Changes in the Phenomenon of Icon-painting in Romania from the Second Half of the Nineteenth Century to the Present Day

VOL I

Nuta Draghici-Vasilescu

Regent's Park College

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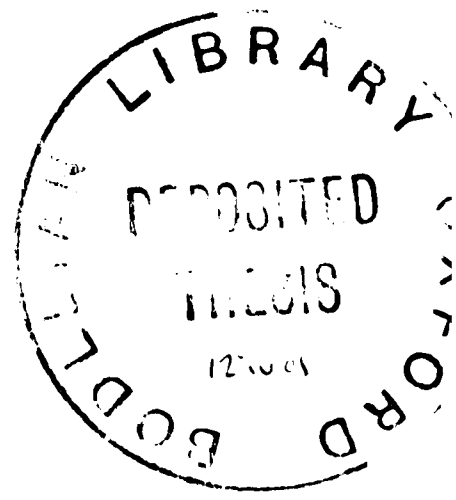
Phd.



To God

iii) Acknowledgments

It may sound like a cliché when academics begin by acknowledging people that have contributed to their research in one way or another. But if there is something that I have learned during my doctoral studies, other than, hopefully, a little valuable knowledge on religious art and theology, is how important it is to count on people willing to help in one way or another. Doctoral studies require an extreme amount of time, dedication, perseverance, patience and many other qualities hard to possess or maintain during the long journey of our graduate studies. Before I engage in individual appreciations, I want to thank everybody that has helped, supported and encouraged me during my studies at the University of Oxford. Each of them has contributed to enrich these years of my life in Oxford and the UK in general. Perhaps, thanks are in place also for people who have put obstacles in my way, because this taught me good life lessons and in this way I have become stronger and wiser.

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Sean Kenny, the Vice-Principal of St Clare's Oxford in the spring of 2000 and a very devout Catholic Christian, and Aiden Hart, a New Zealander iconographer established in Shropshire, encouraged me at the beginning of my DPhil programme. Probably, without this initial encouragement and their financial help I would not have begun this programme.

Also Father (Archimandrite) Visarion Marinescu, the abbot of *Plumbuita* Monastery, offered me all the possible assistance to do research in his monastery allowing me access to the store rooms where many icons are, and to the documents of the monastery. Without his help it could have been very problematic to work as a researcher woman in an Orthodox monastery for monks. Father Constantin, in spite of his advanced age, generously helped me moving the icons around the store rooms in which many of them are usually kept, in order to allow me to measure and photograph them. We did it in July 2003 when the temperature was 38-39 C amid a cloud of dust which arose from the icons, books and other objects. Mr. Alexandru Vasilescu and his young colleagues from the Archives Department of the Patriarchal Palace in Bucharest (within the precincts of Antim Monastery) made and sent xerox copies of some materials to me in Oxford. A very heartfelt thank you to all of them.

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Above all, I am grateful *in memoriam* to my mother, Anca Valeria Guliman (Guliman is my maiden name), for surrounding me with books from early childhood.

iv) Abbreviation, glossary, and preliminary notes

CCG	Corpus Christianorum Series Graeca
CGL	Corpus Christianorum Series Latina
MGH	Monumenta Germaniae Historica
Mansi	Mansi, Giovanni Dominico, *Sacrum Conciliorum Nova and Amplissima Collectio*, vols.i-xv, Antonius Zatta Veneti, Florence and Venice.
PG	Patrologia Graeca

Glossary

Arhimandrit (Rom.), Archimandrite - a senior priest-monk in a monastery.

Egumen (Rom.), Hegumen – an elected abbot (as opposed to an appointed one)

Iconar or pictor de icoane [Iconographer or icon painter] - a term to account not only for the person who paints icons, but also for a person who paints murals, as well as for a restorer of both icons and wall-painting.

Iconostasis – the screen bearing the icons, and separating the *altar* (sanctuary) from the *naos* in an Orthodox church.

Ieromonah (Rom.), Hieromonk – priest-monk

Metoh (Rom.), Metochion – a dependancy on a larger monastery.

A închina [to 'dedicate'] a monastery means to make it directly dependant on the Patriarchate under which jurisdiction the 'mother' monastery is. This practice of 'offering' a smaller monastery as metochion to another – larger monastery - usually from Mount Athos, was a frequent phenomenon in the sixteenth century. The Romanian princes, benefiting of internal autonomy, in addition to founding monasteries in their own country, focused on helping Athonite monasteries. They did it either through occasional donations for the maintenance of those monasteries (which explains why the Romanian princes appear in votive portraits), or through the dedication of certain Romanian monasteries to them.

Naos – the nave of an Orthodox church

Nartex (pronaos) – the entrance room (sometimes under the form of an open porch) of an Orthodox church.

Pantocrator (Rom.), Pantokrator – Jesus in half-figure in a blessing position

Polcovnic – a lesser boyar rank (*boier* - local nobility).

Protosingel (Rom.), Protosingelos – a senior priest of the diocese who acts at times on the behalf of the Bishop.

Skit (Rom.) - can be translated in English either as 'hermitage' (a monastic settlement with in principle only one monk,) or as 'skete',a semi-eremitical arrangement (what used to be called a lavra).

Pentecostarion – The book of the changeable parts of the service used during the days from Easter to the first Sunday after the Pentecost

Prescure (Rom.), *andidoron* or *prosphora* (Gr.) – the part which remains from the bread which the priest uses for the Sacrament of the Holy Communion in the Orthodox Church. The most part of it is given back to people in small pieces by a priest or deacon at the end of the Liturgy. People fast before going to the church that day and then eat this blessed bread or a part of it, while the rest is kept for the next days to be taken in the morning before food.

Proloagele (Rom.), The Book of Prologues – The Book of Commemoration for the Departed

Tetraevanghelier (Rom.) – The Book of the Four Gospels

Triod (Rom.), Triodion – The Book containing the Lenten services.

Preliminary Notes

All original quotations from Romanian, French, and Latin which I translated in the body of the text have been included in Appendix E. This is why there are much fewer footnotes from page 231 on. Most of the footnotes (from fn. 474 on) are in this Appendix.

When mentioning Romanian monks I have kept the local form of their names.

I have used the British English spelling, except when quoting from books published in the United States of America, in which case I have retained the original spelling.

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Short Abstract

The thesis aims to prove, on the one hand that the second half of the nineteenth century was the period of maximum deviation from the traditional Romanian style of icon-painting and, on the other hand, that the process following the Romanian Orthodox Church's Synod of 1889, in spite of the proclaimed return to a pure Byzantine style, actually has involved the coexistence of at least two main styles of painting: Eastern Mannerist of Byzantine lineage and Western Mannerist of *Renaissance* persuasion. In addition to this, a mixture of various elements, even in the painting of the same building, is also present, reaching sometimes the point of *kitsch*.

As steps towards this end, my thesis discusses the way in which the tradition of the Orthodox Church regarding icon and wall-painting manifested itself throughout Romanian history, with special emphasis on the period from the second half of the nineteenth century to the present day. I investigate whether or not, and how the Romanian modern icons (still) fit into the Byzantine conception of an icon.

The thesis presents the same tradition regarding the requirements of the profession of an iconographer, how they were fulfilled in the past and how they are satisfied today in Romania, in both a monastic and a secular milieu. Traditionally, in addition to their skills and artistic training, it is essential that iconographers should be deep believers, have a solid theological training, and live a very pure life. In Chapter 6 I present the answers of 27 Romanian contemporary iconographers to a 17 item questionnaire regarding the way in which they are trained and keep the canonical rules today, the techniques they use in painting and their own attitude towards their work.

Long Abstract

My dissertation describes the tradition of the Orthodox Church regarding the characteristics of icon and wall painting throughout Romanian history, with special emphasis on the period from the second half of the nineteenth century up to the present day. It presents the same tradition regarding the requirements of the profession of an iconographer, how they were fulfilled in the past and how they are satisfied today in Romania, in both a monastic and a secular milieu.

The chapters of the dissertation are as follows:

1. Icon versus Religious Painting

i) Major characteristics of the icon:

Literature in the field of Byzantine studies usually considers as the main features of an icon an emphasis on the reflection of the 'soul' (or inner spiritual personality) in the human face, a stiffness of form, and a 'dematerialisation' or even anatomical deformation of the body of the holy person depicted. An icon is painted in a flat plane (without perspective), because space and time are supposed to have no significance for an Orthodox believer. After the Seventh Ecumenical Council of Nicaea (787) and the 'Victory of Orthodoxy' (843), the icon became a part of the Orthodox Liturgy, equal in importance to the written word of the Bible.

ii) Iconographers in the Church typicon

Iconographers were not supposed to sign their work, since they were only considered to be the vehicle through which the Holy Spirit works to enable them to reveal the

essence of the person represented within the icon. If their names did become known. it tended to be through oral tradition, especially if they had a 'school' around them. (However, after the sixteenth century some of the iconographers began to sign their works, and this could be an indication of a Western influence on Orthodox art). Traditionally, in addition to their skills and artistic training, it is essential that iconographers should be deep believers, have a solid theological training, and live a very pure life.

The believer's reaction standing before an icon is to become involved in its sphere of representation, contrary to the reaction of a viewer looking at a painting, in which case a distance intervenes between him/her and the respective piece of art.

In this part of the thesis I will try to investigate whether or not, and how the Romanian modern icons (still) fit into the Byzantine conception of an icon.

2. Romania - cultural and religious history

Romania entered, at least from the religious art point of view, the "Byzantine Commonwealth" - a term coined by Dimitri Obolensky[1] - in the fourteenth century. The central area of the Byzantine Empire was under the Palaeologan rule, which in Church art marked a distinctive period characterised by a more expressive tendency than in the previous two artistic periods (the first having as its main features "extension", the second "intensity"[2]). After Romanians became aware of their national identity, climaxing in Michael the Brave's act of uniting the three main provinces in 1600 (for a short time), Romanian art began to be distinguished as a specifically

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[1] D. Obolensky, *The Byzantine Commonwealth. Eastern Europe, 500-1453*, Weidenfeld and Nicolson, London, 1971.

national art. In icon painting it manifested itself in including within icons decorations taken from folk art, and naturalist elements either from the history of the country or from daily life.

As mentioned above, traditionally, iconographers were trained within or around the monasteries, using traditional methods and materials (mineral colours, especially for frescoes). By the time of the second unification of the Romanian principalities, in 1959, some iconographers went to study in the West, usually in Italy, France, and Austria, where they were trained by copying paintings of *Renaissance* or modern artists, and became familiar with the idea of perspective in painting and with the techniques in oil, which they propagated on their return to Romania. Also painters from the West came to Romanian territories, and the founders of the new churches who commissioned painters travelled to the West, further adding Western influences to the national art. In the twentieth century most iconographers were trained in Romania in spite of the Communist regime (which actually did not interfere in the details of this profession).

3. Gheorghe Tăttărescu a case-study of a nineteenth century iconographer

Around 1800 itinerant and immigrant painters (fleeing from the Austro-Hungarian Empire or from other places) came to settle permanently or temporarily in the Romanian principalities, working there in a mixture of styles. For example, Eustatie Altini (1772-1815) who was born South of the Danube, but lived in Moldova, had a scholarship to study at the Academy of Vienna before 1800. In direct contact with neo-classicism, he assimilated the technique of representing perspective in painting and

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[2] P. A. Michellis, *An Aestethetic Approach to Byzantine Art*, B. T. Batsford, London, 1964.

also *chiaroscuro*, adopting them later to the rigours of traditional Orthodox iconography. He was followed in this direction by Gheorghe Tăttărescu, Mişu Pop, Constantin Lecca, and to a certain extent, in his youth by Nicolae Grigorescu (the most famous Romanian painter, especially in secular art).

Gheorghe Tăttărescu (1818-1894) is the most renowned Church painter within this movement because he marked a radical shift from the Romanian traditional style of painting in the Byzantine lineage, to a naturalistic style of painting reminiscent of the *Renaissance*. He studied initially at *Şcoala de Zugravi* (Icon painting School) in Buzau, where Nicolae Teodorescu was the *Maestro*. He was granted a scholarship to study at the *Academia San Luca* in Rome. There his training included copying the works of Rafael, Murrillo, Salvadore Reni, etc. On coming back he tried linking Romanian Church painting in to Italian academism. He also painted historical scenes and the portraits of the revolutionaries who participated in the 1848 movement in which he also was involved.

In 1864, together with another painter, Theodor Aman, Tăttărescu founded *Şcoala de arte frumoase* (the School of Fine Arts) in Bucharest where he was a professor and, for a while, its director. In 1865 he published the book "*Percepte şi studii folositoare asupra proporţiunilor corpului uman şi desemn [sic!]după cei mai celebri pictori*" [Useful Precepts and Studies on the Proportions and Drawings of the Human Body by the Most Famous Painters]. All his activity as a leader of an artistic school and as an iconographer left marks on icon painting in Wallachia, where he was especially active.

4. Monasteries as centres of arts and icon-painting in the past and today

Most of the monasteries which used to have icon painting workshops continue this activity today, for example, *Galata* Monastery (Iaşi County) and *Nicula* Monastery (Cluj County). The works of Sister Oana Donose of *Galata*, and of Father Ilarion Mureşan of *Nicula* are presented in the thesis as examples of icons painted today in a monastic milieu. Other monasteries have also developed relatively recently similar workshops, such as *Sâmbata de Sus* Monastery (Sibiu County), and *Plumbuita* Monastery (near Bucharest).

I had the opportunity to choose from among these monastic settlements for a case-study significant for the state of icon painting in Romania today. I decided upon the latest because it has an icon-painting workshop where the students of the Faculty of Theology of the University of Bucharest practise during their academic years.

5. Case-study: the body of icons within *Plumbuita* Monastery

(founded by Peter the Young; 1559-1568)

The icons and frescoes in the monastery's church, both individual and 'narrative' (usually connected with the feasts of the Christian year) come to about 50, some of which are more than 300 years old. Chapter 5 describes some of them, and also some of the icons from two store rooms which used to be in the museum of the monastery (now closed; the conditions in those rooms are totally inappropriate for keeping items of cultural value within them. There is hope that by publishing at least

an article based on this chapter, the authorities in Romania will assist in re-opening the former museum of the monastery).

What is connected more directly to the main topic of my thesis is the fact that icons are still being painted there all the time, and this is why I considered this place as ideal for my research.

6. Interviews with contemporary Romanian iconographers

Since 1990 then, the education of iconographers has received an extended place within the national curriculum, as comparing with their education during Communism when, in addition to monasteries, only two universities in the country (Bucharest and Iasi) taught icon and wall painting in the faculties of Fine Arts. Today the teaching of icon painting is structured on two levels: (1) at secondary schools specialising in arts and humanities, which have subdivisions dedicated to icon painting, and (2) at the university level, within the faculties of Theology and Art History, which have Icon painting departments.

After secondary school, students can either take an apprenticeship with a master for approximately four years (about 600 working days), or take a university degree followed by a shorter period of apprenticeship (usually 365 working days). Then, depending on how many years of profession they have and how accomplished their projects are, they are allowed to take exams to advance in their career (there are four stages to be reached). The iconographers' training during academic studies might sometimes take place in a monastery workshop. This is the case with the students from Bucharest, whose location for this purpose is *Plumbuita* Monastery, not very far from the city. The Chairman of the Faculty of Theology of the University of Bucharest, at

present the Revd. Professor Neculai Necula, is also the Chairman of the Commission for Painting of the Romanian Patriarchate (*Comisia de Pictură a Patriarhiei Române*), the only such commission in the world, as far as the research shows. The main activity of this Commission is to co-ordinate the painting of churches, closely co-operating with the Directorate of National Cultural Heritage (*Direcția Patrimoniului Cultural Național*) for the restoration of icons and frescoes.

I conducted interviews with nineteen church painters and restorers, and with eight students in this field. The questions concerned their training, the techniques they use in painting, the keeping of canonical rules in their work/life (it is difficult to distinguish one from the other in this case), and their attitude towards their work.

7. The Conclusion (the concluding chapter) of the thesis underlines the characteristics and the changes that have taken place in the phenomenon of icon painting in Romania since the second half of the nineteenth century up to the present day. This also envisages the future directions of icon painting in this country.

Changes in the Phenomenon of Icon-painting in Romania from the Second Half of the Nineteenth Century to the Present Day

Thesis in partial fulfilment of the requirement for a DPhil in Theology at the University of Oxford

Changes in the Phenomenon of Icon-painting in Romania from the Second Half of the Nineteenth Century to the Present Day

Volume 1

Nuta Draghici-Vasilescu
Regent's Park College
Trinity 2004

INTRODUCTION

Chapter 1 of this doctoral thesis will describe the European background in which Romanian phenomenon of icon-painting has developed in the last 165 years, and introduce the scholarship which focused on this phenomenon. It also defines an icon, as opposed to a religious painting. Details about what the third phase of Byzantine iconography meant in general for the Romanian style of painting throughout the country's history will be provided in chapter 2 of the thesis. This chapter will also give an account of the emergence of a style distinct in certain respects from any style of Byzantine painting, and of the nature and extent of Western corruption of the tradition of icon-painting from the nineteenth century onwards. Chapter 3 focuses on Gheorghe Tăttărescu, a painter of great influence in the nineteenth-century Romania, who exemplifies the extent of Western influence on Romanian icon-painting. Chapter 4 is concerned with the role of monasteries in training and supporting icon painters (generally from among the monks themselves) in the past. Chapter 5 uses the case of *Plumbuita* Monastery to show how this process continues today. Both these latter chapters illustrate with concrete examples of icon holdings in monasteries the lines along which the phenomenon of icon-painting in the country has developed. Chapter 6 presents interviews with contemporary icon painters, in which questions are raised about how far the traditions of icon-painting are practiced or regarded as important, and the effect of the period of totalitarian Communism on icon-painting.

The best way of characterising the present situation of icon-painting in Romania is in terms of coexistence of at least two main styles of painting: Western/Mannered of *Renaissance* persuasion and Eastern/Mannered of Byzantine lineage. Before going to details, a short description of the methodology employed in the work undergone towards writing the thesis follows.

Methodology

During the research I employed an interdisciplinary methodology taken from Art History, History, Aesthetics, and Anthropology. It implied as specific technique the use of interview: with Church painters, with persons involved in their education, and also with Church officials. In the summers of 2001 and 2002, while doing my field work in Romania I conducted interviews with nineteen church painters and restorers, and with eight students registered with the Faculties of Theology, Icon-painting Division in the universities of Bucharest and Iaşi. The results are centralised in two tables included in volume 2 of the thesis as an appendix, and are commented on in chapter 6. In addition to the interviews, I discussed with the Chairman of the Faculty of Theology at the University of Bucharest, The Revd Professor Neculai Necula, who is also the chairman of the Romanian Patriarchate's Commission for Painting [*Comisia de Pictură a Patriarhiei Române*]. The Commission's main activity is to co-ordinate the painting of churches, closely co-operating with the Direction of National Cultural Heritage (*Direcția Patrimoniului Cultural National*) for the restoration of icons and frescoes. As far as my research has shown it seems that this is the only such institution in the world. I discussed also with the Revd Emilian Stănescu, the adviser of the Patriarch of the Romanian Orthodox Church on economic matters, who gave me (and allowed me to make a xerox-copy of) the official list with the ca. 500 iconographers who are certified by the Commission for Painting to work around the country (the list is changing since new names are added, and sometimes, a few of the iconographers either stop painting after a certain age, usually keeping (some of them work in education) or taking teaching attributions, or leave the country to work abroad (in countries as Germany, Greece, Lebanon, Syria). But the percentage of people who do this is not significant; the number of people added on the list and leaving is

approximately equal, therefore the list stays about the same number (500). I also went deeply into the details of teaching the profession of iconographer with Merişor Dominte, lecturer on Icons at the Faculty of Theology, University of Iaşi, and with Stelian Onică, lecturer at the University of Fine Arts, Iaşi.

Traditionally, the education of iconographers in Orthodox countries centered upon the monasteries. Nowadays in Romania the icon painter's education is structured on two levels: (1) at secondary level, in schools specialising in arts and humanities, which have special sections for icon-painting, and (2) at the university level, either within the faculties of Theology, or within the faculties of Fine arts which have icon-painting divisions. After secondary school, students can either take an apprenticeship with a master for approximately two years (about 600 working days), or take a university degree followed by a shorter period of apprenticeship (usually 365 working days).

In addition to the study of scholarly sources in the library, I have consulted documents from the administration of the Romanian Orthodox Church in general, as the list with the iconographers, and the school and academic curricula. I have considered documents situated in some of the churches themselves (pamphlets and short histories written either by known scholars from the area, or by people who go to the church); I found other information regarding Romanian churches and their paintings on the Internet. My research involved stays and visits at sites: churches being painted and/or restored, including their frescoes (as for example, at Sf. Andrei [St. Andrew]'s Church in Buzău); and visits to ateliers and workshops for icon-painting (as the Restoration Centre 'Resurrectio' in Iaşi).

With the regret that it was impossible to include the completed questionnaires which the iconographers answered (more than a hundred of pages), I have attached to my dissertation, in the second volume, the result of that work: photographs of icons, of the places where I went, and also reproductions of icons.

Twentieth Century Developments in Greek and Russian Icon-painting

The theme of this dissertation is specifically the tradition of icon-painting in Romania, but at the same time the question arises whether there is any connection between Romanian developments and the revival of iconography in Greek and Russian Orthodoxy.

In the 1930s icon-painting in Europe, especially in France and Czechoslovakia where many Russian theologians and some iconographers lived, and also in Greece, underwent a process of revival, which has been called the icon's renaissance. The iconographer Photios (Fotis) Kontoglou (1896-1965) urged people in Greece to go to the Byzantine roots of the icon. Nikos Zías mentions Kontoglou's credo (an undated handwritten note which Zías thinks could be from the 1930s) in which he says that his "mission" is through his "simple and original" pictorial idiom to discontinue the "deceptive naturalistic" imitation of external reality.[1] Kontoglou urges the rejection of a "naturalistic" mode of expression because it would stop the iconographer from following "the inner vision of his soul", and he criticizes contemporary features and

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[1] Nikos Zías, *Fotis Kontoglou, zografos* [Fotis Kontoglou. The Painter], Neoelliniki techni A Series, Emboriki Trapeza tis Ellados, 1991, pp. 158-159.

motifs from the iconography of his time.[2] In a book of interviews with Constantine Cavarnos, *Meetings with Kontoglou*, he reacts, for example, to the use of clouds in Orthodox icons which he thought as coming from "Russian icons and the Russians got it from Buddhist art."[3] I do not think that he was right; the Russians took this and other iconographic motifs from the Italians in the seventeenth century, even before Peter the Great (1672-1725), but especially during his reign which was very open towards the West, and in the period afterwards. Oleg Tarasov acknowledges this, but in a different context. In his view, "The 'Frankish' and 'painterly' icons of the 18th, 19th and early 20th centuries include many transitional types and variants influenced by phenomena that had been appearing in Russian court art since the mid-17th century, when Western art began to influence Russian icon-painting."[4] He is right, but it is important to mention that, in parallel with this phenomenon, even in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries many Russian icons still continued to be painted in what was basically a traditional style.

