Cross of Golgotha. In her right hand she holds an Orthodox cross, and with her left hand she is performing a gesture of blessing. The saint's eyes look off to her left. Her halo is lightly painted around her head. An inscription identifying the saint is painted on the surface of this icon on either side of the Old Testament Trinity.

This icon belonged to Feodosia Ivanovna (1690–1691), one of Tsar Ivan Alekseevich's five daughters.

Old Testament Trinity:

The Old Testament Trinity is depicted in a small, domed register, reminiscent of the facades of Russian churches. The angels sit arranged around a small table in the style of Andrei Rublyev.

Bibliography:

Talbot–Rice, 151, 160, fig. 152; Antonova, 402, fig. 140.

12. Icon of St. Anastasia the Healer

Russia, St. Petersburg, Keibel Workshops,1860

Wood, oil paint, *tsirovka*, gilding, silver, chasing

51.5 x 37.5 cm

State Hermitage Museum

Oklad:

This icon probably never incorporated an *oklad*, but instead has a gilt background around the saint. The icon is set in a silver frame decorated with a floral pattern with cherubim on the corners. The inscription is set on the gold–leaf background, at the level of the saint's head.

Saint:

This icon depicts Saint Anastasia the healer. This saint was forced into marriage with a pagan man, but retained her virginity and spent her life caring for those who suffered for the Christian faith. The curves of the saint's body are visible through the draped robes she wears. The saint wears a light blue *maphorion*, a pink cape bordered in gold, and a green robe with golden hems. In her right hand she holds a jeweled Orthodox cross, and holds her left hand to her chest. Her face and clothes are delicately shaded, showing the increasing Western influence upon icon painting in the nineteenth century. The background against which the saints stands is gilded, and decorated in chased vine patterns. St. Anastasia is depicted standing on a tiled or parquet floor, the lines of which recede towards a perspectival vanishing point behind the saint.

This measured icon was made for the Grand Duchess Anastasia Mikhailovna (1860–1922), the granddaughter of Emperor Nicholas I.

Old Testament Trinity:

The Old Testament Trinity is not present on this measured icon. In its place is a depiction of Christ the Pantokrator, rising from a light pink nimbus and in a scalloped register. He is dressed in a red robe with a long blue shawl, and blesses with his right hand as his left hand

holds open the bible.

Bibliography:

Sinai, Byzantium, Russia, 426–427, fig. R216.

Exhibitions:

"Sinai, Byzantium, Russia," the State Hermitage Museum, 2000.

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