Going back to Kontoglou, the latter mentions that in the depiction of the *Nativity* one of the figures that are included within it is "a typical example of misinterpretation on the part of some persons." This is the old shepherd, wearing a fur coat, standing before Joseph, and who has been interpreted as being the devil tempting Joseph. On it, Kontoglou says that "is a Russian invention and misinterpretation; it is not Byzantine. The man is simply a shepherd talking with Joseph."[5] He names among people "who

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[2] Photios Kontoglou, *Vasánta*, Aster, Athens, 1978 [1923]; Constantine Cavarnos, *Meetings with Kontoglou* , Institute for Byzantine and Modern Greek Studies, Belmont, Massachusetts, 1992.

[3] Cavarnos, *idem*, p. 88.

[4] Oleg Ju. Tarasov, *Icon and Devotion. Sacred Space in Imperial Russia*, transl and ed. R. Miller-Gulland, Reaction Books, London, 2002, p. 207.

[5] Cavarnos, *Meetings with Kontoglou*, p. 88.

give currency to this view" the Russian theologian and iconographer Leonid Ouspensky (Uspensky).[6]

Ouspensky (1902-1987), an iconographer himself and a celebrated author on the theology of the icon, painted in Paris, in the same group with Gregory Kroug (1909-1969)[7] and Sister Joanna Reitlinger (1898-1988)[8] who left Russia immediately after the revolution. They are so-called Russian "revivalists". Kari Kotkavaara considers that "émigré Russian artists played an instrumental part in the attempt to transfer the ancient tradition of icon-painting to the West. In so far as I can see, their artistic activity ran parallel with an intellectual and religious quest that has in many respects influenced the Western notion of Orthodoxy."[9]

I will speak later at length about Sister Joanna, and especially about Ouspensky's theology of the icon. What needs to be discussed at this point is the fact that within the Russian *intelligentsia* of the time there was a debate whether their style of icon-painting constituted a survival of the pre-Revolutionary peasant iconographic tradition, or a revival. I incline to think with Kotkavaara that "It constituted a revival and not a survival"[10], and being so it has no connection with the situation of icon-painting in Russia before the revolution when, between 1901 and 1917, this country had a

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[6] Leonid Ouspensky and Vladimir Lossky, *The Meaning of Icons*, trans. G. E. H. Palmer and E. Kadloubovsky, St Vladimir Seminary Press, Crestwood, NY, 1982, p. 163.

[7] Andrew Tregubov, *The Light of Christ. Iconography of Gregory Kroug*, St Vladimir Seminary Press, Crestwood, NY, 1997.

[8] Sister Joanna Reitlinger (Julia Nikolaevna) was a Russian of Swiss origin on her father's side. She was particularly active between 1930 and 1940, when she was attached to the St Serge Orthodox Institute in Paris, under the spiritual guidance of Fr. Sergei Bulgakov (1871-1944), see Fig. 4 for some of her paintings. For more details about Sister Joanna see my article signed Elena Ene Vasilescu, "Sestra Ioanna Reitlinger (1898-1988), *rara avis* sredi pravoslavnih iconopistev"[Sister Joanna Reitlinger: a *rara avis* among the Orthodox Painters], trans. Juliana Dresvina, in *Stranitsi: Bogoslovie, Cultura, Obrazovanie* [Pages: Theology, Culture, Education], the journal of St. Andrew's Theological College in Moscow, no. 8:3, September 2003.

[9] Kari Kotkavaara, *Progeny of the Icon: Émigré Russian Revitalism and the Vicissitudes of the Eastern Orthodox Sacred Image*, Åbo Akademi University Press, Åbo, 1999, pp. 11-12.

[10] Ibid., p. 12.

Committee for the Guardianship of Russian Icon-painting. (The purpose of that Committee was to "reeducate individual professionals and to promote their craft"[11]). Kotkavaara considers that the only movement outside Russia which could be considered as having something in common with the craftsmanship in Russia before the revolution is Pimen Sofronov's icon-painting school in Rakovica Monastery, Yugoslavia[12]. The similarity between his school and the traditional pre-revolution icon-painting workshops would regard the age of his pupils ('barely more than teenage boys', says Kotkavaara), who later in life "remained dependent on Orthodox bishops, priests and congregations", in contrast with the other iconographers in Diaspora who were mature persons working for various patrons (Catholics, Protestant and Jewish).[13]

I would add that the similarity between these two types of schools would concern also the conditions which Sofronov asked his pupils to fulfil: "It is my first condition that they are Orthodox believers; that they don't smoke or, if they do, that they lay off their habit and abstain from everything that does not help to become an icon painter. I am convinced that a man's inner condition always influences the work on icons, however humble and mechanical the craftsmanship."[14]

In addition to Paris and Rakovica, in the early 1930's the Republic of Czechoslovakia, on the initiative of the President Thomas Garrigue Masaryk (1850-1937), sheltered a part of the Russian intellectuals who were forced to flee their country. Around Uspenie

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[11] Ibid., p.215; see also p. 343.

[12] Pimen Maksimovic Sofronov (1898-1973) was an Estonian Old Believer, who after the Russian Revolution fled to the West, and lived also for a while in the Balkans. In addition to the icon-painting school in Paris (he was there for sure in 1932), he had another one in Rakovica Monastery, near Belgrade (he was certainly there in 1934). His professional 'trajectory' can be followed based on his correspondence, especially with Princess Natalia Grigorevna Jašvil, an icon painter and embroiderer herself in Prague. His correspondence is reproduced in Kotkavaara, *Progeny of the icon*, pp. xxiv-xxv. Before World War II, Sofronov was invited to paint in Vatican. He was also active in the USA in the post-war period: he painted murals in churches, for example, in New York and in Trenton, NJ.

[13] Kotkavaara, *Progeny of the icon*, p. 215.

[14] Sofronov's Lettter to Princess Jašvil on I January 1932, reproduced in Kotkavaara, *Progeny of the icon*, p. xxv.

Memorial Church and The Kondakov Institute, both in Prague, artists, among them iconographers such as Kiril Katkov, gathered.[15] But, as Kotkavaara said, their revival experience did not go beyond the Iron Curtain, and remains unknown.[16]

A phenomenon of return to what was called by the ecclesiastical authorities of the time the 'Byzantine style of icon-painting' took place in Romania, but much earlier than it happened in Greece or in the Russian Diaspora. It began with a Synod of the Romanian Orthodox Church in 1889, and it was a reaction to Gheorghe Tăttărescu's style of painting. He studied in Italy between 1845 and 1851, and on his arrival back he painted churches in a Mannerist style reminiscent of the Italian *Renaissance*. He was also a professor at the School of Fine Arts in Bucharest, where he promoted his style of painting. After his death in 1894, the Church authorities began white washing his works and urged people to remove icons painted in that style from their homes. This ecclesiastical counter-movement culminated with the aforementioned Synod. There does not seem to be any connection between this nineteenth century movement in Romania and what happened in the 1920's and 30s in Greece, Paris or Prague, or even Romania's neighbour Yugoslavia. "Sofronov's school in Yugoslavia –and Princess Jasvil's and Kiril Katkov's works in Prague –were virtually never heard of outside the Iron Curtain, whereas, in the wake of the publication of Uspenskij's books in French, German and English [...] the 'Paris school of painting' became known outside the confines of the Orthodox, Russian-speaking world."[17] Even to say that

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[15] The Kondakov Institute in Prague was founded after the death of N. P Kondakov (1844-1925), a patron of pre-revolutionary Russian icon-painting. The institute lasted for approximately 30 years. Kiril Michailovič Katkov was born in 1905, and while still a student in Prague was sent to Paris to make the iconostasis for the Uspenie Church at Olšane, Prague. He worked on this commission in 1928. After that he studied Byzantine art history at the *École des hautes études*, Sorbonne. In 1939 he went to Argentina, and then lived in Oxford (1958-1965). After 1965 he left for New York, and painted Orthodox churches in Canada and the USA. Kotkavaara, *Progeny of the icon*, pp. 211, 236-244, 344.

[16] Ibid., p. 344.

[17] Ibid.

Romanian movement was an example for the other countries around seems to be hazardous. It would have been too distant in time, and even in space in most cases. But future research may succeed in discovering new evidence to substantiate such a connection. The best that can be said at the moment is the fact that the preservation, to some extent at least, of the "Byzantine canons" in icon-painting is a constant preoccupation in Romania, very much alive now, in the twenty first century. In addition to that, what Kotkavaara says about the fact that the Russian émigrés' activity had no connection to what happened in Russian icon-painting itself before 1917, and that the Czech experience remained largely unknown, serves to strengthen the view expressed above that the revival of a "traditional" style of iconography in the twentieth century has no connection with events in Romania in the late nineteenth century.

CHAPTER I

Icon versus Religious painting

What are the most radical differences between Eastern and Western Church art, particularly between an icon and a religious painting? In what way did communication work in the area previously under the Byzantine sphere of influence? These are the questions to which this chapter will attempt to answer.

Among the countries involved in the game of influence and communication regarding icon and wall-painting is Romania, which has inherited a Church art style of Byzantine lineage. This country entered the "Byzantine Commonwealth" (a term coined by Dimitri Obolensky) in the fourteenth century.[18] during the rule of Palaeologue family. The Church art of that period was characterised by a more expressive tendency than in the previous two artistic periods of the Empire. The rise of the Romanian medieval states, and the canonical organization of the Orthodox Church in each of them led to the development of a specific Romanian style of icon and mural painting with distinctive characteristics that 'grew' on an initial Byzantine base. This specific style was a combination between the canonical Byzantine guidance and many innovations, including acceptance of elements from folk and Western art. I will leave the discussion of the other contributing elements for chapter 2, and I will consider now the Byzantine factor.

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[18] Dimitri Obolensky, *The Byzantine Commonwealth. Eastern Europe, 500-1453*, Weidenfeld and Nicolson, London, 1971; Mircea Păcurariu, *Istoria Bisericii Ortodoxe Române* [The History of Romanian Orthodox Church], vol. 1, Editura Institutului Biblic şi de Misiune al Bisericii Ortodoxe Române [The Publishing House of the Biblical and Missionary Institute of the Romanian Orthodox Church], Bucharest, 1991 (second edition).

i) Byzantine art (especially icon and wall-painting)

In regard to Byzantine art there has been a long discussion about many of its aspects including, or especially with regard to, icon and wall-painting. The controversy was concerned with what was to be included in the definition of 'Byzantine art' because, in spite of the fact that the art of the imperial capital was usually considered as the standard, the dependent provinces of the Byzantine Empire - Asia Minor, Syria, Persia, and Egypt - demanded an equal place within this definition. The situation was further complicated by the fact that the artists used to travel, or live as refugees because of the frequent internal and external conflicts (see for example Stephanos of Aila, "architect and craftsman," who went from Constantinople to Egypt, where he built the Monastery of St Catherine at the foot of Mount Sinai[19]). Major scholarship in the field includes names as R. Cormack,[20] O. Demus,[21] P. Evdokimov,[22] E. Kitzinger,[23] P. A. Michelis,[24] L. Ouspensky and V. Lossky,[25] D. and T. Talbot Rice,[26] and K. Weitzmann[27].

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[19] Kurt Weitzmann (ed.), G. H. Forsyth and I. Ševcenko, *The Monastery of St Catherine at Mount Sinai*, University of Michigan Press, Ann Arbor, 1975, p. 82.

[20] Robin Cormack, *Writing in Gold: Byzantine Society and its Icons*, George Philip, London, 1985; *Painting the Soul: Icons, Death Masks and Shrouds*, Reaction Books, 1997; *The Byzantine Eye: Studies in Art and Patronage, Variorum Reprinst, London*, 1989; *Byzantine Art*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2000.

[21] Otto Demus, *Byzantine Art and the West*, The Wrightsman Lectures: 3, Weidenfeld and Nicolson, London, 1970.

[22] Paul Evdokimov, *The Art of the Icon: A Theology of Beauty*, trans. St. Bigham, Oakwood Publications, Redondo Beach, 1990.

[23] Ernst Kitzinger *The Art of Byzantium and the Medieval West: Selected Studies*, Indiana University Press, Bloomington, 1976; *Byzantine Art in the Making: Main Lines of Stylistic Development* in Mediterranean Art, Third-Seventh Century, Faber&Faber, London, 1977; *Byzantine Mosaic Decoration: Aspects of Monumental Art in Byzantium*, Routledge and Kegan Paul, London, 1976; *The Byzantine Contribution to Western Art of the Twelfth and Thirteenth Centuries*, Dumbarton Oaks Papers, Number 20, Dumbarton Oaks Center for Byzantine Studies, Trustees of the Harvard University Press, Washington, 1966.

[24] Panagiotes Andreou Michelis, *An Aesthetic Approach to Byzantine Art*, B. T Batsford, London, 1964.

I will discuss the contribution to Byzantine Studies of these scholars throughout the chapter and throughout the thesis itself each time I reach the particular topic/topics which any of them has focused on in their works. For the beginning, I will mention one very important methodological idea to which Robin Cormack draws scholars' attention. He thinks that using the general term 'style' in early Christian and Byzantine art could be deceiving since "in fact, 'style' *conceals* rather than *reveals* the problems. Early Christian art can seem to be a continuation of pagan art; but similarities in style obscure the momentous changes which occurred in religion and thought in Late Antiquity."[28] It would be difficult to say that he is right in all instances, but it could be useful for a scholar to have this caution in his/her mind.

Otto Demus points out to some aspects of Byzantine art which he considered as distinctive in comparison to Hellenistic art from which it evolved:

> In Byzantine art, forms have become divisible and this divisibility is perhaps one of the most characteristic and, from the Western medieval point of view, one of their most useful attributes. This feature emerged firstly in technique and modeling, when the continuous gradation or the illusionistic color patch technique of Hellenistic painting was supplanted by a three- or four-tone system in which a medium tone is modified by one or two darker and one or two lighter shades, all quite distinct and not merging into each other; a similar principle dominated the representation of the human figure, which was divided into its component parts, parceled out, as it were, and put together like model figures, with the joints

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[25] Leonid Ouspensky, *Theology of the Icon*, vols. 1-2, trans. A. Gythiel and E. Meyendorff, St Vladimir's Seminary Press, Crestwood, NY, 1992; Ouspensky and Lossky, *The Meaning of Icons*.

[26] David and Tamara Talbot Rice, *Icons and Their Dating. A Comprehensive Study of their Chronology and Provenance*, Thames and Huston, London, 1974; D. Talbot Rice, *Byzantine Icons*, Faber & Faber, London, 1959.

[27] K. Weitzmann, *The Icon*, Evans Brothers, London, 1982; *The Icon: Holy Images, Sixth to Fourteenth Century*, Chatto&Windus, London, 1978; *Art in the Medieval West and Its Contacts with Byzantium*, Variorum Reprints, London, 1982; *Various Aspects of Byzantine Influence on the Latin Countries from the Sixth to the Twelfth Century*, Dumberton Oaks Papers, Number 20, Dumbarton Oaks Center for Byzantine Studies, Trustees of the Harvard University Press, Washington, 1966.

[28] Cormack, Preface to *The Byzantine eye: studies in art and patronage*, pp. 1-2; his empasis.

> clearly articulated and the movements somewhat mechanized and overstressed. The same spirit of division and articulation ruled Byzantine composition: the arrangement is simple, legible, paratactic and quasi-geometrical; compositions can easily be taken to pieces, and every one of their parts may be substituted by another. This enabled artists to express a new content by applying minor adjustments to ready-made, traditional forms.[29]

But, on the other hand he remarks that, "[the] absolute distinctness of meaning is another of the attributes which enabled Byzantine art to become the *magistra Europae*. Every representation, from the simplest to the most complicated, compound image, had its specific message that remained unchanged through centuries; and every image had a solemn grandeur which made it a fit representation of the Holy."[30]

I do not think that the first part of the above description (about divisibility and interchangeability) has ever been an attribute of the Romanian style of icon and wall-painting. This is because Demus' description does not totally apply to the Romanian style of painting. Hence I would avoid calling it simply 'Byzantine' or even 'Post-Byzantine', as Theodora Voinescu does,[31] but only 'of Byzantine lineage' or 'of Byzantine persuasion' bearing in mind the canonical aspect of this phenomenon. In support of my idea it is worth mentioning that some of the renowned iconographers deliberately broke the canons, and this was socially accepted; the climax of this process was reached in the second half of the nineteenth century (as chapter 3 will prove). As regards the second part of Demus' description, it is to be noted that since

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[29] Demus, *Byzantine Art and the West*, pp. 12-13.

[30] Ibid., p. 15.

[31] Theodora Voinescu, "The Post-Byzantine Icons of Wallachia and Moldavia", in Weitzmann, *The Icon*, Evans Brothers, London, 1982. She believes that the Church art in South-eastern Europe, including Romania, began after the fall of Constantinople; she is right from the chronological point of view to use the term 'Post-Byzantine'. But the new discoveries challenge her dates, and from the stylistic and compositional point of view the term does not work in all cases.

holy images are an important part of the Liturgy in Eastern churches, and the Liturgy has come unchanged throughout the centuries, it is natural for the images used during the Liturgy to have preserved the same meaning and to convey the same message across all time. As Tarasov shows: "In the Byzantine tradition the requirement to adhere strictly to the ancient models that were 'revealed' to the saints lay at the foundation of all religious art."[32] And, indeed, the "Byzantine canons" in icon-paintings are still been kept today (certainly in Romania where, during my field work in churches undergoing painting, I found the iconographers with Dionysius' *Hermeneia* in front of them).

Ouspensky underlined the fact that "Byzantine norms" are still followed by modern iconographers and, as just mentioned above, what he said in the beginning of the 20th century is still true. In addition to the example of Romania, another one is the famous and active school of iconographers in Sviato-Troitskaia Serghieva Lavra [Holy Trinity Serghieva Monastery], where the book *Trud Ikonopista* [Iconographer's Toil] - actually a *Hermeneia*- published in 1995[33] guides the icon painting in that monastery today. This book contains very much Ouspensky's theology and shows that, is spite of being the subject of much criticism, his theology of the icon is important (as an iconographer he is considered as belonging to the Old Believers' orientation). Among Ouspensky's critics, Boris Rothemund considers that "Die Verfasser sind der Ikonenmaler Wladimir Lossky und der orthodox Theologe Leonid Ouspensy, von dem auch eine ausführliche, leider aber sehr unkritische Arbeit über die Ikonentheologie

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[32] Tarasov, *Icon and Devotion*, p. 171.

[33] Mother Juliania (Maria Nicolaeva Socolova), *Trud Ikonopista* [Iconographer's Toil], in Sviato-Troitkaia Serghieva Lavra, 1995.

auch eine ausführliche, leider aber sehr unkritische Arbeit über die Ikonentheologie stammt".[34] Also Inga Lena Ångström disapproves Ouspensky's affirmation in regard to Protestant iconoclasm and the lack of images in Protestant churches. As an example which contradicts Ouspensky's view she considers the richness of altarpieces from Lutheran churches during the Renaissance and Baroque periods.[35] Ångström's clarification is useful since it is known that at least the Calvinist tradition within Protestantism is iconoclastic; since Ouspensky lived in Paris it is expected that he would have been familiar with the genuine iconoclasm of Calvinism.

But Ouspensky ideas have also renowned supporters, for example Daniel Sahas[36] and V. N. Lazarev[37]. The main reason for why Ouspensky's theology is worthy to be mentioned in the context of this thesis is its stress on maintaining the Byzantine guidance in painting contemporary icons

For the purpose of this dissertation, the traditional Byzantine style in icon and wall-painting is to be understood as that manner of painting which emphasises the reflection of the 'soul' or inner spirituality ['inner perfection' – Ouspensky] in the holy persons' face, hence the attention paid to their eyes, usually depicted as being very large. This style ignores corporeal details, which appear disproportionate and

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[34] "The works of the iconographer Vladimir Lossky and of the Orthodox theologian Leonid Ouspensky, even though extensive, contain an uncritical theology of the icon." Boris B. Rothemund, *Handbuch der Ikonenkunst*, Slavisches Institut, Munich, 1966, p. 62. Also in footnote 8 on p. 350 he describes this theology as being naïve; my translation.

[35] Inga Lena Ångström, *Altartavlor i Sverige under renässans och barok: studier I deras ikonografi och stil 1527-1686* [Altarpieces in Sweden during Renaissance and Baroque: study on iconography and style 1627-1686], Almqvist & Wiksell International, Stockholm, 1992, pp. 25, 273.

[36] Daniel J. Sahas, *Icon and Logos. Sources in Eight-Century Iconoclasm*, University of Toronto Press, Toronto, Buffalo, London, 1986, pp. 5-6 and footnote 11 on p. 6; p. 10.

[37] Viktor Nikitich Lazarev, *Russkaia ikonopis. O istokov do nacala xvi veka* [Russian Icon-painting from the Sources to Early Sixteenth Century], Iskusstvo, Moscow, 1983 [1969-1971], p. 18.

unrealistic, even ugly, especially for someone unfamiliar with the spirituality of the Eastern Christian Church. This description is consistent also with Demus' definition cited above. Of course, there have been periods in the evolution of Byzantine art, especially in its beginning, when iconographers painted naturalistically. The thesis will discuss about it in detail later. But what is understood today by Byzantine style seems to be closer to what I have described above. In icons there are no details about the space in which the reality depicted would take place, and therefore the temporal dimension is not represented either. These are properties of the human world, whereas the icon is intended to depict not this, but the divine reality.[38] The characterisation is valid for icons painted in the Romanian style, the beginning of which was contemporary with the style of icon and mural painting of the Palaeologan period, as shown above when mentioning Obolensky. That epoch was considered by Michelis as representing 'the third phase of the Byzantine art'. In order to explain the specificity of that period an introduction of the phases of the Byzantine art is necessary. Michelis' account of these phases has been chosen because he has a description of the third phase of the Byzantine art which suits in the best way the style of painting icons in Romania. I am aware that Michelis fails in his description of the first phase (The Macedonian) to acknowledge that art on a smaller scale coexisted with the monumental art of the period, but the other two phases are reasonably described. As mentioned above, he describes in an appropriate way the third phase, that phase of the Byzantine art which Romania 'connected' to. This somewhat mannered third phase in the development of Byzantine art, while lacking sublimity, gave an emphatic "exaltation" which, if

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[38] Ouspensky and Lossky, *The Meaning of Icons*, p. 38.

missing sublimity, yet moved "within the realm of religious fervour", testifying perhaps "to a mystic passion which dramatises and humanises the divine."[39]

[39] Michelis, *An Aesthetic Approach*, p. 194.

i. 1) Stages in the development of Byzantine religious art, particularly with reference to icon-painting

Michelis distinguishes three periods in Byzantine art, not only with regard to architecture, but also to painting. Therefore, his account is useful to illustrate one aspect of the general topic of the thesis.

In Michelis' opinion the three phases in this development are as follows: *extension* (sixth century – ca. 1056) characterized by large dimensions, and also by a tendency towards the heavy and massive [examples in painting, could be the Ravenna mosaics, or the paintings in the church of Saints Cosmas and Damian in Rome where the size and impressive gesture of Christ in the apse are highly representative for this phase, and in architecture the famous Haghia Sophia (built under Justinian in the sixth century), which rose to great splendour under the Macedonian emperors (867-1056)]. Michelis points out that "the monumental character of the works testifies to a tendency to suggest the sublime through the immeasurable and the majestic. Thus, extension stood for the expression of 'sublime ecstasy'.[40] In addition to 'extension', augmentation and syncopation are other factors seeking to convey the sublime in this stage of the development of the Church art. The works of that time brought an impression of serenity which is not found in the Gothic cathedral, because "here *exaltation of power* is the guiding principle in suggesting the sublime"[41], and Gothic art in general "is a realistic and violent expression of the sublime." That is in contrast

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[40] Ibid., p. 182.

[41] Ibid., p.182; italics in the original.

to the "spiritual expression of serene sublimity"[42] of Byzantine art, which is due to the influence of the Hellenic spirit.

The second stage of Byzantine art (ca. 1056-ca. 1261) has as the main feature "*intensity.*" Now all artistic works "are more adapted to the human scale" and "instead of amazing, stir up our imagination by their pictorial quality. In these works the immeasurable and the grandiose were replaced by the measurable and the vigorous"[43] and "the shifting from measurelessness to measure, from the unit to the multipartite, from serenity to movement, from augmentation to instantaneous growth – briefly, from extension to intensity- naturally, at times, brought the graceful into play in the sublime work. For movement, abrupt cessation, sudden alternations and, primarily, measure are equally characteristics of the graceful. Grace, it has been said, is beauty in motion."[44] A good example of this shift from extension to intensity in art is the Crucifixion at Hosios Lukas where an intense expressionism is to be noticed.

In the third phase of the Byzantine art (ca. 1261-1453) – characterized by "*emphasis*" - three new characteristics are evident:

> Firstly, a slight departure from the pictorial to the plastic – a differentiation, that is, of the tectonic elements, that lends mass volume and weight. In consequence, the dematerialising tendency is no longer expressed in elasticity of surface, but in mobility of mass. A second feature is what might be described as the "humanisation" of dimensions – that is, the reduction of each member to a human scale, so that the work brings no sense of exaltation. [...] Finally, a third trait of this last period is the mystery specific to the interior of the buildings by subdued illumination.[45]

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[42] Ibid., p. 201.

[43] Ibid., p. 183.

[44] Ibid., p. 186.

[45] Ibid., pp.192-193.

Examples illustrating this phase are the fresco of the Lament at the Tomb in the Monastery of Chrysostom in Cyprus, the mosaics of the Monastery of Chora in Constantinople, and the painting of Mistra, in the Peloponnese, where,

> ...the painter transforms the scene of the Holy Scriptures into a passionate human drama. The early two-dimensional representations, restrained and austere, now become almost plastic figures with expressive poses and dramatic gestures that express impassioned feelings, as though the artist aimed at capturing fugitive impressions of life. The figures, moreover, are placed not only against a monochrome background, but also within a natural frame [...] Already, however, the figures, set farther back, sometimes diminish in size and the lines tend towards the discovery of a perspective *fuite*.[46]

Even though sometimes the attempts to create environment and to bring in landscape succeed, still there is no anatomy of space in the icons of this period as there is in religious painting of the Italian *Renaissance*. The more direct reason for this change towards 'humanisation' was the resurgence of the classical Greek spirit. It had, actually, "always lurked in Byzantine art, but whereas in the earlier period its idealism was mainly borrowed; now it was its humanism which was adopted – the first to spiritualise, the second to humanise art."[47] This humanisation of dimensions explains the style of monasteries in Mount Athos and of a lot of other modest, but "intense and sublime-aspiring" churches. Michelis emphasizes strongly the idea that this 'humanism' was in no case the result of Western influence, but rather the reverse. He says that "It was natural enough that the Byzantine, beginning after incessant contemplation of the divine, to lose the ground from under his feet, should have turned his attention to man again." And he finds that "The most eloquent proof of the

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[46] Ibid., p. 198.

[47] Ibid., pp.193-194; this period is thought to have been a period in which famous icon painters such as Michael Damaskenos, and Victor Tzanes lived. See John Galley (ed.), George H. Forsyth and Kurt Weitzmann, *Sinai and the Monastery of St Catherine*, Chatto&Windus, London, 1979, pp. 95-96.

introduction of the human element, - of human passions - in artistic expression is provided by the painting of the Palaelogue period."[48]

Generally speaking, for Michelis the 'sublime' quality of Byzantine art comes from the fact that its creators looked to God and not to an earthly human ideal, as the creators of the Gothic or Romanesque art did taking their inspiration from the classical form, and giving prevalence to form over 'substance.' This specificity leads the Western viewer to consider Byzantine art as 'ugly'or 'barbaric.' In its original state Byzantine art had an eternal quality which "can move man today as it did then." Michelis considers that,

> Byzantine architecture and painting praise God in chants of free verse, as that of the Testament, and not in classic metres: in chants that obey their own impulsive rhythm and are the expression of individual exaltation, induced by the inner dynamism of a sublime experience. These are not products of objective intellectual pleasure drawn from the serene contemplation of beauty, wherein dynamism (of which, indeed, beauty is not bereft) becomes a disciplined and restrained feeling.[49]

Details about what the third phase of Byzantine Church painting meant in general for the style of painting in Romania throughout the country's history will be provided in chapter 2 of the thesis, where a few examples will also be given. Chapter 4 will explain what it has meant for the Romanian monks and iconographers in general who painted and still paint icons and murals, and chapters 4, 5 and 6 will provide concrete names and places to exemplify this further.

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[48] Michelis, *An Aesthetic Approach*, p. 194.

[49] Ibid., p. 59.

ii) Major Characteristics of the Icon

As a context for the discussion of the thesis, in this chapter I will analyse the differences between an icon - the work of a traditional Christian Orthodox Church-painter or iconographer - and a work of art with a religious theme made by an artist trained in a school of fine arts. I will begin by presenting a theoretical background to the icon in general. Then I will indicate the differences between a typical icon and two paintings made by an artist 'merely' as works of art. The differences refer to the painter who makes them, to the techniques involved, and to the viewer, as will become clear later in the chapter.

In Christianity in general, an icon is usually understood as a painted wooden panel, but it can also be a mosaic, a fresco, a miniature, or a tapestry, as long as they can have a role during the liturgy (the frescoes, for example have been very useful in enabling the illiterate to understand Holy Scripture since they are narratives of the Bible in images). An icon can be made of wood or carved in marble, ivory, common or precious stone, and metal (gold and silver, especially "to enhance the splendor of small-scale mosaic icons"[50]). The widely accepted notion that an icon must be a painted panel derives from the enormous number of images preserved from the late and post-Byzantine period when, indeed, the painted panel prevailed. But this is not true for the earlier periods, especially for the time of the Macedonian dynasty (867-1056), the second golden age of the Byzantine Empire, when various (often expensive) media were used.[51] The economic ups and downs are reflected in the materials used in

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[50] Weitzmann, *The Icon*, p. 6.

[51] Ibid.

making icons. For example, there are many icons on paper made in the time of the Second World War in Plumbuita Monastery reflecting a time of economical crisis; there is a whole chapter about icons on paper in the *Treasures of Mount Athos* catalogue.[52]

Icons are made usually in two dimensions; very few are in three dimensions. Even when marble and ivory sculpture are used, the flat relief is preferred "in order to subdue the impression of pronounced corporeality."[53] In earlier times, shows Weitzmann, cloisonné enamel was considered very suitable because of its two-dimensionality and translucence which help in rendering a dematerialized body.[54] While painted icons are very common and easily recognized as icons, the status of those made in three dimensions is a matter of controversy. There are a number of icons in three dimensions, some in the form of sculptures, in Northern Russia, Romania and, perhaps also in other countries (there is a well-known English example in the Victoria and Albert Museum in London); likewise the high crosses of Celtic Christianity are considered by many to be a form of icon.

Similarly, the icon can take many forms. Some of the earliest icons have sliding lids, for protection when they were taken along on their owners' travels. Another form, the diptych, was invented as a writing tablet. It preserved this function in the well-known ivory consular diptychs of the fifth and sixth centuries, and the practical usage still survives today in the Orthodox Church, when the deacon reads the prayer of intercession from a diptych. After the diptych ceased to be used primarily as a writing

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[52] *Treasures of Mount Athos*, a catalogue based on the exhibition in organized by the Ministry of Culture, Museum of Byzantine Culture, and the Organization for the Cultural capital of Europe, Thessaloniki, 1997, chapter 4.

[53] Weitzmann, *The Icon*, p. 6.

[54] Ibid.

tablet, the relief decoration was moved from the outside to the inside, in order to provide more protection for the holy images. Protection is equally well achieved in the triptych, which, to judge from the numerous early fragments at St Catherine Monastery in Sinai, exceeded the diptych in popularity. With its natural focal point in the central plaque, and wings to which subordinate figures could be relegated, the triptych automatically permitted a display of a hierarchical order. Soon the *iconostasis* became the focal point for the display of important icons. Even today, the iconostasis has usually four icons which depict Christ, the Virgin and St John the Baptist forming the 'Deesis' (Intercession), and the patron saint of the church. Not until the middle Byzantine period (853-1204) were large icons placed above the marble parapet of the iconostasis and between the pillars supporting the architrave. From the tenth century on, a beam was placed above the architrave, decorated with representations of the liturgical feasts, replacing an earlier tradition of saints' busts or medallions. Finally, the doors through which the priest enters the sanctuary, were decorated with an Annunciation, of which the earliest surviving example – at Sinai - dates from the thirteenth century.[55] In Eastern Orthodox churches the icon representing the saint or the feast of the day is displayed on a special lectern, the *proskynetarion*, which stands in the nave. The church's collection of small icons hangs on the walls of the aisles or the sanctuary, or is kept in a store room. In other places in a church there are installed the icons of special veneration, such as images of the Mother of God painted (according to tradition, by St Luke himself; Fig 1) and the *acheiropoietoi*, icons of Christ 'not made of human hand'. They are chief attraction for pilgrims, and are adorned with votive gifts. Many churches possess also bilaterally painted processional

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[55] Ibid.

icons. to which special veneration is similarly offered. In the past, these were sometimes carried into battle by the army.[56]

In the thesis I am especially concerned with wooden icons and mural paintings in the context of Orthodox Christianity, because, as Bulgakov makes clear, "Byzantium [...] is the homeland of Christian iconography," where "such painting passed through several periods of flowering",[57] and the painting of Orthodox icons traditionally follows the Byzantine canon. The importance of icons for a believer is emphasised in many Orthodox theological works as, for example in *Theology of the Icon* by Ouspensky, and *The Meaning of Icons* by Ouspensky and Lossky. In Eastern Christianity it was officially confirmed by the decrees of the Seventh Ecumenical Council (Second Council in Nicaea, 787), and the victory of the Byzantine Iconodule movement in the ninth century.

Here is the excerpt from the summary of the decisions of the 787 Nicaean Ecumenical Council (Synod) which declares that the icons are to be venerated in the Church:

> ...we preserve all the traditions of the Church, which for our sake have been decreed in written or unwritten form, without introducing an innovation. One of these traditions is the making of iconographic representations - being in accordance with the narrative of the proclamation of the gospel – for the purpose of ascertaining the incarnation of God the Word, which was real, not imaginary, and for being of an equal benefit to us as the gospel narrative. For those which point mutually to each other undoubtedly mutually signify each other. Be this as it may, and continuing along the royal pathway, following both the teaching of our holy Fathers which is inspired by God and the tradition of the catholic Church – for we know that this tradition is of the Holy Spirit dwelling in her– in absolute precision and harmony with the spirit, WE DECLARE that, next to the sign of the

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[56] The information here comes from the personal contact with Orthodox Christian churches, but also from Weitzmann, *The Icon*, p. 6.

[57] Sergius (Sergei) Bulgakov, *The Orthodox Church*, The Centenary Press, London, 1935, p. 167.

> precious and life-giving cross, venerable and holy icons – made of colours, pebbles, or any other material that is fit – may be set in the holy churches of God, on holy utensils and vestments, on walls and boards, in houses and in streets. These may be icons of our Lord and God the Saviour Jesus Christ, or of our pure Lady, the holy Theotokos, or of honourable angels, or of any saint or holy man. For the more these are kept in view through their iconographic representation, the more those who look at them are lifted up to remember and have an earnest desire for the prototypes. Also [we declare] that one may render to them the veneration of honour…[58]

For the topic of my thesis, the doctrinal aspects are more important; therefore I will present only a short summary of the struggle which ended with this victory. The conflict began at the initiative of the state. In 730 (or in both 726 and 730 – the opinions are divided; in any case, no text of any decree survived), Emperor Leo the Third (the Isaurian) pronounced himself against the veneration of icons. The Patriarch in Constantinople at that time was Germanus (715-730) who refused to sign Leo's decree; in consequence he was deported and replaced by Anastasius (730-753). Since Patriarch Anastasius signed that decree, Iconoclasm became the official position of the Church, and the destruction of icons began. The Orthodox bishops or simple faithful people were exiled and martyred. The struggle can be divided in two periods: the first between 730 and 787 when, during the reign of the Empress Irene, the Seventh Ecumenical Council re-established the cult of icons and formulated the dogma regarding their veneration, and the second, between 814 and 843, when the Victory of Orthodoxy was officially proclaimed. Jaroslav Pelikan has a good account of the conflict, but his idea that it was an 'affray' between the 'masculine' and 'feminine'

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[58] Giovanni Dominico (Joannes Dominicus) Mansi, *Sacrum Conciliorum Nova and Amplissima Collectio*, Antonii (Antonius) Zatta Veneti, Florence, 1767, vol. xiii, colls. 378-379 the Latin version; Sahas' translation, in *Icon and Logos*, pp. 178-179.

principles is disputable, is spite of the fact that, indeed "Six Emperors had fought against them [icons], and two Empresses had led them home in triumph."[59]

The use of icons is founded on the doctrine of the Church that the Son of God became incarnate and was made man. Ouspensky and Lossky comment on this:

> Christianity is the revelation not only of the Word of God but also of the Image of God, in which His Likeness is revealed. This godlike image is the distinctive feature of the New Testament, being the visible witness of the deification of man. The ways of iconography, as a means of expressing what regards the Deity, are here the same as the ways of theology. The task of both alike is to express that which cannot be expressed by human means, since such an expression will always be imperfect and insufficient.[60]

Divine reality cannot be represented and described in the same way as the world of the senses can be. There are no words, nor colours, nor lines which could represent the Kingdom of God in the same way as humans represent and describe the human world. The artist points symbolically, through the use of colour and line, to that which transcends this world. By virtue of the Incarnation, humans can depict only the human nature of Christ, not the divine one, even though they do not depict even His human nature in all its earthly details, but point to the characteristics which represent him in the most essential way (as is also the case with the Mother of God and the saints).

Between 726 and 730, at the request of John V, Patriarch of Jerusalem (705-735), St John of Damascus (ca. 675-ca.749) wrote three treatises in defence of the icons[61]. He wrote them in Palestine, at that time under Muslim rule-where he was safe from the

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[59] Jaroslav Jan Pelikan, *Imago Dei: The Byzantine Apologia for Icons*, Yale University Press, New Haven, London, 1990, p.8.

[60] Ouspensky and Lossky, *The Meaning of Icons*, p. 49.

[61] St John of Damascus, *Three Treatises on the Divine Images*, trans. and ed. Andrew Louth, St Vladimir's Seminary Press, Crestwood, New York, 2003. Important is also his *Exposition of the Orthodox Faith*, Wn. B. Eerdmans, Grand Rapids, M. I., 1955. For an interpretation on his theology see also Louth, *St John Damascene: tradition and originality in Byzantine theology*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, New York, 2002.

persecution of the Byzantine emperor. He used all the resources of his vast theological knowledge to provide a powerful justification for using the sacred image. He says,

> ...but now that God has been seen in the flesh and has associated with human kind, I depict what I have seen of God. I do not venerate matter, I venerate the fashioner of matter, who became matter for my sake and accepted to dwell in matter and through matter worked my salvation, and I will not cease from reverencing matter, through which my salvation was worked.[62]

He thus legitimised the cult of icons by proving that iconography was based on reason, that it was theologically permissible, and that it offered great many practical advantages.[63] Leroy comments on St John's qualities which characterised him as an important theologian:

> It is said that he [John of Damascus] was the master and initiator of scholastic theology. By the clarity and precision of his style, by his love of distinctions and argument, and by taking as his evidence the writings of the Fathers of the Church and the Gospels, he did, in fact, create a method of working which was to dominate the teaching of theology and philosophy throughout the Middle Ages.[64]

He is recognised as such in the Eastern, as well as in the Western Church. Through Thomas Aquinas (1225-1274), who read a few pages of John of Damascus' book every day, he became also one of the most influential masters of Western thought.[65] "All the statuary of our Gothic cathedrals, all the brilliant colours of our stained glass, show similar ideas in the minds of the artists of the Middle Ages. They owed their ideas to

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[62] St John of Damascus, *Three Treatises on the Divine Images*, i, 4, 16 (Louth, p. 29).

[63] Jules Leroy, *Monks and Monasteries of the Near East*, trans. Peter Collin, George G. Harrap, London, Toronto, Wellington, Sydney, 1963, p. 81.

[64] Ibid., p. 80.

[65] Ibid., p. 81. See also James A. Weisheipl, *Friar Toma D'Aquino: his life, thought, and work*, Catholic University of America Press, Washington DC, 1983.

John of Damascus and his followers at the Great Laura, especially the brothers Theodorus and Theophanes Grapti (Graptos)."[66]

In the acrimonious debates of the iconoclastic period, Patriarch Nicephorus (758-829; as Patriarch 806-815) and St Theodore the Studite (759-826) had also put forward as their main argument the fact that Christ's incarnation made him visible, and gave value to His visibility. Theodore the Studite defines the relationship between the image and its prototype as relations of necessity and identity (they are different by nature, but identical by name):

> ... we say that Christ is one thing and His image is another thing by nature, although they have an identity in the use of the same name. [...] When one considers the likeness to the original by means of a representation, it is both Christ and the image of Christ. It is Christ by the identity of name, but the image of Christ by its relationship. For the copy is a copy of its original, just as a name is the name of that which is named.[67]

The term iconoclastic does not simply mean an upsurge of 'purified' religion reacting against the excessive cult of saints and icons. In reality what was at stake during these two periods of struggles, disputes, and persecutions was the fate of Byzantium's art ("what constitutes for us the charm of Byzantine civilization"[68]).

Jules Leroy considers that,

> if the opponents of the Holy Icons had triumphed part of the beauty of the world to-day would have been lost, for we would have been left to bewail the disappearance of the mosaics in Santa Sophia's, at Daphni, Karie Cami, the frescoes of Mistra,

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[66] Leroy, *Monks and Monasteries*, pp. 81-82; Sts Theodorus (ca. 775-ca. 842), and Theophanes (ca. 778-845). They were defenders of the presence of icons in the Church. They were born in Jerusalem and lived in St Savas Monastery. *The Oxford Dictionary of Byzantium,* vol. 3, Oxford University Press, New York, Oxford, 1991, pp. 2042, 2062.

[67] Theodore the Studite, *On the Holy Icons*, iv, 99, 421 (trans. Catharine P. Roth, St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, Crestwood, N.Y., 1981, pp. 31-32).

[68] Leroy, *Monks and Monasteries*, p. 81.

> ought to follow, in it they read who do not know letters; whence especially for gentiles a picture stands in place of reading.[71]

Also the Synod which took place in 863 in Rome, by affirming directly that the "cult of images is confirmed against the Iconoclasts,[72] in Menozzi's view, "goes way beyond the traditional Gregorian thesis about the didactic equivalence between Word and image. It actually proclaims that through the colours of the paintings as well as through the words of the Scripture, man grows to a contemplation of Christ that is a condition of salvation: the one who has not seen the sensible figure of Christ on earth will not be able to see it in the celestial glory."[73]

Therefore, both Catholicism and Orthodoxy confess the dogma of venerating religious images in the Church but Western Europe (especially Frankish realms) never fully accepted the decisions of the 787 Ecumenical Council of Nicaea. As Alain Besançon shows, after Pope Hadrian (772-795) sent the documents of the Second Council of Nicaea to the Emperor Charlemagne (742-814), the emperor asked either Théodulfe d'Orléans (760-821), or (in Besancon's opinion) Alcuin (ca. 735-804) to prepare a refutation of their content, which was called in the history of the Church

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[71] "Epistola II (10) Gregorius to Serenus, Episcopus Massiliensis, October 600 [The Second Epistle to the Bishop Serenus]", Ibid., pp. 873-875. The translation was also done by Chazelle, ibid.

[72] "cultusque imaginum adversus iconoclasts confirmatur", Mansi, *Sacrum Conciliorum Nova and Amplissima Collectio*, Antonius Zatta Veneti, Venice, 1770, xv, col. 662.

[73] See Appendix E for Daniele Menozzi's quotation in French from *Les Images. Eglise et les arts visuels*, Paris, Les Editions du Cerf, 1991, pp. 111-112. This is against the Second of the Ten Commandments which forbids believers to make 'any graven image, or any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth below, or that is in the water, or under the earth' (Exodus 20:4), but was altered by the Incarnation of Christ that made His representation legitimate, as John of Damascus affirmed. See also Chazelle's comment in "Pictures, Books, and the Illiterate," pp. 138-153.

Libri Carolini.[74] The main ideas of this refutation (already familiar from the two letters sent by Pope Gregory the First to Bishop Serenus) are that the images are to be accepted in the Church out of a didactic purpose: they could help those who cannot read the Bible to understand its message, they could help *memoria* (i.e. people can recalled more easily the saints' actions than if they are left without any visual means), and that these images are *ornamentum* (i.e. are acceptable to adorn the walls). This is why the painter's "state of mind" or personal morality is not important. The painters is completely free in his work, which is neither pious nor impious, but the same with that of carpenters, joiners, and other labourers

> All these arts, accessible only through apprenticeship, can be possessed by professionals in piety or in impiety [...] Just it is not impious to paint abominable scenes, so is it not pious to depict the lives of goodly men.[75]

The second important point in *Libri Carolini* is that the aims mentioned above (didactic and decorative) are acceptable "only if painting is placed within the context of the other means spiritual life has at its disposal."[76]

Even within the Eastern Church an important distinction is made: according to the 787 Nicaean Council's decisions, the icons receive veneration (*προσκύνησις*) from the faithful, but not adoration (*λατρεία*), which is addressed only to God. The icons are not worshipped themselves; they provoke in people a longing for the archetypes they represent:

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[74] Alain Besançon, *L'image interdite. Une histoire intellectuelle de l'iconoclasme*, Fayard, Paris, 1994, p. 208 (or, in the the English version, *The Forbidden Image. An Intellectual History of Iconoclasm*, transl. by J. M. Todd, The University of Chicago Press, Chicago, London, 2000, p. 151); from now on I will use the English version. *Opus Caroli Regis Contra Synedum (Libri Carolini)*, [*sive Caroli Magni Capitulare de imaginibus*] are four books which were written probably between 790 and 792.

[75] "Opus Caroli Regis Contra Synedum (Libri Carolini)", in Ann Freeman, Paul Meyvaert (eds.), *Monumenta Germaniae Historica Concillia*, Hahnsche Buchhandlung, Hannover, 1998, t. ii; the English translation (by Todd), in Besançon, *The Forbidden Image*, p. 151.

[76] Besançon, *The Forbidden Image*, p. 151.

> For the more these are kept in view through their iconographic representation, the more those who look at them are lifted up to remember and have an earnest desire for the prototypes. Also [we declare] that one may render to them the veneration of honour: not the true worship of our faith, which is due only to the divine nature, but the same kind of veneration as is offered to the form of the precious and life-giving cross, to the holy gospels, and to the other holy dedicated items. Also [we declare] that one may honour these by bringing to them incense and light, as was the pious custom of the early [Christians]; for 'the honour to the icon is conveyed to the prototype.' Thus, he who venerates the icon venerates the hypostasis of the person depicted on it.[77]

Therefore, the most important approach to icons is a sacramental one, in which icons are seen as means of grace. In addition of being such means, they have also a didactic and mnemotechnic use, as images in the Western Church have.

In spite of the decisions in favour of images in Christianity, there have been many controversies since then, notably in the West during the Reformation.[78] The issue still remains debated today.

With regard to position and placement of icons, although some other Christian denominations decorate their places of worship, the way in which they manifest veneration is different. The Orthodox do it through liturgical honours: keeping icons inside the altar and placing some of them in the middle of the church on special occasions, praying, bowing, lighting candles in front of them, and kissing them. Catholics, on the other hand, do not use them during the religious service, but just pray individually and light candles in front of them in churches, and to a certain extent even

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[77] Sahas, *Icon and Logos*, p. 179.

[78] Opinions are divided as about what type of 'iconoclasm' the Reformation brought with it. However, most recent research would argue, with Evan Cameron, that "Reformation 'iconoclasm' was not a campaign against 'graven images' as such, but a campaign against the veneration of all that detracted from the free and sufficient grace of Christ - so relics or mass vestments, not 'images' as such might none the less be denounced and destroyed as 'idols'." Cameron, *The European Reformation*, Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1991, p. 249. See also G. R. Elton, *Reformation Europe: 1517-1559*, Collins, London, 1963; Arthur Geoffrey Dickens, *Reformation* and *Society in Sixteenth Century Europe*, Thames and Hudson, London, 1966.

kiss them (especially in the countryside or if they live in countries where the Orthodox are numerically predominant and thus influential). This difference in practice is consistent with their doctrine, since, as shown above, the Catholics never fully accepted the decisions of Second Council of Nicaea.

I believe that today the geographical area in which Catholics live makes a difference in terms of their attitude towards sacred images: I have seen people in Italy (in a small village church close to Turin) behaving in front of images (both paintings and statues) representing holy persons almost in the same manner in which the Orthodox people behave in front of icons (lighting candles and kissing them). I have also seen, for example, Canadian Catholics in St Michael's Church in Toronto who did not focus at all on the religious paintings in the church, but only on the statues. In general Orthodox people consider icons to be prominent to their devotional life, especially in the private domain (every house is supposed to have an icon corner), while Catholics give more importance to the didactic purposes of icons, and render "special veneration, particularly [to those images] supposedly endowed with miraculous powers"[79].

The attitudes of the two denominations differ also towards the artists who make icons and towards sacred art. The main distinction is that Orthodoxy bases theirs on the Tradition of the Church, whereas Catholicism, since the Renaissance, has not been especially preoccupied with choosing the painter according to canonical criteria; but has instead appealed to any artists - often to the most famous - to decorate its churches, without being concerned with whether they belong to the Church or not, or even

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[79] Weitzman, *The Icon. Holy Images. Sixth to Fourteenth Century*, Chatto and Windus, London, 1978, p. 7.

whether they are believers or atheists.[80] By contrast, the Orthodox Church has required - and still does require - that painters should not only be believers, but also keep certain ascetic rules before and during their work in the church. This was the case, for example, with the painters who eventually completed the frescoes in the Holy Trinity Monastery in Jordanville, USA,[81] and, even with the artists who worked in St Michael's Cathedral, Coventry, United Kingdom, during its reconstruction after the war (even though it is not an Orthodox church, the artist who worked there, Sir Jacob Epstein, was questioned about his faith).[82]

In 1551 the Russian Orthodox Church Council held a Council in Moscow ('The Council of the Hundred Chapters – *Stoglav* - as it was called at the time because its decisions are divided into one hundred chapters). Among the issues discussed there, as for example, whether people who are still alive or, more generally, have yet to be declared saints are supposed to be painted in an icon, the rules to guide iconographers in their work were also addressed. These rules were formulated, in the following terms:

> ... painters must paint icons according to the ancient models, as the Greeks painted them, as Andrei Rublev and

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[80] For example, the church at Assy where Chagall – an unbeliever - painted the Baptisterium. See W. S. Rubin, *Modern Sacred Art and the Church at Assy*, Columbia University Press, New York, 1961.

[81] The story about the icons and wall-paintings of this monastery, narrated by Revd. Dr. Kallistos Ware who partially witnessed it in about 1960, is that initially the monks hired a woman painter to do it. After a while, in spite of the fact that the images looked formally correct, the monks felt that something was wrong with the paintings - they were too "cold." One day the abbot discovered that, during the painting process, the woman smoked and listened to modern pop music. Then he decided the monks should try to do the painting by themselves, even though none of them had full artistic training. The whole community prayed and fasted together for a while. They began to paint and, to their surprise, the frescoes looked good and emanated a special "warmth."

[82] Basil Spence, *Phoenix at Conventry. The Building of a Cathedral*, Geoffrey Bles, London, 1962, pp. 68-71; Sir Jacob Epstein (1880-1956) worked at the Cathedral between 1954 and 1955.

> other renowed painters made them [...] Painters are in no way to use their imagination.[83]

That was consistent enough with what Dionysius of Fourna would say later (in the eighteenth century) in his set of rules regarding "Preliminary training and instructions to him who wishes to learn the art of painting."[84] Dionysius describes the ways in which a church painter[85] can learn from a Master, either directly studying under his (today also under 'her') supervision in a true process of initiation, or indirectly, copying his works:

> Know, therefore, diligent student, that when you wish to undertake this science [of painting], you must look for and find a learned master, whom you will soon wish to surpass in some respects if he teaches you clearly as we should direct. If you only find one who is unlearned and unskillful, do as we did and see if you can find some original works by Manuel Panselinos[86] and copy them at any opportunity, drawing them in the way that we shall instruct you further on, until you master the proportions and forms in the original. Then go into the churches that he has painted and make copies, as we shall instruct you clearly.[87]

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[83] *Stoglav*, 41, answer to question 1; in the French translation by E. Duchesne, *Le Stoglav ou les Cent chapitres* [Stoglav or The Hundred Chapters], Librairie ancienne Honoré Champion, Paris, 1920, p. 107; The original Russian text of *Stoglav* was edited in Moscow in 1890; it was called like that at the time because its decisions are divided into one hundred chapters. The English translation in the above text is by Ouspensky, *Theology of the Icon*, vol. 2, p. 291. In his book other excerpts are translated into English by the same author, pp. 289-303. Ouspensky points out (in footnote 7, p. 291) that there are some errors in the French translation "due to the translator's lack of knowledge about iconography". For a twentieth century perspective on Rublev's work see Andrei Tarkovsky' s film *Andrei Rublev*, USSR, 1966. The film reflects (at least in the director's vision) the fourteenth century practice of praying, fasting, and even keeping the silence vow while painting of an icon.

[84] Dionysius of Fourna, The *'Painter's Manual'*, Oakwood Publications, Redondo Beach, California, 1989, p. 4. The Hieromonk Dionysius of Fourna was a painter and writer who lived between ca. 1670 and 1746. From 1701 he lived on Mount Athos. He considered himself a disciple of Panselinos (see footnote 86 below), even though he lived much later than the latter. He gathered the material for the above mentioned *Manual* (*Ermineia tis zografikis tehnis*) during 1729-1733. See the Preface of the Romanian edition of the Dionysius of Fourna's book *Erminia picturii bizantine*, Editura Sophia, Bucharest, 2000, p. 13.

[85] By a 'Church painter' Dionysius understood the Orthodox Church painter, see footnote 86.

[86] Manuel Panselinos is believed to be a Church painter from Thessalonica who, in the fortheenh century, painted many churches in Greece, especially on Mount Athos, e.g. the church of the monastery Protaton in 1310 (see the Preface to the Romanian edition of the Dionysius of Fourna's book *Erminia picturii bizantine*, Editura Sophia [Sophia Publishing House], Bucharest, 2000, pp. 9, 11, 13-14).

[87] Dionysius of Fourna, The *'Painter's Manual'*, p. 4.

In general, in the Byzantine context – and this is still kept in the Orthodox countries - an iconographer has to undergo an apprenticeship with a Master. For example, in Romania even today, in addition to the studies in the university, a graduate of the Faculty of Theology, Icon-painting Division, or of the Faculty of Decorative Arts is still required to have done this apprenticeship for at least 365 working days.

The true apprenticeship cannot be undertaken without a religious preparation of the soul, body and mind, because the images in the Orthodox Church are not created primarily for the delight of the eyes and satisfaction of the aesthetic senses of people who see them, but constitute a 'theology in images.' For the correct execution of these images a knowledge of dogma, Holy Scripture, exegesis, cult and Church history is necessary. The icon remained a very specific feature of Eastern Christianity, and it is still considered as such in the present day. It involves the concept of the image, when created in the correct way, as a receptacle for the spirit of the person it portrays in his or her glorified state, not in the fallen form of the corruptible body.

It is difficult to understand Byzantine Christian art, especially nowadays, without one being familiar with the doctrine related to it. For the Byzantine believer, an icon was not just a likeness of a saint, but contained the essence of the prototype, and therefore, in a sense, it actually was the subject portrayed. The icon makes present what it signifies. As the Council of Nicaea underlines: "Thus, he who venerates the icon venerates the hypostasis of the person depicted on it."[88]

The same conception is still specific to the Orthodox Church today, and modern Orthodox theologians reinforce the traditional ideas. For example, Cândea and Simionescu affirm that "above all, the icon is a real presence of the person it represents; so it was viewed by the most rigorous theoreticians or artists" even though

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[88] Mansi, *Sacrum Conciliorum*, vol. xiii, coll. 377 E. Sahas' translation in *Icon and Logos*, p. 179.

is it also "a support for spiritual concentration, a means to communicate the doctrine or a theme for meditation."[89]

Therefore, the Orthodox Church attributes such great importance to the icon because it is something 'greater' than a 'simple image', 'decoration,' or even an 'illustration of Holy Scripture.'[90] It is an object of veneration and an integral part of the liturgy, the manifestation of the holy Tradition of the Church. Even though, as Louth affirms, the problem of the ecclesiastical Tradition has not been sufficiently researched, one can say with St Basil the Great that,

> We have both dogmas and proclamations (*kerygmata*) preserved in the Church, proclamations in the written teaching, and dogmas which we have received from the tradition of the apostles and given to us in secret.[91]

Unlike many elements of the liturgical practices (the sign of the cross, the epiclesis at the Eucharist, and most of the rest of the Eucharistic prayer, the blessing of the water in baptism and of oil, and prayer towards the East) which have come in the Church by the way of unwritten tradition or following a "tacit dimension which is the heart of the tradition,"[92] icons have come by both the way of unwritten (initially) and *written* tradition, as the documents of the Councils mentioned above prove.

Pelikan mentions an ambiguity in the notion of Tradition itself –written or unwritten- which can justify, at least partially, some of the controversies regarding the images in the Church. He considers that,

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[89] Virgil Cândea and Constantin Simionescu, *Witnesses to the Romanian Presence on Mount Athos*, Editura Sport-Turism, [Sport and Tourism Publishing House], Bucharest, 1979, p. 12.

[90] Ouspensky, *Theology of the Icon*, vol. 1, p. 8; Weitzman, *The Icon. Holy Images, Sixth to Fourteenth Century*, Chatto&Windus, London, 1978, p. 7.

[91] St Basil the Great, *On the Holy Spirit*, xxvii. 66, ed. C. F. H. Johnston, Clarendon Press, Oxford, pp.127-128.

[92] Louth, *Discerning the Mystery. An Essay on the Nature of Theology*, Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1983, p. 95.

> The ambiguity of the tradition was far older as well [as old 'as the tradition dealing with the use of images']. Both groups of Christians in the Iconoclastic controversy denounced Judaism and dissociated themselves from the Jews [...] Nevertheless, both of them also acknowledged the bearing of the biblical and post-biblical Jewish tradition on the question of the place of the icons in the worship of one God [as based on the interdiction from the Second Commandment in the Decalogue].[93]

But, for Pelikan, Dura Europos is a proof 'for the ambiguity of the post-biblical Jewish tradition on representation' itself. He continues,

> In view of the efforts by John of Damascus and other defenders of Iconodule orthodoxy to validate the Byzantine reverence for images on the basis of early usage, the evidence provided by Dura may at least in part make up for the absence of more artistic remains from the early centuries of Christian history – although it also adds to the ambiguity of the argumentation from tradition.[94]

As a conclusion to the idea of Tradition in Christianity – implicitly justifying the use of icons, Louth's words could be useful:

> Both Scripture and tradition are objectified: they are *that* which we seek to understand, there is a distance between them and us who seek to understand them. There are a good many hidden assumptions behind all this: the idea, for instance, that what is revealed is a collection of truths, so that if tradition supplements Scripture, what we mean is that in addition to the apostolic witness that was written down in the Scriptures, there are other truths which have, as it were, been whispered down the ages, and not written down. These truths are objective, independent truths which we who seek them will, if we go about it the right way, come across and recognize.[95]

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[93] Pelikan, *Imago Dei*, pp. 49-50.

[94] Ibid., p. 52.

[95] Louth, *Discerning the Mystery*, p. 73, his emphasis. The idea in this quotation seems to clarify somehow the misunderstanding of both Catholic and Protestant Christian denominations regarding the nature of Tradition in the Church. For the Catholics, at least between the Reformation and the Second Vatican Council, Tradition has usually been understood as a supplement to the Scripture, while the Protestants have rejected all together such an idea of Tradition, keeping to the original revelation of God in Christ as described in the Scriptures. See more on this issue in Chapter 4 ('Tradition and the tacit', pp. 73-95) of Louth's above-mentioned book.

Since the ninth century for Orthodox people the individual image has become the most graphic expression of holiness. They venerate the icons, honouring them in churches each Sunday and on each religious holiday, going on pilgrimage to some of the icons which are considered miracle working,[96] and making them the centre of their daily devotional life by praying in front of them at home. These icons depict Jesus, the Virgin, and the saints, who are presented as radiant with a special kind of light, 'the uncreated light of God,' as it is called in the language of the Church.[97] Orthodox Byzantine painting, i.e. icon, makes no use of shadows or perspective because the light of grace within the saints dispels darkness, and the space in which they live and move is full of shining grace. When other objects appear in icons (plants, hills, animals) their spiritual essence is also revealed. This is one of the reasons, among other listed below, why I would called the style of icon-painting 'Spiritual Realism'.

Kontoglou thought he had discovered a "transcendental" and "anti-naturalist" Realism in Ouspensky's icons.[98] Kotkavaara, in his published doctoral thesis, considers that for the style of icons painted by what he calls Russian "revivalists"

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[96] There are miracle working icons in Romania, for example in Neamț Monastery, one of Hodegetria (Indicator of the Way) iconographic type: the Virgin with the Child Christ held on her left arm while she points to him with her right hand, similar with that which is said to have been painted by St Luke, Fig. 1 in the thesis (Appendix C). There is also another one in Necula Monastery, see chapter 4. D. and T. Talbot-Rice give a powerful example through the fifth century mosaic in the Church of Hosios David in Thessaloniki. The story goes as follows: during the process of setting the mosaic, while the craftsmen were engaged on a portrayal of the Virgin in the apse, one morning when they came to work they found that the figure had been miraculously changed to that of Christ. D. and T. Talbot-Rice, *Icons and their Dating. A Comprehensive Study of their Chronology and Provenance*, London, Thames and Huston, 1974, p.16.

[97] See Sergei Bulgakov's: *Svet nevechernii. Sozertsaniia i umozreniia* [The Unfading Light. Contemplations and Speculations], Respublica, Moscow, 1994.

[98] Kontoglou, *I'asánta*, pp. 234-236.

living in Paris after the Russian Communist Revolution, the term "Magic Realism" will work. He justifies such a term as follows: "A non-Orthodox, Western spectator who encounters this contemporary art form in modernist interiors, for example in the *Church of the Virgin, Joy of All Who Sorrow and of Saint Geneviève* in Paris, may, at least, benefit from such a reading." But then he realises that "the connotations of "magic" certainly disturb the friends of icon-painting" and thinks that "the word could be replaced with a less provocative term. He thinks that "Perhaps the best alternative – and a perfect match for Vladimir Lossky and Leonid Uspensky's neo-Palamite ideas – would be "Transfigured Realism".[99] I would feel that if someone uses the word 'transfigured' that person should explained into what this Realism is 'transfigured', so it looks as though the term Spiritual Realism works better. More arguments for my opinion (besides what I affirmed above) will follow further on.

It is difficult to know what the iconographers themselves would have called their style of painting in the early stages of Christianity since there are no written sources to attest their reflections and opinions on their own works. Actually, only a few of the works themselves (the icons) before and from the Iconoclastic period have survived. Jaroslav Pelikan summarises the insufficiency of evidence from that time in following terms:

> Whatever may have been the difficulties created by the authority of the tradition for Byzantine thought (and on the both sides of the [Iconoclastic] debate) when it confronted the new and yet ancient issue of the place of images in the worship of the one invisible God, our historiographical difficulties in seeking after more than a millennium to reconstruct that tradition (and on both sides of the debate) are in some ways at least as great.[...] When the edict against images had been issued by Emperor Leo III, squads were dispatched not only to government buildings, churches, and to monasteries, but to private homes, to extirpate

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[99] Kotkavaara, *Progeny of the Icon*, p. 342.

> the abomination of the idolatrous pictures that had desecrated the holy city of Byzantium. Even if one does not credit all the details of the atrocity stories that were circulated by the partisans of images, we must conclude that the police did their job effectively. Just how effectively can be judged by the scarcity today of pre-Iconoclastic icons.[100]

Among the few sources of the period, the best known is the Homily xvii, a "Homily Delivered from the Ambo of the Great Church, on Holy Saturday, in the presence of the Christ-Loving Emperors, when the form of the Theotokos had been depicted and uncovered" by Photius, the Patriarch of Constantinople (856-867, 877-886) – unfortunately not by an iconographer. The emperors present were Michael the Third (842-867) and Basil the First the Macedonian (867-886). In this sermon from 867 the Patriarch describes the mosaic representing the Mother of God in the apse of the Saint Sophia Church stressing especially the 'naturalism' in which that was painted:

> A virgin mother, with a virgin's and a mother's gaze, dividing in indivisible form her temperament between both capacities, yet belittling neither by its incompleteness. With such exactitude has the art of painting, which is a reflection of inspiration from above, set up a lifelike imitation. For, as it were, she fondly turns her eyes on her begotten Child in the affection of her heart, yet assumes the expression of a detached and imperturbable mood at the passionless and wondrous nature of her offspring, and composes her gaze accordingly [...] To such an extent have the lips been made flesh by the colours, that they appear merely to be pressed together and stilled as in the mysteries, yet their silence is not at all inert neither is the fairness of her form derivatory, but rather is it the real archetype.[101]

Hans Belting comments of Photius' homily and on the whole occasion in which that was delivered. He shows that the day was carefully chosen [it was 29 March] to coincide with the anniversary of Orthodoxy, i.e. the day when, in 843, the

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[100] Pelikan, *Imago Dei*, pp. 47-48.

reinstatement of images was proclaimed. Belting considers that "The sermon by Patriach Photios, in celebrating the completion of the new 'form (*morphē*) of the Mother of God, became a synopsis of the official doctrine on images."[102]

A naturalism is mentioned here indeed since the icon is a "lifelike imitation'. But it should also be noticed that the holy figure "assumes the expression of a detached and imperturbable mood" which most of the literature of Byzantine Studies mentioned in this chapter considers a feature of Byzantine style of painting (or, at least, of one of the styles of Byzantine painting). Moreover, even when the lips have "been made flesh by the colours", they are "stilled as in the mysteries", and even thought "their silence is not at all inert" [which Beltings points out to be "a criticism that was sometimes made of painting"[103]] "her form" is "the real archetype". The latest affirmation repeats another widespread idea about icons: that they represent the archetype of the holy person depicted within them (and, as shown in the beginning of the chapter, stated by St John of Damascus).

Just as the religious schism between the Eastern and Western was a gradual process, not a single in 1054, so the split between them at the artistic level was also gradual. According to Demus, the Western artists continued to find in Eastern art models and techniques that they could borrow or adapt to their different ethos. He affirms:

> The apprenticeship of Western artists with respect to Byzantine models began, of course, in the technical field. Western treatises, from the *Schedula diversarum artium* of the so-called Theophilus to the *Trattato* of Cennino Cennini, are full of recipes derived from Byzantine sources.

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[101] Photius, Homily xvii, "Of the same Most-Blessed Photius, Patriarch of Constantinople, Homily Delivered from the Ambo of the Great Church, on Holy Saturday, in the presence of the Christ-Loving Emperors, when the form of the Theotokos had been depicted and uncovered", Cyril Mango (ed), *The Homilies of Photius, Patriarch of Constantinople*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge Mass., 1958, p. 290.

[102] Hans Belting, *Likeness and Presence: A History of the Image Before the Era of Art*, trans. E. Jephcott, University of Chicago Press, Chicago, London, 1990, p. 167.

[103] Ibid.

> Some techniques, such as mosaic, or cloisonné enamel, it is true, remained for a long time virtual monopolies of Byzantium; but even these opened up new possibilities in the West: Italian wall-painting profited from the way in which mosaic decorations were articulated, divided by frames and enriched by ornament, and certain modeling practices evolved in mosaic were eagerly copied by fresco painters.[104]

In addition to Weitzmann who speaks about the process of communication,[105] also Kitzinger,[106] Demus, and Michelis show in their writings that an interraction was at work at all times between the Eastern and Western parts of the Roman Empire. However, most of the scholarly sources which deal with the cultural connections between West and East discuss the issue of Western influence on Eastern Christian art (usually with reference to Greece and Russia, but also Romania). Among them there are the works of Evdokimov, Ouspensky, Lossky, and Voinescu already mentioned. In contrast, there are concrete cases which Michelis brings into discussion to exemplify an Eastern influence on the West, such as Mistra: "It was not, then, the West which influenced the art of Mistra but rather the reverse."[107] In addition, he maintains that the 'humanisation' observable in Eastern art, for example within the Monasteries of Mount Athos, is not a consequence of the Western influence, but on the contrary: the Athonite iconographers used it in their works, and from there it spread in the West. It seems that the influence between the two was simultaneous and reciprocal, and this idea is implied in the above-mentioned works of both Michelis and Demus; it would be better to say that today we think of this interaction in terms of communication rather than influence.

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[104] Demus, *Byzantine Art and the West*, The Wrightsman Lectures: 3, Weidenfeld and Nicolson, London, 1970, p. 15.

[105] Weitzmann, *Various Aspects of Byzantine Influence on the Latin Countries from the Sixth to the Twelfth Century,* Dumberton Oaks Papers, Number 20, pp. 1-25.

[106] Kitzinger, *The Byzantine Contribution to Western Art of the Twelfth and Thirteenth Centuries*, Dumbarton Oaks Papers, Number 20, pp. 25-49.

[107] Michelis, *An Aesthetic Approach to Byzantine Art*, p. 4.

A very short concluding summary of the common [for the two parts of the former Roman Empire] situation of Church painting before the Fall of Constantinople in 1453, which produced a more substantial differentiation, would look as follows:

With regard to individual images, Church tradition traces the first icons (*eikon* - image, reflection) back to the time of Jesus Christ and the period immediately after Him, even though the general tendency in the Christian Church up to the fourth century was a reserved attitude about direct depictions of Christ and of the holy persons; symbols were used instead. Thus the early Church reacted to the surrounding paganism which was very rich in imagery. At that time Christians did not paint Christ's face in the form of a portrait, but evoked him symbolically as a fish, the Lamb, the Good Shepherd (Fig. 2).[108] The first known image of the bearded Christ is in the Catacomb of Commodilla, late fourth-early fifth century (Fig. 3). After the reign of Constantine, and especially after that of Justinian (527-565 A.D), the depiction of Christ's face became widespread, and the veneration shown by people towards these first icons led to Leo the Third's reaction against images in 726.

Toward the end of the seventh century with the barbarian invasions in the West and the rise of Islam in the East, a multitude of tendencies and styles in depicting holy images occurred. Weitzmann affirms that,

> The Greco-Roman style, predominant in imperial Rome, was not only shared by Constantinople, but here preserved, more

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[108] For a detailed discussion on the symbols of the early Christianity see Theodor Klauser, "Studien zur Entstehungsgeschichte der Christlichen Kunst" [Studies on the transmission of Christian Art], *Jahrbuch für Antike und Christentum*, vols. 1-10, Aschendorffsche Verlagsbuchhandlung, Munster, Westfalen. 1958-1967. The pages in which Klauser discusses symbols as the Good Sheppard, Lamb, and the Orans position of prayer are respectively: 20-51, 115-145, 112-133, 128-145, 113-124, 71-100, 67-76, 126-170 (the last was a double issue for 1965/1966). See also J. Wilpert, *Die Malereien der Katakomben Roms*, Herdersche Verlagshandlung, Freiburg im Breisgan, 1903; T. F. Mathews, *The Clash of Gods: A Reinterpretation of Early Christian Art*, Princeton University Press, Princeton, 1993; Michaly Csikszentmichalyi, *The Art of Seeing. An Interpretation of the Aesthetic Encounter*, J. Paul Getty Trust, Los Angeles, 1990. See the image of Christ as the Good Shepherd made in about 200-250 A. D. which has survived in San Callistos [Saint Callixtus] Catacomb. Crypt of Lucina in Rome, André Grabar *The Beginnings of Christian Art. 200-237*, Thames and Hudson Edition, 1967, p. 31.

> strongly than in any other part of the empire, into the sixth and seventh centuries, nurtured by the imperial court and humanistic intellectuals. In the meantime, the great metropolitan cities Alexandria and Antioch, still rooted in the classical tradition in the third and fourth centuries, began to succumb to the native styles of their hinterlands, Coptic Egypt and Palmyrene Syria. In the West, outside the imperial residences of Rome, Milan, and Ravenna, and especially outside Italy, in the provinces of Gaul, Spain, Britain, and the Germanic territories, the classical heritage weakened rapidly and was infiltrated by what is called "Migration of Nations" art.[109]

The process of adopting imagery in Christianity, which developed simultaneously with the classical tradition, was a sinuous one. Imperial commissions in the provinces, as for example Jerusalem where they abounded, artistic revivals, and other factors produced objects in which the classical heritage was often much better preserved than in other works of art produced contemporaneously in the same regions. This process was also partially interrupted from time to time because of other periods of iconoclasm which, in the period up to 843, led to the destruction of many early religious paintings.

Weitzmann says that before the seventh century,

> Seen from a wider perspective, the general trend of stylistic development was from naturalism to abstraction, from sculptural to two-dimensional arts for the sake of dematerialization and spiritualization, and from spatial settings to geometric order.[110]

Photius's homily speaking about the naturalism in depiction of the Mother of God in his time is a support for his point of view. And the discovery of the three exceptional and well known icons in St Catherine Monastery: Christ, The Virgin Flanked by Saint Theodore and Saint George, and St Peter, supposingly made in Constantinople (their

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[109] Weitzmann (ed.), *Age of Spirituality. Late Antique and Early Christian Art, Third to Seventh Century*, The Metropolitan Museum of Art and Princeton University Press, New York, 1979, p. xxvi.

quality strongly points towards this provenance) comes to strengthen the idea that in the sixth and early seventh centuries icons were painted naturalistically.

Up to the eighth century most of the religious art looks similar to the art of Byzantium (for instance, the frescoes of Rome, in *Santa Maria Antiqua* Church[111]). In Faure's opinion after that a process of gradual desacralization began.[112] Weitzmann seems to suggest the same when he exemplifies with Palestine, where between seventh and eighth century "the classical forms have begun to erode". Nevertheless he puts a strong note of relativity on Faure's statement and shows that,

> A history of the icon from the sixth to the ninth centuries according to style and content cannot yet be written because of the extreme scarcity of the material, which has been preserved almost exclusively at Mount Sinai, where it escaped the destruction of the iconoclasts. Even when the tenth century is concerned, the history of the painted icon is still an enigma, since only a handful of examples come to light, once more at Mount Sinai, although a substantial number are preserved in other media, such as ivory. A coherent picture of icon-painting begins to emerge only with the eleventh and twelfth centuries. But from this period as well, the majority of extant icons are in the possession of Saint Catherine's Monastery.[113]

From the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries many more icons have survived: from Greece, Russia, Serbia, Bulgaria, and the Near East. The technique of painting, especially for the end of the fourteenth century, was that of "loose brush which had been the chief means of achieving dematerialization and spiritualization" and "reached

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[110] Ibid., p. xxvi.

[111] *Santa Maria Antiqua* Church was founded in the middle of sixth century in the Roman forum; the frescoes here were painted between sixth and eighth centuries.

[112] Élie Faure, *Histoire de l'art: L'art renaissant*, Éditions Jean-Jaques Pauvert, Paris, 1976; See also Deborah J. Haynes' historical presentation, which refers to the secularisation of arts after the eight century, *The Vocation of the Artist*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1977.

[113] Weitzmann, *The Icon. Holy Images Sixth to Fourteenth Century*, Chatto & Windus, London, 1978, pp. 17-18.

a point where the strokes formed a pattern quite dissociated from the body hidden by the garment." Weitzmann call it "phantom-like" and shows that it was best represented in the art of Theophanes the Greek, who went from Byzantium to Russia to decorate churches in Novgorod and other areas.[114]

I would say that because of the restraint in showing emotions and feelings on the face of the holy person depicted, even when naturalism has been employed in the painting of icons in Orthodox churches, it was supposed to be different from a pure photographic realism. And when in the history of icon-painting there were periods (such as, for example, the fourteenth century) when icon-painting became very spiritualised, that has often been interpreted in the West as being a distortion of the image of the real world or as an idealisation of it. Actually Orthodox people maintain that this world is the Church's world, and this is the reason why in Orthodoxy painters must be members of the Church: they must see what they are painting. This is one reason, besides the others mentioned above, why I consider that for describing such a style of painting employed by the Orthodox iconographers, the term Spiritual Realism works better than Kotkavaara's 'Transfigured Naturalism'.

The period of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries was very intense in terms of communication and interrelations. This is the period when also Romania - on which my thesis focuses - strongly connects to this Orthodox world, because: "The late flowering of Paleologan icon-painting, despite the impending collapse of the Byzantine Empire, retained sufficient vitality not only to create a distinct style, but to determine the course of painting in other Orthodox countries (...) and to survive even the fall of Constantinople in 1453." For another two or three centuries post-Byzantine painting

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[114] Ibid., p. 23.

produced other good works especially in Crete "maintaining a hight level of artistic accomplishment until it surrendered to the influence of Western Renaissance and Baroque art."[115] The next chapter will present at length the situation in Romania since it was one of the countries affected by this course of icon-painting.

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[115] Ibid.

ii) The Icon and the Religious Painting

ii 1) The difference between an icon and a religious painting with reference to the painter

As I mentioned at the outset of the chapter, the differences between an icon and a painting with a religious motif begins with the attitude of the painter towards his training, towards his work, and towards the result of this work, see above, especially pp. 31- 37.

A painter of a work with religious motifs has no other compulsory requirements to fulfill, except for quality and perhaps originality.[116] In Haynes's opinion, the artist was a "privileged personality," especially in the West, from the time of Giotto (1266-1337) who became the first City *Architect* (because Florence did not have the category of City Painter at that time).[117] But for icon painters the situation is different. They need, in addition to their artistic vocation, a call from God. The icon painters obey certain rules.

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[116] This was the case with the painters belonging to the *art sacré* movement which began in 1920's-1930's. They were talented and original in their approach to religious themes, but their works are not icons. Examples of this still living art can be seen at the Museum of Contemporary *Art Sacré* of St Hugues de Chartreuse. It depicts sacred themes, some of their works looking almost like icons, but in a kind of abstract style. See *L'art sacré d'Albert Gleizes*, Museé de beaux arts, Caen, 1985; Madeleine Ochsé, *Un art sacré pour notre temps*, Fayard, Paris, 1959; Joseph Pichard, *L'art sacré moderne*, B. Arthaud, Paris, 1953.

[117] Mention can also be made here of Haynes's "sympathy" with the distinction between the "era of the images" and the "era of art," between "images" and "art", with an image being essentially "a holy image, worshipped, despised, and/or used in rituals", and a work of art being "a modern invention, created by an (often famous) artist and justified by art theory rather than religious ideology." Haynes speaks also about the "premodern roles of the artist, the craftsperson or artisan who worked prior to the development of mythologies about the artist as a special or privileged personality." D. J. Haynes, *The Vocation of the Artist*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1977, p. 49. She explains later in the book how, in the course of history, the artist was perceived as a "privileged personality": a hero, a semi-divine creator and mystic visionary, a public intellectual. For the distinction between "images" and "art" see also Hans Belting, *Likeness and Presence: A History of the Image Before the Era of Art*, University of Chicago Press, Chicago and London, 1994 and *Qu'est-ce qu'un chef-d'oeuvre*, Gallimard, Paris, 2000.

There have been many treatises to help the icon painter in his work. Theophilus Presbyter, who wrote his handbook *Schedula diuersarum artium*[118] in the twelfth century, stated directly that he intends it for the benefit of those who decorate the "House of God." But even when the purposes of other "Medieval Painter's Manuals" were not explicitly declared, their rules and specifications were widely used by church painters.

In literature in general (Theophilus himself, Cennino Cennini,[119] and Dionysius of Fourna), the art of painting was conceived either as a gradual learning process, or as a 'gift of inspiration.' The roots of this differentiation go back to Classical Antiquity when Horace and Quintilian, referring to literature, speak about a distinction between *versificator* and *poeta*, the writer who possessed a skill which can be learnt and passed on, and the writer who is 'inspired.'[120] In the Middle Ages this distinction was expressed in painting through the differentiation made between Artisan and Master, *Dipintor* and *Maestro*, *Zugrav* and *Meşter* (in Romanian; it has survived in this form until today), the first terms in this enumeration describing the artist whose inspiration

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[118] Theophilus Presbyter, *Schedula diuersarum artium*, Wilhelm Braumuller, Wien, 1874 (in Medieval Latin); *On Divers Arts*, eds. and trans. John C. Howthorne and Cyril Stanley Smith, University of Chicago Press, Chicago & London, 1963. It seems that Theophilus the Presbyter was a German (more precisely from North-West Germany), in spite of many controversies as to whether he was Italian or Greek; but in Germany, in the twelfth century, Greek names were used by artists or even craftsmen. Most specialists of the period identify him with Roger of Helmarshausen, a Benedictine monk and priest, and a practising craftsman whose skill is attested by a bejeweled book cover in Nuremberg, and two portable altars preserved in the Cathedral Treasury in Paderborn. See the *Introduction* to *On Divers Arts*, University of Chicago Press, xv and also the Introduction to *De diuersis artibus. The various arts*, Thomas Nelson and Sons Ltd., London and Paris, Toronto, New York, 1961; trans. C.R. Dodwell, xxxiii, xxxiv, xxxix, xli. On page xxxix Dodwell affirms that, "He [Theophilus] was an educated person, who could write *Kunstprosa*, and who was conversant with scholastic philosophy. He was also a practical craftsman and an established artist, whose primary interest was in metalwork."

[119] Cennino Cennini, *The Craftsman's Handbook: the Italian 'Il Libro dell'Arte'*, N.Y., 1954; Cennini was a Florentine painter and writer who lived between ca. 1370-ca. 1440.

[120] Horace, *Horace's Satires and Epistles*, trans. Jacob Fuchs, Norton, New York, 1977; I:1; 40 & II:1; 28; Quintilian, The *Institutio oratoria of Quintilian* , trans. Harold Edgeworth Butler, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Mass., 1969-1979, vol. 4 : 10, 1.

is based on skills, and the latter describing the artist who "receives" inspiration from Divinity.[121]

Theophilus favours the first term in this distinction; so also do Cennino Cennini, and Dionysius of Fourna, who has a set of rules regarding "Preliminary training and instructions to him who wishes to learn the art of painting".[122]

In Chapter 43 of *Stoglav* Council the rules to govern the iconographer's life are written as follows:

> The painter should be humble and meek, full of reverence, not given to idle talk and jesting. He should not be quarrelsome or envious, not a drunkard or a murderer. Above all, with the utmost care he will preserve spiritual and bodily purity...He will make frequent visits to his spiritual father for confession, revealing everything to him, continuing in fasting and prayer according to his guidance, and avoiding all shamelessness and disorder.[123]

Similar rules guided the way in which the Romanian Orthodox Church painters approached their work:

> The master who began a house or painted a votive fresco observed fasting and took Holy Communion; establishing contact with the sacred was not without danger and implied passing into another state. This passing was first of all a method, but was at the same time a spiritual exercise.[124]

Holy tradition and purity of the heart help the Orthodox painters to do their work. Before beginning their work, the iconographer is supposed to be brought before the bishop to be blessed. Today they receive the blessing from their spiritual father. He

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[121] A very detailed discussion on this distinction and on the artist's status during the history, in D. J. Haynes' book *The Vocation of the Artist*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1977.

[122] Dionysius of Fourna, The '*Painter's Manual,* Oakwood Publications, Redondo Beach, California, 1989, p. 4.

[123] *Stoglav*, 43, Duchene, pp. 133. Ouspensky comments on it especially on pp. 296 and 300 in The *Theology of The Icon.*

[124] Radu Drăgan, 'Cuvânt înainte', in Radu Drăgan, Augustin Ioan, *Fiinţa şi Spaţiul*, Editura ALL, Bucharest, 1992, p. 2.

or she must pray constantly to be strong in his/her faith, to be protected from evil, delusion and fantasy, and to receive the Holy Spirit which enables him/her to see, as they should, the subjects of their paintings. This is the prayer which icon painters traditionally say before beginning a new work:

> O divine Master of all that exists, enlighten and direct the soul, heart and mind of your servant; guide my hands so I may portray worthily and perfectly Your Image, that of Your Holy Mother and all the Saints, for the glory, the joy, and the beautification of Your holy Church.[125]

When Dionysius of Fourna gives advice to the candidates in the art of painting he urges that, after a preliminary short training, "let there be a prayer on his behalf to the Lord Jesus Christ, and supplication before the icon of the Mother of God Hodegetria." He shows the steps to be followed by the painter: "When the priest gives the blessing, after the 'King of heaven' and the rest, the *megalynarion* of the Mother of God, the 'Mute lips' and the *troparion* of the Transfiguration [...], he should mark his head [cross himself] and say aloud "We beseech thee, O Lord." And then he [the painter] must recite a long prayer, from which a fragment follows:

> Lord Jesus Christ our God [...] *Who, having imprinted the sacred character of thy immaculate face on the holy veil* [...] O God and master of all things, enlighten and bring wisdom to the soul and heart and mind of thy servant [name] and direct these hands for the irreproachable and excellent depiction of the form of thy person and of thy immaculate mother and of all thy saints, to thy glory and to the splendour and beautification of the holy church, and the remission of the sins of those paying homage in regard to her and devoutly kissing and so bringing honour to the prototype; redeem him from all harm inflicted by evil, as he diligently follows all the commands of the ministers of thy immaculate mother, of the holy and illustrious apostle and evangelist Luke, and of all the saints. Amen.[126]

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[125] Prayer as given by Aidan Hart of Shropshire, a painter of icons.

[126] Dionysius of Fourna, The '*Painter's Manual*', p. 4; my emphasis.

As one can see from the above, a traditional Orthodox icon painter is a medium through which the prototype of the person depicted in the icon imposes itself on the work to be undertaken by the iconographer. Of course, the gifts of an iconographer are reflected in the icons he/she paints, but the painter in an Orthodox church does not work merely for artistic reasons, or to produce aesthetic effects, but somehow tries to 'hide' behind his/her painting, in a manner exactly opposite to the individualistic attitude of the modern ('conceptual') artist, who attempts to express in a very obvious manner his/her own personal concepts and opinions through his/her work. As quoted above, Weitzmann found that until the Cretan school influence became strong in Eastern Europe, iconographers did not sign their works. In Romania and Russia this is still the norm. An icon painter, before and during the work, undergoes a process of *kenosis* (self emptying) and a *metanoia* (conversion) which transforms him, which is why it is considered that, ideally, an icon painter should be a specifically holy person, with a pure heart and strict discipline of the body.

The documents of the *Stoglav* contain, in addition to the rules to govern the moral life of the iconographer, a chapter with stipulations regarding the canons to be followed in painting icons. They say that artists must paint icons as they were painted by the ancient iconographers.[127] To paint icons as they were painted by the ancestors means to follow the Tradition, at the same time taking into account the general development within iconography itself. Therefore, there is space for creativity within the Tradition, and since this creativity follows canonical norms, it is blessed by God. As Ouspensky maintains, "...the power of the Tradition is the power of the Holy Spirit and of continuity in the spiritual experience of the Church, the power of communion

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[127] *Stoglav*, 41. (transl. Ouspensky, *Theology of the Icon*, vol. 2, pp. 299-300).

with the spiritual life of all the preceding generations back to the time of the apostles"[128].

Nowadays, with a fragmented life in a 'fragmented' and complex milieu, the risk of icon painters losing the connection with their inner self and with the Absolute is much greater than in the past. If this connection is not re-established through a spiritual process (ascesis, prayer, etc.), then the work of these iconographers is different when compared with the work of those who are 'initiated' and who can 'see' much more clearly what is represented through their art. Without the connection with the transcendent reality to which the persons in the icon belong, one cannot properly achieve a work such as that of Rublev's famous icon of the *Holy Trinity*, an icon acclaimed by the 'Hundred Chapters Council' as the paragon of iconography in general, and representations of the Trinity in particular).[129] The fact that this icon was painted more than 500 years ago does not prevent it from being compared with modern works, because the conventions for icon-painting are almost the same today as in ancient times. Therefore, it is both ancient and modern at the same time – as is any authentic Orthodox icon.

By their iconographic compositions, the Church painters translate into visual terms Church's doctrine and history, theological concepts, the divine cult, and in general the religious sentiments of the clergy and laity. Each part of the iconographic decor has a theological substratum and a symbolic intention; each group and cycle of holy images has a certain place in the decorative ensemble of the holy place and plays

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[128] Ouspensky, *Theology of the Icon*, vol.1, p. 11.

[129] The icon of the Holy Trinity was painted by the monk Andrei Rublev (of Radonezh) in 1425. Evdokimov, *The Art of the Icon: a Theology of Beauty*, Oakwood Publications, Redondo Beach, 1972, p. 246; tempera on panel, 142x114 cm (56x45 in.), Tretyakov Gallery, Moscow; see Appendix C.

a well-defined role in the theological demonstration which a specific church building intends to present to the people.[130]

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[130] Ene Branişte, *Programul iconografic al bisericilor ortodoxe. Indrumător pentru zugravii de biserici* [The Iconographical Guide (Typicon) of the Orthodox Church. Guide for the Church Painters], Editura Institutului Biblic şi de Misiune Ortodoxă [The Publishing House of the Biblical and Missionary Institute of the Romanian Orthodox Church], Bucharest, 1975. See also the Notes of Sister Joanna Reitlinger on her icons in St Basil's Chapel which used to be the headquarters of the Fellowship of St. Alban and St Sergius in London (the icons and paintings still belong to the Fellowship; they are now in the Anglican monastery of The Holy Trinity, in Crawley Down, West Sussex – information from Father Brian CCWG, the Abbot of the former Monastery of Christ the Saviour in Hove with whom I have been in correspondence for more than two years), transcript by "Anna Hulbert and Donal Savage with the General Secretary", March 1994; there are four pages of notes, in both Russian and English, unpublished. Consulted by permission of the Fellowship of St Alban and St Sergius in Oxford (represented by Father Stephen Platt of the Orthodox Church of the Holy Trinity and the Annunciation in Oxford, who at the time of writing this chapter was a deacon in the church and the Secretary of the Fellowship). In addition, I have consulted the brochure *The Wall-paintings in Chapel of Our Lady and All Angels*, edited by the Monastery of Christ the Saviour in Hove which used to house Sister Joanna's paintings until 2004; four pages.

ii 2) The notion of programme or iconographical *typicon*

As shown in the above discussion, symbolism, as a very important characteristic of Orthodoxy, comes from the Fathers of the Church. It is manifest in the construction of church buildings and in the arrangement of the images within them. In the first centuries it was expressed merely in the general idea of the church as a place sanctified by the presence of God, which, during the services, was filled with angels and contained human beings who were absolved and sanctified. The general idea of a church (more a matter of inner experience than of outer representation) began to unfold itself in even greater detail from the fourth century on. It was chiefly at this time that Christian services began to acquire a definite form, whilst together with this, and in answer to ritual requirements, there began to evolve a definite plan and a definite arrangement and decoration of the various parts of the church.

In the ninth century the same Patriarch of Constantinople Photius, whom I mentioned above, in another sermon describes the decoration of one of the churches of the imperial palace, and explains some of the iconographers' justification for choosing to decorate the church in the way they did. His homily goes as follows:

> On the very ceiling is painted in coloured mosaic cubes a man-like figure bearing the traits of Christ. Thou mightest say He is overseeing the earth, and devising its orderly arrangement and government, so accurately has the painter been inspired to represent, though only in forms and in colours, the Creator's care for us.[131]

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[131] *The Homilies of Photius*, Homily x, "Homily of the same most-blessed Photius, Archbishop of Constantinople, delivered in the form of a descriptionof the Renowned church in the palace", Ar ii 434-435 (Mango, pp. 187-188). Mango considers that "the date of our Homily falls after April 12, 864 and certainly before April 21, 866" p. 180.

Then he explains where the angels are depicted "in the concave segments next to the summit of the hemisphere",[132] thus giving us details about the church's architecture. Photius' description and presentation of the theology behind the decoration continues:

> The apse which rises over the sanctuary glistens with the image of the Virgin, stretching out her stainless arms on our behalf and winning for the emperor safety and exploits against the foes. A choir of apostles and martyrs, yea, of prophets, too, and patriarchs fill and beautify the whole church with their images.[133]

Nevertheless, a discussion about the painting in an Orthodox Church must inevitably touch on the topic of a programme or iconographic *typicon*. Orthodox churches are not painted at random, but according to specific rules, i.e. an iconographic system, plan or *typicon* which shows to the Church painters what scenes or holy faces may be painted in each part of the church in such a way that the pictorial decor of every church will form, in its entirety, a unitary and logical ensemble, inspired and guided by a central principle. On the palace church in Photius' homily, Mango comments that this was built in a transitional ninth century style (having an atrium, a dome, and also a specific type of decoration of the marble on the façade, pavement, interior walls, and the dome "which seems to have been ribbed"[134]). He also notices that "The mosaic decoration of the church consisted [...] of individual figures arranged in a hierarchical order, to the exclusion of Gospel scenes. Such a scheme of decoration is typical for the period immediately following the re-establishment of Orthodoxy." He shows that this style of architecture and manner of decoration is typical, among other churches, for Saint

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[132] Ibid., p. 188.

[133] Ibid.

[134] Mango's introductory note on Photius' Homily x, Ibid., pp. 181-182.

Sophia in Constantinople, the decoration of which was "certainly conceived under Michael III, although not under way until 867."[135]

Belting finds an 'ideological' explanation behind the church decoration, especially for the ninth century. He shows that the emperor's policy toward images (a favourable one),

> ...was manifested above all in the new pictorial programs for church interiors, which were clearly designed with the backing of the court [...] The state had a solid interest in expressing the religious unity of God's realm on earth both by way of liturgy and by the visual appearance of churches of churches [...] It was a welcome result when the layout of images in churches reflected the everlasting hierarchy of the heavenly court and thus strengthened the central authority. Wherever programs were described, it was the universal ruler Christ with its retinue of angels that dominated the pictorial history of salvation.[136]

I think it is difficult to judge today the situation of those days, but it is not easy to believe that all clerics and people involved in Church decoration would have followed an exclusively political programme [Belting even affirms that "It is not accident that the account of the pictures made for the throne room reads like a description of a church interior representing the whole Christian cosmos. The images not only celebrated the triumph of Orthodoxy, but also integrated the emperor and the earthly hierarchy (including the patriarch) in the context of the cosmic order"[137]]. Perhaps this was –at least partially – the case with the palace churches, but not with all churches in the Byzantine Empire. In any case, this is not the case today, and even

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[135] Ibid., p. 183.

[136] Belting, *Likeness and Presence*, pp. 170-171.

[137] Ibid., p. 171.

Belting agrees that later "did the emphasis shift to ecclesiastical interests, and the programs include canonized bishops and depiction of liturgical subjects."[138]

At the basis of the symbolism at work in decorating a church lies the teaching of the Church on the redeeming sacrifice of Christ and its ultimate aim, the future transfiguration of humankind. In its entirety the church is the image of the future renewed world according to 1 Cor 15:28, where God "fills all in all" (i.e. where God will be 'all in all'; Eph.1, 23), and not of a transitory mortal human being, even when that human being happens to be an emperor.

The iconographic programme *–typicon-* of decorating churches has not been fixed and uniform, i. e. it was not always and everywhere the same in every period. It has been formed step by step, and has varied epoch by epoch and according to geographical area, following the development of religious architecture. It has varied with church architecture types, with the sizes and the forms to be painted, and with the theological ideas or movements which have existed in Christian thinking and have inspired Church painters, and with the specific role of the holy place; it depends also on the intentions and tastes of the founders of the churches, or of the painters. This means that the painting of a Christian basilica from the fourth-sixth centuries was different from the painting of an Orthodox church from the fourteenth century; the painting of a small parish church is different from that of a cathedral, the painting of a church in a monastic complex is different from that of a Court chapel, and that of a church built in a cemetery is different from all of these through its emphasis on the idea of the afterlife. However, this unitary *typicon* which circumscribes many variations within makes a believer to feel familiar in any type of church.

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[138] Ibid.

Beginning with the eighth-ninth centuries, especially after the resolution of the Iconoclast controversy, the personal taste and imagination of the founders and painters came more closely under the control of the Church, which from now on guided the evolution of religious art according to rigorous principles and precise rules. For example, in an icon Christ or any holy person faces the believer; they are never presented with their faced turned away from the viewer, as it is the case sometimes in a religious painting. Only painted persons who represent negative characters (as Judas, for instance) or some of lesser importance (such as servants) are depicted in profile. Hetherington comments on this technical aspect:

> To pay honour and respect to a person must involve some form of communication, and so the iconic image is invariably shown in a frontal pose (or nearly so) and with the eyes open. To portray a figure in a way in which the beholder could not communicate with it would have been pointless as it could not have been 'understood.[139]

In the development of the Church *typicon*, the connection of architecture with the imagery that it housed became so intimate that it is difficult to visualize one without the other; certainly some form of close collaboration between architects, builders, and painters or mosaicists must have existed in Byzantine times, as it exists today, in order for an integrated concept in the building and decorating a church to have become established. The process of building and decoration a church has a functional character: in architecture, painting, furniture or liturgical vessels nothing is gratuitous or futile decoration. Cândea and Simionescu underline the fact that "Everything goes with specific regulations and canons which rule the Eastern religious art so rigorously

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[139] Paul Hetherington, *Byzantine and Medieval Greece: Churches, Castles, and Art*, John Murray, London, 1991, p. 41.

that for almost 2000 years it forbade any individualistic manifestation."[140] The second part of the statement should be interpreted in the sense that the architects and iconographers who work on building a church do not work as a consequence of a desire to make their names known and to glorify themselves. As shown above on pp. 27-28, there have been Church painters (for example Panselinos and Rublev), and schools of painting (for instance Mount Athos and Crete) very distinct, but still within the tradition, and preserving the canons. The results of the field-work for this thesis show the same.

ii. 3) The difference between an icon and a religious painting with reference to the technique and to the viewer

In addition to the distinction between the traditional church painter and the artist who makes a religious painting, a distinction which determines the difference between an icon and a painting, another contrast between the two genres consists in their diverse approaches to artistic perspective, according to a theory launched in the beginning of the twentieth century (which, although still under discussion, has gained enough credibility to be at least mentioned). This theory affirms that there are "specific perspectival devices" for "transmitting spatial characteristics on the two-dimensional surface of the picture".[141] Oskar Wulff is the art theoretician who termed 'inverse perspective' as peculiar to icon-painting (this concept represented an important

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[140] Virgil Cândea and Constantin Simionescu, *Witnesses to the Romanian Presence in Mount Athos*, Editura Sport Turism, Bucharest, 1979, p. 12.

[141] Boris Uspensky (Stephen Rudy ed.), *The Semiotics of the Russian Icon*, The Peter De Ridder Press, Lisse, 1976, p. 31.

advance when it was introduced in 1907), as opposed to direct perspective used, for example, in *Renaissance* painting.

Boris Uspensky, one of the best known scholars on this topic, explains the mechanism behind "the system of inverted perspective" showing that it

> ...results from the use of a multiplicity of visual positions, which is to say that it is connected with a dynamic visual gaze and a subsequent summation of the visual impressions that is received in a multilateral visual embrace. As a result of this summation, the dynamics of the viewing position are carried over to the picture.[142]

This summative process leads to deformations which form the inverted perspective. Therefore, the opposition of the systems of direct and inverted perspective comes to whether the visual position is fixed or, respectively, dynamic. Uspensky thinks that this is the reason for why the figures in icons are immobile: they do not need to move since the observer moves. He shows that "the viewing position changes relative to the figures, which is functionally one and the same thing. This may be contrasted with the sharp foreshortening and the torsion of figures (*contrapposto*) used to convey movement, characteristic of later art based on the immobility of the visual position, that is, of art which observes the system of direct perspective."[143]

The perspective that is used in a 'mere' painting, even with a religious theme, "separates the representation from the spectator, the object from the subject," while "Byzantine perspective is a means (equally if not more sophisticated) of not separating the representation from the spectator, of allowing neither subject nor spectator access to the representation *qua* subject, *qua* spectator. It is rather a perspective which invites

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[142] Ibid.

[143] Ibid.

or demands participation."[144] The situation is not as simple as just reversing the role of the subject and the object, and of the view-point and the vanishing-point in the 'system of inverted perpective'. This is the basic perceptual problem for the Western viewer of a Byzantine icon. The reversion ('inversion') of perspective is not simply because "there is a dynamic [at work] both away and towards, a dynamic by which the person (neither viewer nor subject) negotiates his or her way into participation with and within the image."[145]

In the art of the Western Renaissance, objects grow smaller the further they are from the spectator. Uspensky explained that,

> ...if one figure in a picture is represented larger than the others, it could be a consequence either of the purely geometric (perspectival) system, or of the semantic system of representation. In some cases it actually does occur because of perspectival features, namely, the figure is larger the nearer it is to us (in direct perspective), or the further it is from us (in inverted perspective). In other cases, however, it occurs because one figure is considered semantically more important than others.[146]

Contrastingly, in many icons the more distant things are, the larger they become. The most famous example from this point of view is Andrei Rublev's The Holy Trinity (*Troitsa*). Kallistos Ware comments on this aspect of icon-painting: "The reason for this iconographic *metanoia*, to use Paul Evdokimov's phrase, is nowhere explained in the Byzantine or medieval Russian sources, but it has been discussed by several modern writers. Briefly, its effect is to place the beholder *inside the picture*."[147] In

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[144] Charles Lock, *Iconic Space and the Materiality of the Sign*, in Religion and the Arts, No 1:4 (Winter 1997), Boston College, 1997, p.8.

[145] Ibid.

[146] Uspensky, *The Semiotics of the Russian Icon*, p. 60.

[147] Kallistos Ware, "Praying with Icons," in Paul McPartlan, *One in 2000. Towards Catholic-Orthodox Unity*, St Pauls, Slough, 1993, p. 165; his emphasis.

Western painting, at the rear of the picture there is a vanishing point where the lines of perspective converge. But in the case of an icon there is no such imaginary vanishing point at the back. The lines pass out from the front of the picture and converge at the point where the viewer is standing. As a result we are not gazing in from the outside, as in a Renaissance work of art, but we are ourselves drawn into the scene and made part of it. We are not outside but inside. We and the figures in the icon are both within the same space. As Ware puts it,

> The icon is in this way converted into a place of meeting: the persons depicted in the icon come out from it to greet us and we on our side enter the scene, becoming not merely spectators but participants. We are directly involved; between us and the persons in the icon there is an immediate relationship, a bond of mutual communication.[148]

Źhegin puts forward the technical details which make it possible. He explains that in the Byzantine method of composition that there are three stages of 'deformation', as compared with an image made based on *Renaissance* perspective:

1) ignoring scale, or scaling persons and objects according to a geometry of value and position, rather than to a spatial geometry; 2) sliding a plane out from the body to which it had been a surface, which makes, for example, buildings to have many apertures and partitions and the rocks to have many edges and shelves; 3) transposing the slid planes as in a mirror with the effect of a flattened image. Thus certain elements

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[148] Ibid., p. 165.

in the image are perceived as in a mirror, others as in a space continuous with the space of our viewing.[149]

Through considering concrete examples the differences between an icon and a religious work of art become more obvious. Therefore, I will compare Rublev's icon of the Trinity (Fig. 5) with two religious painting by Fra Angelico (ca. 1395-1455); Figs. 6-7. I consider the latter as being two aspects of the same reality; this is the reason why I analyse both of them in contrast to an icon. I have chosen them as being among the most famous in our times (it seems that Rublev's Holy Trinity was as famous in his time as it is today, or even more so).

For the Western case I could have chosen to compare Rublev's work with that, for example, of the twentieth century religious painter (and writer) David Jones (1895-1974). He is one of the artists who have questioned the principles of Western art in the Church[150]. He also made remarkable paintings such as, among others, *The Oblation of Noah* (1927) and *Vexilla Regis* (1947). But I thought Fra Angelico is much more universally known than Jones.

In Andrei Rublev's icon each member of the Trinity is represented as an angel. Evdokimov comments, perhaps a little too speculatively, that the three angels look at one another, as being "... in conversation, possibly about a text of St. John: 'God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son.' Now the Word of God is always an act, and here it takes on the sacrificial form of the cup."[151] Their hands seem to invite the viewer to come closer, in a gesture of hospitality, but also following the Orthodox rules for bringing the viewer inside the iconic space in a movement which

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[149] L.F. Żhegin, mentioned in Lock, *Iconic Space*, pp. 8-9. Lock points out that Żhegin's *The Language of a Pictorial Work*, written in the 1920's, was not published in Russian until 1970; it is still not available in English.

[150] David Jones did it in his book *The Anathémata*, Faber and Faber, London, Boston, 1952.

[151] Evdokimov, *The Art of the Icon: a Theology of Beauty*, p. 247.

annihilates the condition of the viewer itself. It is like passing through a "looking-glass," through the materiality of the icon into a space from within the human person might be also seen and watched. This is the difference between an icon and an object of art that can be turned into a fetish or an idol. Lock again: "The icon involves us, 'regards us, it concerns us': its space opens to the person, invites participation, optical movement, bodily movement and physical gestures, of veneration, of the kiss;" it has its own attitude of determining "the way in which it is received, through its own *elenchos*, its challenge or invitation to abandon the disembodying space of the spectator and enter the iconic space as a person," while "the idol is created by the eye for the eye, for the aesthetic pleasure of detachment."[152] The modification made by Źhegin of Wulff's point of view is, in Lock's opinion, that there is no single 'vanishing-point' in the viewer's space, for each represented object has its own perspective; thus the eye cannot stay or rest, nor fix its gaze, a fact which prevents an idolatrous gaze. Such ideas will be developed further below when discussing a "simple" painting on a religious theme.

In Rublev's icon, the angels wear blue garment, that exceed in intensity the other, paler, colours of the background landscape. Evdokimov describes it as follows:

> The three angels, light and svelte, are painted with very elongated bodies, fourteen times the size of the head against seven times for normal dimensions. The angels' wings, as well as the schematic way of treating the countryside, give the immediate impression of being immaterial and weightless. Inverse perspective abolishes distance and depth in which everything disappears at the horizon. The opposite effect is of course to bring the figures close up and to show that God is here and everywhere.[153]

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[152] Lock, *Iconic Space...*, pp.18-19.

[153] Evdokimov, *The Art of the Icon*, pp. 246-247.

The triptych *Virgin and Child with Saints John the Baptist and Dominic* by Fra Angelico[154] in San Marco Museum, Florence (Fig. 6) is his earliest datable painting. This was installed on the high altar of the convent church of San Pietro Martire [The Martyr] in Florence before March 1429, and it is supposed that was completed in the preceding year. John Pope-Hennessay describes the painting as follows:

> In the central panel the Virgin is seated on a gold-brocaded stool in front of a golden curtain, with the child standing on her lap. Her body is *not set frontally, but is slightly turned*, with the right knee thrust forwards in the centre of the panel. Her heavily draped cloak is illuminated from the left, and the light falls on the orb held in the Child's left hand and on his raised right arm. No concession is made to decoration save in the gold-brocaded curtain behind the group, in the lion's feet beneath the stool, and in the edging of the Virgin's cloak, which is caught up at the bottom in a number of small folds [...] As in a conventional triptych their [the saints'] heads lie on a common horizontal line, but the two outer saints stand slightly forward of those adjacent to the throne, and two of them, Saint John the Baptist on the left and Saint Thomas Aquinas on the extreme right, reveal even more markedly than the central group, *a concern with volume and plasticity.* Both in the Virgin and the Baptist a debt to Masaccio is apparent...[155]

As Pope-Hennessy stresses, the Mother of God is not depicted frontally as the holy figures are painted in an Orthodox icon; moreover a preoccupation to create an illusion of space and volume is obvious. That is also opposed to an iconographer's concern since in an icon the time and space are not important, as shown in chapter 1.

Also in Fra Angelico's *Annunciation* from the Diocesan Museum in Cortona (Fig. 7) the Virgin is not painted frontally, but she "looks up at the Angel, who floats down towards her from the right."[156] The Virgin has a book on her lap; in an Orthodox icon

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[154] Fra Angelico (Giovanni da Pietro) was a Dominican friar and painter of religious works, many of them in San Marco convent in Florence. He is usually known as Beato Angelico Giovanni da Fiestolo, because Fiestolo is the place where he joined the order in 1407. William Wood, *Fra Angelico at San Marco*, BCA Publishing House, London, New York, Sydney, Toronto, 1993 (c. 1993 Yale University).

[155] John Pope-Hennessay, *Fra Angelico*, Phaidon, London, 1974, p. 9; my emphasis.

[156] Ibid.

this is absent. In some icons representing Annunciation the Virgin holds a distaff.[157] Pope-Hennessy distinguishes an influence from Masaccio in Fra Angelico's work; neither of these two painters has ever been called an iconographer by art historians, but both of them were called authors of religious paintings. Here is how Pope-Hennessy sees him:

> The five hundred years that have elapsed since the death of Fra Angelico have produced no artist with so universal an appeal. The Annunciation at Cortona, the Deposition from Santa Trinita, the Transfiguration at San Marco form part of our common imaginative currency. They eschew the private idiom of other great religious artists, and reflect the serenity, the discipline, the anonymity of communal religious life. In the case of Fra Angelico, more truly than in that of any other painter, the artist and the man are one.[158]

Even an author such as William Hood, who describes the austere environment in which Fra Angelico spent his youth among the Observant Dominicans in San Marco, (and which were comparable to the conditions in which a monk Orthodox iconographer used to live in the same century), does not call him an iconographer. Hood acknowledges that Fra Angelico was a representative of the *Renaissance* epoch, employing in his work devices specific to the artists of that period. He describes the conditions of San Marco community where Fra Angelico lived,

> The major preoccupation of the novice master would have been the boy's behaviour. Sources on the Observant novitiate show that one primary duty of the novice master was to make sure that his adolescent charges learned to curb their youthful energies and to conform themselves in all respect to the decorous examples of their elders, who themselves, after all, had been identically trained during their own novitiate years. [...] Like

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[157] As in *Treasures of Mount Athos*, p. 63 where there is a bema door from Vatopedi Monastery, c. 1200, with such a scene (the Virgin standing up, holding the distaff in her left hand and the spindle in her right), and p. 129 (the Virgin seated on a backless throne; the latest is in Stavronikita Monastery, 1546, by Theophanis the Cretan). The editors of *Treasures*...mention that the *Protoevangelion* of James – in which the Virgin is described as spinning in the scene of Annunciation - is to be found in Tischendorff 1853, xi, p. 21.

[158] Pope-Hennessay, *Fra Angelico*, p. 40.

> other religious in particular ascetic communities, the Observant Dominicans observed long periods of fasting. Even when they were not limiting the amount of food they ate, the friars refrained from eating meat; fish was the common substitute on feast days.[159]

At the same time, Hood acknowledges that,

> ...Italian artists have been highly active agents in the history of subjectivity. This is particularly so for the period of the renaissance when painters and sculptors alike turned their powers to describing phenomenal world [N.B. precisely the opposite of the world which iconographers describe in their work]. Vanishing-point, perspective, depictions of physiognomy, the rendering of movement based on analytical observation – these were some of the means whereby artists located the viewer's imagination in the temporal and spatial domain of the representation itself.[160]

In spite of his pure and strictly disciplined life, Fra Angelico was not an exception. The fact of employing such means results in his work, including both the paintings described above, differing from an icon. These painting presuppose an external point of view (we have seen that an icon has none, either internal or external), that might produce an idolatrous gaze; something similar with the gaze of an art collector. Some authors also consider that optical movement is important in distinguishing an icon from a "mere" religious painting. Gervase Mathew illustrates this idea: "It seems clear that the Byzantines assumed that the human eyeball was mobile, was spherical in shape and had a concave retina. They could never have been satisfied with any system of perspective which presupposed that the human eye was a flat object gazing immobile at a vertical plane." He has an explanation of this fact, which can clarify, at least partially, why the Renaissance in art began in the West:

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[159] Hood, *Fra Angelico at San Marco*, p. 199.

[160] Ibid., p. ix.

"Their [the Byzantines'] horizon lines often seem curved even if only slightly, while often in the West the horizon has been conceived as a straight line."[161]

As stressed above, a traditional Orthodox icon painter is regarded as just a medium through which the prototype of the person depicted in the icon imposes itself on the artist. Such a painter, before and during the work, undergoes a *kenosis* and a *metanoia* which transforms him, so that ideally an icon painter should be a saint.

As a conclusion to the discussion of the differences between an icon and an artistic work with religious motif, both genres provoke emotions in the viewer, but in the case of the icon a process of *apatheia*[162] intervenes, which transfigures these emotions to a higher spiritual state than one produced by aesthetic pleasure. For any Orthodox Christian, "an icon, whether ancient or modern, is not an object of aesthetic admiration or an object of study; it is living, grace-inspired art which feeds him."[163]
It should not be understood that an icon is necessarily ugly; on the contrary, some of them meet even the beauty criteria expected by a Western viewer. But what must be underlined is the fact that it is not essential for an icon to be admired as a mere painting.

The most important conclusion of Chapter 1 regarding the main differences between an icon and a religious painting is the idea that an icon is essentially part of an act of prayer and worship. It is an object of devotion, not just a work of art; as such, it is given liturgical veneration. Belting shows that historically what mattered for an icon was "not whether the depiction of a saint was beautiful", but whether it was "correct."[164] According to the teaching of the Orthodox Church, the icon corresponds

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[161] Gervase Mathew, *Byzantine Aesthetics*, John Murray, London, 1963, p. 36.

[162] *Apatheia* not with the meaning people ascribe to the term today: apathy, indifference.

[163] Ouspensky and Lossky, *The Meaning of Icons*, p. 48.

[164] Belting, *Likeness and Presence*, p. 47.

entirely to the word of Scripture. It completes the Liturgy and explains it, adding its influence on the soul of faithful. The content and the meaning of the icon and of the Liturgy are the same; they have the same symbolism, the same sobriety, the same depth in content.

Belting adds a further element to the 'classical' discussion on the connection between the icon and Liturgy. He considers that "Image and liturgy are related to each other in such a way that the liturgy contributed to the control of the image and prevented any paramagical excesses"[165] on theological basis. This is why, as with everything in the Church, sacred art has a double dimension: Its very essence is unchangeable and eternal since it expresses the revealed truth, but at the same time it is infinitely diverse in its forms and expressions, corresponding to different times and places.[166] Similarly, the English Orthodox theologian Philip Sherrard underlines this connection. For him,

> ...the liturgy does not merely commemorate an event. It is that event, and the event is the person or persons that enacts or enact the same archetypal ritual in a time that is essentially their time. And this is shown forth in the icon, which is simultaneously both the revelation of the archetype of the event - the person it depicts, and the depiction of the event - or person - as archetype.[167]

Because the icon vehicles the spiritual energy of the archetype it becomes a centre of power, "an incarnation in its own right", as Sherrard formulates it, of the energy that is able to induce in the believer a consciousness of this more than human life it embodies.

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[165] Ibid., p. 172.

[166] Ouspensky, *Theology of the Icon*, vol. 1, p. 9.

[167] Philip Sherrard, *The Sacred in Life and Art*, Golgonooza Press, Ipswich, 1990, p. 84.

The icon is also a means of grace. In regard to this aspect, the Seventh Ecumenical Council says that "When we honour and venerate an icon, we receive sanctification"[168] St John of Damascus affirms that,

> Divine grace is given to material things through the name borne by what is depicted. Just as the purple dye and the silk and the garment that is woven from them simply by themselves have no honor, but if an emperor wears it, his clothing shares in the honor that belongs to the one wearing it. So material things, on their own, are not worthy of veneration, but if the one depicted is full of grace, then they become participants in grace, on the analogy of faith.[169]

Also St Theodore the Studite says that "We should believe that divine grace is present in the icon of Christ, and that it communicates sanctification to those who draw near with faith."[170]

As a means of grace, the icon conveys strength, healing and holiness. Tarasov considers that "If the *Stoglav* Council of 1551 indeed had a 'reformative' role, then in the first instance that was related to a concern about the purity of grace in an image."[171] Belting says that in the beginning of their acceptance in the Church, "The images met the same demands that were made of the saints while they were alive: to give aid and perform miracles."[172] On the Sunday of Orthodoxy, the text from the Lenten Triodion reads: "From your icon, O Lord, we receive the grace of healing...the eyes of the beholders are sanctified by the holy icons".[173] Particular icons have acted as a focus for prayer and for bodily or inner healing are honoured in the Orthodox Church as wonder

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[168] Mansi, *Sacrum Conciliorum,* xiii, col. 269E.

[169] St John of Damascus, *Three Treatises on the Divine Images*, i, 36; (Louth, p. 43).

[170] St Theodore the Studite, *Letter to Platon on the veneration of the holy icons*, PG (Patrologiae cursus completus. Series graeca), Jean-Paul Migne, Paris, 1860, vol. xcix, col. 505B.

[171] Tarasov, *Icon and Devotion*, p. 122.

[172] Belting, Likeness and Presence, p. 42.

[173] The *Lenten Triodion*, trans. Mother Mary and Kallistos Ware, Faber and Faber, London, 1978, p. 300.

working or miraculous; but "in principle every icon without exception is miraculous, an efficacious sacramental sign."[174]

Belting speaks about "the magical presence of the archetype" and mentions that since the acceptance of images, the Church had to deal with the fact that people credited them with miraculous power.[175] He explaines that "the granting of privileges to certain icons is paradoxically inherent in the theory of icons itself, for the ontological relation between likeness and model made the portrait subject to the criterion of authenticity."[176] Since only one of several differing portraits can be authentic, the performance of miracles was "the classic proof of authenticity" in the effort of establishing which was the true one. Belting comments further:

> If a particular image performed a miracle, it thereby revealed itself as an instrument of heavenly intervention and assumed special powers. The cult history of the icon begins with miraculous images that seemed capable of passing on supernatural favors. The paradox inherent in the religious image of making visible the invisible seemed to be validated in cases where images legitimated themselves as receptacles of God or a saint, that is, by revealing the direct intervention of heaven. The difference between the image and what it represented seemed to be abolished in them; the image *was* the person it represented, at least that person's active, miracle-working presence, as the relics of saints had previously been.[177]

The cult of relics in the West will be discussed further down. As regarding icons, the important distinction which the Second Council of Nicaea's aforementioned decisions makes should be remembered: the icons receive veneration (*προσκύνησις*) from the faithful, but not adoration or worship in strict sense (*λατρεία*), which is addressed only to God. It is true that, sometimes, in practice the Eastern Church

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[174] Kallisos Ware, "Praying with icons", in Paul McPartlan (ed.), *One in 2000. Towards Catholic-Orthodox Unity*, p. 150.

[175] Belting, *Likeness and Presence*, p. 172.

[176] Ibid., p. 47.

sometimes failed to guard enough against "superstitious exaggeration." Ware comments on the Council's decisions on this topic: "An icon of Christ, although mediating his presence and communicating his grace, remains wood and paint, and so it is not worshipped. Christ is truly present alike in the Eucharistic elements and in an icon, but the nature of his presence is by no means the same in these two cases."[178]

In the West, at first, this very important distinction between veneration and true worship was misunderstood. *Libri Carolini* which I mentioned on p. 30 "falsely accused the Greeks of adoring icons with the worship due to the Holy Trinity."[179] Ware shows that "Not until the eleventh century was the Seventh Council generally accepted in the West as Ecumenical", and wonders "whether Latin Christendom has ever fully assimilated the theology of the icon, as this is understood in the Orthodox tradition."[180]

Western Christianity has a similar struggle to that of the Eastern Christian Church in guarding against "paramagical excesses", but with regard to the cult of relics. Besançon draws attention that "it is not true that idolatrous tendencies were less strong in the West, or that they had fewer opportunities to emerge than in the East. But because of the image's lower status, idolatry was partly deflected toward the *bodies of saints which ranked just above the image*."[181] The Synod which took place in Rome in 863 (cited above, p. 29) on the initiative of Pope Nicholas the First (858-867), in Besançon's opinion, as in Menozzi's mentioned in the same place, goes "beyond the Gregorian tradition" in accepting images in churches. But, in spite of the fact that Pope

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[177] Ibid; his emphasis.

[178] Ware," Praying with icons", p. 150.

[179] Ibid., p. 151.

[180] Ibid.

[181] Besançon, *The Forbidden Image*, p. 151; my emphasis.

Nicholas proclaimed "that, through colours in paintings, man rose to a contemplation of Christ" in the West relics were to become primordial in a believer's religious life. In Besançon's words,

> But, even though the worship [*sic*] of images (and, in the first place, of the crucifix) spread, *piety assigned a much higher sacral virtue to relics*. Of course, images formed spontaneously around the relic, but *it was the relic that communicates its virtue to the image*. Reliquary statues proliferated from the ninth century.[182]

And he immediately provides a concrete example about the way in which relics were considered a means of grace in the Frankish realm, and compares it with the situation of an Eastern icon:

> The statue of Saint Foy in Conques was a pilgrimage site and a source of wealth for the abbey. The sick who were healed brought offerings to it. It was carried about by monks across monastery lands to secure the boundaries and defend the lands against the claims of the neighboring lords. It appeared in dreams and performed many miracles. The magic power of the relic was passed to the image by contagion, but the relic was still at its foundation, even when the relic itself was forgotten. *The relic was a material foundation and, unlike the icon, did not stem from representation as such or from the spiritual relation it maintained with the prototype*.[183]

That does not differ too much from what the same Besançon describes in regard to an icon of the Mother of God taken into procession from the *Protaton* Church on Mount Athos to the neighbouring monasteries:

> At its center was a miraculous image whose name, *Axion estin*, alludes to the Magnificat: "Verily, *it is worthy* to praise thy name." Legends date it from the era of iconoclasm and tell how it bled after being wounded by an imperial soldier. The miracle-working Madonna normally reposed "on the stone seat of the abbot under a baldachin, enjoying the veneration appropriate to princes. At the millennial celebration of Mount Athos she was

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[182] Ibid.; my emphasis.

[183] Ibid., pp. 151-152; my emphasis.

> received in Athens like a ruling sovereign amid the ringing of all the bells of the city. The Christ Child bears a ribbon inscribed with a text from Luke 4:18: "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me...He hath sent me to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives and recovering of sight to the blind." These words now refer to the icon panel and identify its miraculous works. On Easter Monday the monks accompanied the Virgin to the neighbouring convents. The icon was borne beneath a canopy, a sign of sovereignty since before Christianity. Here the veneration of the Virgin had taken on highly material forms.[184]

In spite of the similarity of these two processions, the theology behind them is different. This is why, for example, after the Latin occupation of Constantinople in 1204, Pope Innocent the Third (1198-1216), although confirming that the icon *Hodegetria* is the original icon painted by St Luke, "could not share the Greek view, however, that the Virgin's spirit inhabited the image, and he rejected any exaggerated veneration as superstitious."[185]

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[184] Ibid., p. 48.

[185] Ibid., p. 77.

CHAPTER 2

Wall and icon-painting in Romania between the fourteenth century and the first half of the nineteenth century

This chapter is concerned with icon and wall-painting in Romania, which will be presented in its surrounding geographical and political context, as well as in its broader cultural and religious history. The questions to be answered are: what is Byzantine and what local in the traditional icon and wall-painting in Romania? What is the role that Byzantium played in the formation of Romanian Church art in terms of teaching and guidance? What are the characteristics of the Romanian style of painting?

I would reckon as the most important phases of Romanian iconography during these five centuries as follows: 1) the beginning of the fourteenth century - first half of the sixteenth century (from Moldova there are significant iconographical works only from the beginning of the fifteenth century on; the outset of its iconography is just a little late than those of Wallachia and Transylvania); 2) middle sixteenth century-early eighteenth century; 3) early eighteenth century-beginning of the nineteenth century.

The first phase of Romanian iconography, which was marked strongly by the influence of Byzantine painting in its stage of extreme sobriety and, perhaps, rigidity, is best represented by *Streinsângeorgiu* Church in Transylvania, in which the layer of painting from 1313-1314 was applied over an even older one. The turning points of the later iconographic development are sixteenth century frescoes in Wallachia and especially Moldova, and The Brâncovan School of Painting opened in the end of the seventeenth century in Wallachia, as will become clear later in the chapter.

i) The first phase of Romanian iconography

There is evidence that the decoration of churches and chapels on the territory of what is today Romania is of long tradition, as the cemetery chapel at *Dinogeția* (eleventh century or even earlier) proves. These early churches and chapels have traces of mural paintings with geometric and vegetal motifs, thus attesting that this type of decoration was known in the most important settlements around the eleventh-twelfth centuries.[186] However, it is possible for a country to have a coherent artistic life only when that country has reached a certain administrative centralisation, a certain degree of economic prosperity, and independence. In the fourteenth century this was the case with the Romanian lands, and under those circumstances, a more organised church than before, dependent on the Byzantine Patriarchate, developed. The preliminary phase of artistic development in Romanian lands was completed with the unification of the first forms of state organisation called *voivodates* and *knezates*.

In general, during the Middle Ages the Byzantine religious tradition in Eastern Europe became more homogeneous, and the slight variations of icon type, visible in the early Middle Ages between the churches and monasteries of the different Eastern European areas, are far less significant than the underlying unity of formal structure and spiritual message they conveyed. The differences became even less perceptible after 1300, when a new current of asceticism and spirituality, which had again originated in the leading monasteries of the Byzantine Empire, further strengthened the ties that bound together the various local branches of Eastern European monasticism.[187] In the central area of the Byzantine Empire, the fourteenth century was the Palaeologan period, in

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[186] Vasile Drăguț, Dan Grigorescu, Vasile Florea et. al., *Romanian Paintings in Pictures. 1111 reproductions*, Editura Meridiane [Meridiane Publishing House], Bucharest, 1971, pp. 8-10.

[187] Obolensky, *Byzantine Commonwealth*, pp. 294-295.

which Church art was characterised by a more expressive tendency than in the previous two artistic periods, as shown in detail in the Introduction to this thesis.[188] In wall and icon-painting this means that the holy figures are depicted with a more "human" appearance than was earlier the case, their faces showing individual traits and feelings. In the icons and murals from some of churches which have survived from that period in Romania traces of decoration even from an earlier period are present. This, for example, is the case with the Church of *Streisângeorgiu* founded by the *cneaz* or *kneaz* (prince) *Bâlea* in the twelfth century, which not only contains the oldest inscription from the Romanian Middle Ages, but also the oldest wall-painting of Byzantine tradition in the country which has been preserved in its entirety. The figures from the beginning of the fourteenth century visible today on the walls of that church are depicted as very rigid, and somehow 'atemporal'(Fig. 10),[189] which is considered by many specialists, as shown in Chaper 1, to be a feature of Byzantine painting in some historical epochs. Since the Byzantine hierarchy on which the Romanian lands were dependent maintained a widespread network of relations, it may be presumed that the iconic materials required by the churches in this area were either brought from Byzantium, or were copies produced locally. The Byzantine strongholds built along the Danube after the fall of the first Bulgarian stardom (1018), at *Durostor*, *Păcuiul lui Soare*, *Drobeta* and *Dinogeția* made a substantial contribution to the spread of South-Danubian art.

Obolensky emphasises that Romania entered the 'Byzantine Commonwealth'[190] in the fourteenth century; the country was 'caught' in the 'movement' in which icon-painting

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[188] See Michelis, *An Aesthetic Approach.*

[189] Mircea Păcurariu, *Istoria Bisericii Orthodoxe Române*, Editura Sophia [Sophia Publishing House], Bucharest, 2000; p. 83, and also the illustrations on p.iii from the special section following p. 64 (Fig. 7 from that page).

[190] Obolensky, *Byzantine Commonwealth* pp. 257-260.

spread from the Byzantine Empire to the Balkan countries and to Russia (where it attained the highest degree of development in the same century in Moscow and Novgorod). The prestige enjoyed by the art and culture of Constantinople throughout the Orthodox world, despite the political and economic decline of the Empire, made the young principalities from North of the Danube receptive to its forms. Drăguț, commenting on this, says:

> As was to be expected, Byzantine painting, which had reached the stylistic phase peculiar to the Paleologus epoch, was adopted especially by the Greek-Romanian Orthodox Church; it is to be found in the numerous foundations of the Transylvanian princes or of the voivodes in Wallachia.[191]

In the context of medieval painting, icons developed in parallel with mural decoration. Usually the same painters who created the frescoes, also painted icons, either portable one or larger, intended to be kept in the church. For example, the large altar-icons of the sixteenth century in *Sângeorgiu* representing the Virgin *Hodegetria*, Christ the Saviour, and St Nicholas (in half-figure, surrounded by saints) follow the early Byzantine conventions of wall-painting.

Awareness of Constantinopolitan art forms came to Romania either through direct contact, or *via* the Serbian kingdom, which had adopted the Palaeologan style as early as 1321 (in *Gračanic*a Monastery).[192] Both Obolensky and Drăguț draw attention to this fact. Drăguț says that "The [Romanian] iconography recalls several models

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[191] V. Drăguț, *Romanian Art: Prehistory, Antiquity, Middle Ages, Renaissance, Baroque*, Meridiane Publishing House, Bucharest, 1984, vol. 1, p. 116. The rulers of Wallachia and Moldova used to call themselves 'voievod', a Slavonic term, which means literally 'the military commander'; they also bore the title "domn", taken from the Latin imperial formula (*dominus*, in the sense of Lord or "master of the country and of its subjects"). Kurt W. Treptow (ed.), *A History of Romania*, East European Monograph. In collaboration with the Centre for Romanian Studies, Iaşi, distributed by Columbia University Press, New York, 1996, p. 83.

[192] Slobodan Ćurčić, *Gračanica: King Milutin's church and its place in late Byzantine architecture*, Pennsylvania State University Press, University Park (Pennsyl.), 1979; Obolensky, *Byzantine Commonwealth*, pp. 252-254.

coming from the flourishing Serbian kingdom of the time."[193] Therefore one may say that in the style of Romanian icon-painting there is "a twofold orientation: on the one hand, the integration of the artistic forms common to the Balkan Orthodox countries in the period so very well labeled by the historian Nicolae Iorga 'Byzance après Byzance', and on the other hand the tendency to stress, beyond the stylistic diversity with which it came in contact, those elements original and specific to Rumania."[194] (Voinescu refers to this style as"post-Byzantine," a term which I shall also use from time to time within this thesis.)

Obolensky stresses the presence of the Byzantine element in Romanian icon-painting by giving a concrete example: "*Curtea-de-Argeş*, completed between 1364 and 1377, was attached to the court of the Wallachian princes and was built as their place of burial. Its frescoes are the most complete cycle of Byzantine Palaeologan painting on Rumanian soil. Several of them, it has recently been proved, were directly inspired by the mosaics of the Kariye Camii in Constantinople."[195] Drăguț accepts this but, at the same time, he highlights the capacity for assimilation and selection of Romanian icon-painting, which is: "In point of style [...] an art of synthesis which turned to good account both the expressive elements peculiar to Byzantine-Paleologan painting and to the Italian one."[196] This means that Romanian Church-art has never limited itself to borrowing styles, techniques and motifs but has instead selected them in such a way to suit the sensibility of the Romanian artists and worshippers. Moreover, it has displayed openness not only to Byzantine art, but also to other sources of inspiration, such as the

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[193] Drăguț, *Romanian Art. Prehistory...*, vol. 1, p. 116.

[194] Voinescu, *Post-Byzantine Icons*, p. 373; Nicolae Iorga, *Bizanțul după Bizanț* [Byzantium after Byzantium], Institutul de studii bizantine [Institute of Byzantine Studies], University of Bucharest, Bucharest, 1971.

[195] Obolensky, *Byzantine Commonwealth*, p. 353. Current research is trying to establish whether this monastery is of an even earlier date (cf. Voinescu, *Post-Byzantine Icons*, p. 374).

[196] Drăguț, *Romanian Art. Prehistory...*, vol. 1, p. 116.

Western art or the local folk art. (This fact has not always had beneficial consequences, as shall be shown later in the thesis). Voinescu underlines the same idea: that, despite a context in which "Byzantium was the age-old substratum on which grew the art of Romania", the iconography of this country was "remarkable from the earliest period for its originality and its exceptional gift for interpreting, processing, and synthesizing."[197] The paintings within the church mentioned above by Obolensky as an example, St Nicholas, the foundation of the Basarab voivodas at *Curtea de Argeş*, support the same idea. This church is decorated with frescoes, "which, though observing Byzantine tradition, are very much alive and personalized, and thus much closer to Giotto's art than to the rigid mannerism of the Greek masters;"[198] Fig. 11 in Appendix C of the thesis. Drăguţ affirms that, in addition to its artistic merit, St Nicholas' Church in *Curtea de Argeş* was considered, in the theological conception of the time, to be not only an act of faith but, first and foremost, an act of secular authority destined to strengthen the idea of independence[199] because "the setting up of the Metropolitanate of Wallachia in 1359 was also part of the effort made by the first Basarabs to ensure the full authority of their young state".[200]

This effort towards freedom in the artistic field - in parallel with the political struggle for independence – was to be expected. Drăguţ shows that

> ...the Romanian feudal high nobility did not hesitate to call upon foreign artists in order to see its ambitions for pomp and ceremonial satisfied as rapidly as possible. We are still in a period of assimilations, but these assimilations prove both daring and fruitful. Adopting a Constantinople Byzantine architectonic style - the Greek inscribed cross of a complex type - the Princely Church at Curtea de Argeş raised this to

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[197] Voinescu, *Post-Byzantine Icons*, p. 373.

[198] Drăguţ, *Romanian Art: Prehistory...*, vol. 1, p. 116.

[199] *Idem*, *Romanian Painting in Pictures. 1111 reproductions*, p. 12.

[200] Ibid., p. 12.

> monumental proportions never met with in Byzantium, while ensuring noble spatial harmony and perfect balance of the architectural masses. Rivalling the artistic value of the great building they decorate, the interior mural paintings constitute the largest and finest iconographic ensemble of the early period of Romanian medieval painting.[201]

Drăguț provides several other examples of a late Byzantine element earlier than those at Curtea de Argeş to be found in Romanian church murals, of which the following are the most representative of that period. He shows that in 1311 an anonymous painter adorned the foundation erected by the Cânde Princes in the village of *Sântămărie Orlea* (Hunedoara County, Transylvania) with mural paintings. On the walls of the nave in the church several images from the iconographic cycle of the Virgin Mary and from the Passion of Christ have survived. The south wall appears to have been dominated by a large representation of *The Last Judgement*. The compositions are simple and clear, executed in a Byzantine fashion, i.e. the line is elegant, and the particularly simple colouring has nuances of light red earth. The finest scenes are *The Birth of the Virgin*, *The Presentation to the Temple* and, especially, *The Discovery of the Holy Cross* (Fig. 12). Drăguț also comments on the Church of St George in *Streisângeorgiu*, which, as shown above, was decorated with frescoes in 1313-1314. With only a few means and 'energetic' brush-strokes Master Teofil realised a masterpiece in mural-painting, the best preserved example of which is the *Last Judgement*, on the west wall of the church, which has been partially cleaned. From the older layer of painting in the church, the best preserved fragments show a soldier (in the sanctuary), and the figures of Saint Basil the Great and Saint Nicholas (on the walls). Drăguț suggests that these paintings could be a proof of

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[201] Ibid.

an old local tradition which "can be traced back, through Southern Italy, to distant Cappadocia, where the iconography of Basilian churches offered similar solutions."[202] Drăguț also comments on the ensemble of mural painting preserved in the Hermitage *Negru Vodă* in Argeş County, Wallachia, built in 1215 (mentioned in chapter 1)[203], and in those from the cave-church at *Corbii de Piatră* (Argeş County; Fig. 13), attributed to the same Basarab the First, the founder of the princely church in Curtea de Argeş. In Drăguț's opinion, the paintings here "evidence an early assimilation of artistic solutions typical of the Paleologan style, although there are also numerous traces of a simplified form of representation peculiar to provincial workshops"[204]; Fig. 14. On the east wall of the *naos*, over the two niches of the sanctuary there is the image of the *Deisis*, while the *Annunciation*, as in the church of *Sântămărie Orlea*, is on both sides of the sanctuary. On the south wall and partially on the vault, images from the Christological cycle are preserved, of which the *Nativity*, *The Presentation to the Temple*, and the *Resurrection* of Lazarus are very beautiful.

The monumental image of the *Archangel Michael* surrounded by an ornamental frame made of semi-palmettes recalls the numerous similar images in the cave churches in the south of Italy, or for example, from *St. Apollinare* in Classe, Ravenna. As at *Streisângeorgiu*, this mural ensemble is strongly marked by tradition, "a fact which is due to some older monastic rules, replaced in the new princely foundations by a freer interpretation, aulic in character."[205]

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[202] Drăgut, *Romanian Art, Prehistory...*, vol. 1, p.116.

[203] Baron, Mărculescu-Popescu, Andreescu, *România. Schituri, Mânăstiri Biserici. Romania. Ermitages. Monastères, Eglises. Romania. Hermitages, Monasteries, Churches* (Album in Romanian, French, and English), Editura Royal Company [Royal Company Publishing House], Bucharest, 1999, p. 27.

[204] Drăguț, *Romanian Art, Prehistory...*, vol. 1, p. 117.

[205] Ibid., pp. 117-118.

According to Drăguț, only the paintings in the church of *Sântămărie Orlea* are visibly influenced by Byzantine art (and they were executed by a painter from south of the Danube), while the other paintings from the beginning of the fifteenth century in Transylvania are the original works of Romanian iconographers. This means that in that period there was an authentic Romanian art with specific characteristic; the so-called Transylvanian School of Painting which emerged in close connection with the political and military development of the *voivodates* and *knezates* in that land.[206]

From Wallachia the fresco from 1391 in Cozia Monastery in the pronaos depicting the Holy Trinity is also very well realised and proportionalised (Fig. 15), and the same is true of the frescoes from the apse and nave painted in the same year (Fig. 16).

Obolensky affirms that Moldova "developed a fully articulate artistic tradition only in the second half of the fifteen century, during the reign of Ştefan cel Mare [Stephan the Great]."[207] However he acknowledges and gives examples of earlier Moldavian churches from the time of Alexandru cel Bun which are frequently recorded in historical documents as having ornamental objects, Byzantine manuscripts and icons commissioned by the rulers of the Byzantine Empire. Indeed the most remarkable works in icon-painting in Moldova date from the second half of the fifteenth century and from the sixteenth century, and they are the long-revered external mural-paintings. An example that is not very famous, but that is still beautiful and well-preserved. is the fresco in Stephen the Great's *paraclis* [side chapel] in *Bistrița* Monastery, Suceava County from 1498 (Fig. 17). But what makes that epoch famous is the external mural painting. The external walls of churches had occasionally been decorated with pictures

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[206] Ibid., p. 118.

[207] Obolensky, *Byzantine Commonwealth*, p. 353.

in several Balkan countries before that time, but the practice of covering the entire external surface of the walls with elaborate cycles of paintings seems to have been an inovation of Moldavian artists.

The earliest example in Moldova of the technique of entirely decorating the external walls of the church with cycles of painting is the *Arbore* monastery's church (1503; Fig. 18). It was followed by the external decorations of the *St George* Church in Suceava (1522) and of monasteries of *Humor* (1535; Fig. 19), *Moldovița* (1535; Fig. 20), *Voroneț* (ca. 1547; Figs. 21, 22, 23), and *Sucevița* (ca. 1585; Fig. 24).

The influence of Byzantine models in the iconographic domain is visible in Moldova too. Obolensky considers that in the votive fresco from *Voroneț* (1488) in which "the monastery's founder, Stephen the Great of Moldavia, followed by his family, offers a model of his church to Christ", the "vigorous and realistically portrayed faces contrast with the more abstract features of St George. The princely clothes, and the treatment of the subject, are purely Byzantine."[208] Other examples are the images of the *Virgin and Child* from the *Vălenii* Church of Monastery of *Văratec*, Neamț County (Fig. 25), *Deesis* (Fig. 26), and *Virgin and Child* (Fig. 27) both from *Humor*, Suceava County. Contemporary with these works, yet revealing a completely different artistic outlook,

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[208] Ibid., caption of fig. 77.

is a small panel supposedly from the casket which enshrines the relics of St John the New, brought to Suceava in the fifteenth century (Fig. 28).[209] This is

> ...rendered in exquisite pictorial images. The main group is depicted in tones of deep red and creamy white against a mild dark brown background. It is a unique example of narrative painting, which corresponds to the skilfully chiselled plaques of silver gilt framing the reliquary that still contains the remains of the legendary martyr.[210]

The Moldavian masters employed a wide variety of warm colours, shades of brown and dark red with a predominance of gold; by contrast, the style of icon-painting in Wallachia is more discreet and perhaps more refined.

In Voinescu's description, some icons in Wallachia, such as those offered by Matei Basarab to the Monastery of *Arnota*, painted by Stroe from Târgovişte, "have gorgeously gilded back-grounds with incised stucco floral ornamentation, gilded halos in stucco relief, and a decorative scheme that augments *the more refined sumptuousness of the Wallachian prototypes*"[211]. And Voinescu emphasises the 'sobriety', and harmony in icon-painting in Wallachia by bringing to attention more cases: "*The same equilibrium* is visible in icons by other painters of the time, for example, those commissioned by Metropolitan Ştefan for his foundation at *Bălăneşti*

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[209] Voinescu, *Post-Byzantine Icons*, p. 384. *Sfântul Ioan de la Suceava* (St John the New) was tortured and killed by Turks, in the beginning of the fourteenth century, in *Cetatea Albă* fortress (*Ak-Kerman* in Turkish) on the Nister River, which was under Turkish domination for a while, because he did not want to deny his Christian faith. In the book *Romanian Art* (p. 282) Drăguț considers that the Tartars killed the saint). St John the New was originally from Trebizond, Cappadocia. His remains were brought for the first time to Suceava in ca. 1402, in the reign of Alexandru cel Bun [the Kind] and episcopate of Archbishop Ioseph. In 1686, because of the war, Metropolitan Dosoftei (a very erudite Romanian monk-priest) took the holy relics with him in Poland to protect them. He died there, but on the 18 of July 1783 the relics were brought back to Suceava from *Jolcova* (Poland) on the orders of another Dosoftei, the Bishop of Radăuți at that time, Al. Lascarov-Moldoveanu, *Viața Sfântului Ioan cel Nou de la Suceava* [The Life of St John from Suceava], Anastasia Publishing House, Bucharest, 2002. Every year, on 2 June, people go on pilgrimage to Suceava to venerate St John the New's relics.

[210] Voinescu, *Post-Byzantine Icons*, pp. 374-375.

[211] Ibid., p. 377; my emphasis.

and those adorning the county church at *Sâmbureşti* (Olt district)."[212] Noteworthy for its elaborate modelling is the icon of the *Virgin Hodegetria and Child* from the Monastery of *Bistriţa* (Vâlcea County, Wallachia), dated 1513 (Fig. 29).[213] The *Virgin Hodegetria and Child* from the Monastery of *Govora* (Vâlcea county) is typologically similar. It was made by the order of Father Damaschi*n*, the abbot of this monastery around 1530, (Fig. 30).[214]

Actually, at the beginning of the sixteenth century in both Wallachia and Moldova, wall and icon-painting took an original turn, as shown below on pp. 90-91; the images from the princely church at *Curtea de Argeş* dating to the reign of the Voivode Neagoe Basarab (1512-1521) reveal this fact,[215] and also the icons and frescoes from the Monastery of *Humor* [contemporary with the voivode Petru Rareş (1530-1538; 1541-1546) and his followers. The Moldavian series is from the same period with the other world famous exterior murals from Serbia (for example *Gracaniča* Monastery which, after the initial painting in 1321under the King Milutin, was painted again in 1570, after the renewal of the Patriarchate of *Pec* [216]).

In Wallachia's generous cultural and artistic atmosphere, masters such as Dobromir and his team of assistants produced remarkable works at *Dealu* (Târgovişte), *Tismana*, *Snagov* and *Curtea de Argeş* monasteries (see the examples of the Archangel Michael

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[212] Ibid., my emphasis.

[213] Ibid., p. 381.

[214] Ibid., p. 385.

[215] The Episcopal Church, or the Monastery of *Curtea de Argeş*, an impressive monument, was built by Prince Neagoe Basarab between 1514-1517, on the site of a metropolitan church which had been raised in the fourteenth century and acknowledged by the Archbishopric of Constantinople in 1359. Neagoe Basarab decided that it "to be consecrated as the Assumption of the Virgin [...] with great pomp in the presence of outstanding Orthodox religious personalities, led by the ecumenical Patriarch Theolipt of Constantinople", web site:monasteries/romania/encyclopedia/romania/cities/ag_curteadearges.html.

[216] Slobodan Ćurčić, *Gracaniča: King Milutin's Church and its Place in Late Byzantine Architecture*, Pennsylvania State University Press, University Park (Pennsyl.), 1979; Zaga Gavrilović, *Studies in Byzantine and Serbian Medieval Art*, Pindar, London, 2001; D. Talbot Rice, *Byzantine frescoe from Yugoslav churches*, Collins in association with UNESCO, London, 1963.

and St Demetrius from *Curtea de Argeş* Monastery, both from 1526, (Figs. 31-32).[217] This epoch was dominated by the outstanding personality of Neagoe Basarab, a man well acquainted with the artistic trends of his time. He was a patron of the arts and founder of religious establishments and this inspired him to encourage an almost international diversity of forms, in as large an artistic area as possible, including icon-painting. Voinescu mentions Neagoe Basarab's commissions of Constantinopolitan works that adorned his newly founded church at *Curtea de Argeş*, standing beside the icons produced by native painters from the prince's own workshop. Voinescu appraises the work as follows:

> The few surviving examples of these local works excel in quality everything that had been achieved up to that time. Displaying a great thematic diversity, they feature variety rather than uniformity. Their quality derives from an openness of an epoch that gave its artists opportunities to treat their subjects distinctively and originally.[218]

An example from the Church *Curtea de Argeş* is the ten large bilateral icons which had initially occupied the spaces between the colonnade of the *pronaos*, and which would appear to come from the same workshop. Facing the centre of the church are figures of anchorite saints, while military saints on horseback, crushing the unbelievers, are looking towards the *pronaos*. Of this group, only the icon of *St George Killing the Dragon* and of *Sts. Alexis, Barlaam* and *Joasaf* have been preserved. Besides their functional role, these icons carried a political message, as requested by the prince. Voinescu again: "The elegance and precision of the draftsmanship, the free expression

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[217] Voinescu, *Post-Byzantine Icons*, pp. 386-387.

[218] Ibid., p. 375.

of forms, and the brilliant colour scheme place this ensemble of remarkable artistry among the outstanding achievements of the early sixteenth century."[219]

In the years 1542-1543, the paintings adorning the Chapel of the *Cozia* infirmary (Argeş County, Wallachia) were executed through the commission of Prince Radu Paisie. David and his son Radoslav, the authors of the paintings, must have had a first hand knowledge of the world south of the Danube, whence they depicted some themes present there but never represented before in Romanian iconography. An example of this is the fresco depicting the *Holy Communion* in which Judas is shown turning his back and spitting. The frescoes at *Cozia* contain narrative cycles, like that of *Doubting Thomas*, which is a strikingly spectacular image, unique in old Romanian painting, in which every gesture is a symbol. The votive painting representing Mircea cel Bătrân [literally the Old, i.e. 'the Wise'; 1386-1418] and his family, Petru, Marcu, Roxanda (Fig. 33), is a work obviously inspired by the votive painting made by Dobromir in the Church of *Curtea de Argeş* from which the artist copied the solemn attitude of the personages. On the other hand, the portrait of Spatharus Stroe (in the painting of the Cantacuzino family), who supervised the construction of the building and the decorating work of the church, is an impressive and truthful depiction in which nothing is conventional and flattering. The drawing faithfully presents the gestures of the character, his energy and power typical of a high official (Fig. 34). This image is not only a document, but an anticipation of the portrait in the realistic painting that was to develop later on in Wallachia. In general, the frescoes in the chapel of the infirmary of *Cozia* Monastery draw the viewer's attention by the clear organization of the composition and distribution of surfaces, by the vigorous line and the variety and

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[219] Ibid.

harmony of colours: shades of grey and a dominant earth red enhanced by touches of white which gives the ensemble brilliance.

Affected by numerous restorations, the frescos in the Church of *Valea* monastery (Argeş County) painted in 1548, still have a documentary value. The same is true of those (covered in plaster) in the Church of *Hârteşti*, the same county.

On the other hand, the murals at *Snagov* Monastery (Ilfov county, near Bucharest), dating from 1563, though also restored, are a very important landmark in that they show the artistic aspirations and resources of Wallachia, despite the oppressive circumstances of the Ottoman domination. Since 1310 when Wallachia was first mentioned in written sources, its history was centered on the resistance to the Ottoman Empire. The Ottoman Empire's influence was especially strong after the defeat of Christian alliance at Varna, in 1444, and the conquest of Hungary (Mohács, 1526), when for 150 years the Ottoman Empire was at its height. In 1462 Wallachia was invaded by Mehmet II, the conqueror of Constantinople, and Moldova became also a vassal state of this empire in 1504. Donated by Petru cel Tânăr [the Young], the son and successor to the throne of Mircea Ciobanul, the paintings at *Snagov* are the largest sixteenth century iconographic ensemble preserved in Wallachia. It is particularly impressive in its perfect adaptation to the surfaces of the walls, in the elegant attitude of the personages depicted, and complex in its programme. In this case there is a harmonious combination between the richness and expressiveness of the iconography and the clarity of the biblical narrative. Scenes such as the *Presentation to the Temple* (Fig. 35) and *The Dormition of the Virgin* are well-balanced. As in the church of *Curtea de Argeş*, the votive painting in the *naos* and *pronaos* are processions of princely figures; among them the portrait of Princess *Chiajna* is very expressive (Fig. 36). Attributed initially to Dobromir of Târgovişte, the frescoes at *Snagov* are certainly the work of a good artist, familiar with both contemporary local and Balkan paintings.

Dobromir was certainly not the author of the frescoes, for cleaning and restoration from the beginning of 80's revealed differences with regard to style from what is certainly the work of Dobromir in other places mentioned here.[220] There is, however, an obvious unity of conception with other monuments in Wallachia; this proves the existence of a stable artistic milieu based on the activity of permanent painting workshops.

In Moldova (Suceava County), the votive painting in *Bistriţa* Monastery's bell tower from 1541, representing Stephen the Great and Petru Rareş with their wives, has been well preserved (Fig. 37).

ii) The "golden age" of Romanian iconography

As I made clear at the beginning of the thesis, the frescoes have been included in my understanding of icons, and the following two examples come as arguments for my choice of this broader definition of an icon, emphasising the common elements between a fresco and an icon painted on a smaller scale. In the Episcopal Church of *Curtea de Argeş*, the icon of *St Nicholas* from 1512 (Fig. 38) depicts a white-haired, thick-bearded old man with prominent forehead and cheeks. His hieratic, frontal attitude is an evident illustration of the Byzantine traditional style of painting. His archaic vestment is ornamented with black crosses, and the *omophorion* is outlined against a white background.[221] The other example is the icon of *Sts Mark and Matthew* from *Curtea de Argeş* of which typology and treatment lead us to the image of the apostles surrounding Christ in the Last Supper fresco of *Târguşor* Church (Prahova

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[220] Drăguţ, *Romanian Art: Prehistory...*, vol. 1, pp. 118.

[221] Ibid., p. 375.

County), which is presumed to have been founded in the sixteenth century (Fig. 39). On the latter, Voinescu comments: "Its aspect of depth, the simplicity and the sobriety of the frame, and the almost monochromatic colors confer on the icon the specific monumentality of the mural, despite of its smaller scale."[222] Another Byzantine influence is visible in the icon *Deposition from the Cross with Donors*, *Curtea de Argeş*, early sixtieth century (Fig. 40). This icon is special in the sense that, in its left corner, the Princess Despina (Prince Neagoe Basarab's wife) is depicted carrying her dead son in the same way in which the Virgin carries Jesus after he died. The expression on the faces of the two mothers is very similar, as the detailed Fig. 41 makes clear.

In spite of the Byzantine influences, all these accomplishments can be viewed as signs of Romanians becoming aware of their national identity, with their art beginning to be distinguished as a specific national art. In icon-painting it was manifested, for example, by incorporating into icons decorations taken from folk art. Obolensky comments on this, and at the same time emphasises the connection with Byzantium in this regard: "Despite their late date, these celebrated paintings are still faithful to the Byzantine Palaeologan tradition, which is only slightly diluted by the admixture of realistic and lyrical elements derived from local popular art."[223] It was a historical moment in which, as Voinescu puts it:

> Native and foreign artists [who worked in Romanian lands at that time], in a perfect unity of vision, benefited from propitious conditions to translate the spirit of the time into Palaeologan nuances that then became their own traditional artistic language.[224]

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[222] Ibid.

[223] Obolensky, *Byzantine Commonwealth*, p. 353.

[224] Voinescu, *Post-Byzantine Icons*, p. 374.

This process of awakening the national consciousness came to a political climax in Mihai Viteazul [Michael the Brave]'s act of uniting the three main Romanian provinces in 1600 - with Transylvania, even though only briefly, - coming back to Romania. As Obolensky explains, between 106 and 271 AD Transylvania "formed the kernel of the Roman province of Dacia; occupied by the Magyars at the time of their migration to Central Europe, it was annexed to the Hungarian crown in the eleventh century."[225] The artistic expression of that time of unity, as the culture in general, reflected the evolution of the national sentiment, and stimulated it. The role of art in the process of Romanians becoming aware of their national identity was important in the course of their entire history. The period preceding this first unification of Romanians was one of spiritual effervescence, which is reflected also in icon-painting. The most frequently represented politic/patriotic motif in icons and frescos was the destruction of the country's invaders - Turks and Tartars -, as is clear in Fig. 42 illustrating the frescoes of *Voroneț*. Attributed to painter Marcu, the paintings at *Voroneț* stand out against an intensely brilliant blue background, which gives a unity to the composition and underlines the architectural forms. On the southern façade the usual iconographic typicon is changed by including an atypical scene: the story of St John the New from Suceava. Using as a source the scenes decorating the silver coffin in which the relics of the saint were (and are still) kept, the iconographer handled the colours in such a way as to make the episode clearly understandable. Drăguț comments, "Thus the story of the saint tortured by the Tartars becomes a genuine fight against the sanguinary predatory hordes which raided Moldavia."[226]

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[225] Obolensky, *Byzantine Commonwealth*, p. 207.

[226] Drăguț, *Romanian Art: Prehistory...*, vol. I, p.282.

In general the realities and ideology of feudal society are present in icons and frescoes, since the founders of the churches were usually princes or high local nobility and they suggested themes to the painters. This is one of the ways in which later Western influences came to Romanian icon-painting, since the princes and nobility were the ones who travelled outside the country and also, in the spirit of that time, received a broad European education.

In Transylvania, just a few murals from the sixteenth century have been preserved (for example, at *Cetatea de Baltă*). Probably the church of *Prislop* Monastery was also painted, and there are a few icons of that time kept in some churches. From the seventeenth century there are very few works from Transylvania, which is not surprising since the Romanians under Austro-Hungarian occupation did not have full political, socio-economic, and religious rights. In addition, the new Calvinistic religion of the Empire did not recognise the cult of icons. Nevertheless, the mural ensemble from the church *Sf. Nicolae* [St Nicholas] in Hunedoara, executed by the iconographers Constantin and Stan from that period has been preserved. The authors of the *Biserica Ortodoxă Română.* Monografie-Album [The Romanian Orthodox Church. Album-Monograph], consider that it is likely that the church from *Turnu Roşu* was painted by iconographers sent by Matei Basarab of Wallachia, and that it is also likely that the church of the Monastery *Sâmbăta de Sus* and the Church of *Ocna Sibiului*, were painted at about the same time by iconographers sent by Constantin Brâncoveanu, since they are his foundations in Transylvania.[227]

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[227] *Biserica Ortodoxă Română.* Monografie-Album, pp. 161-208.

The most famous school of iconographers was around the Monastery of *Hurezu* or *Hurezi*, Vâlcea County, Wallachia. It was open on the initiative of Prince Constantin Brâncoveanu, and led by the Greek Master Constantinos, as will be detailed below. The icons and the frescoes from that monastery have been well preserved (Figs. 43-44). In the same period beautiful frescoes and icons were made in other monasteries and churches in Vâlcea, for instance in *Polovragi* Monastery, as will be proved further. In Moldova, famous in the seventeenth century were iconographers Ion, Sofronie, and Gregorie from *Bierileşti*. Voinescu affirms: "Among these three painters, Grigorie of Bierileşti seems to have been the most traditional. His icons for St Teodori's Church in Iaşi (p. 401) show that he was much appreciated by his contemporaries."[228] (Fig. 45).

In the end of the sixteenth century and the beginning of the seventeenth century some of the icons in Wallachia showed a Western influence. For instance the icon of *St Paraskevi* from *Bălăneşti* Church (Vâlcea County) includes a landscape which resembles the small, very picturesque genre paintings of the period, whose presence reveals the common tendency of cultural Westernisation of the time (Fig. 46). Under the same influence, some of the iconographers began signing their works. This process took place because of the connection which Romanian Orthodox Church had with both Russian and Greek Orthodox Churches, with effects upon the local iconography. Venice invaded Crete as early as eleventh century and, as a consequence of the Fourth Crusade (1204), it seized Greek islands and ports. The beauty of their religious paintings made the Greek iconographers, especially the Cretans, consciously or unconsciously, to imitate the Venetian artists. Then the Cretan School of iconography influenced that of

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[228] Voinescu, *Post-Byzantine Icons*, p. 377.

Mount Athos. Since many Romanian monasteries were dedicated to monasteries on Mount Athos, and this was anyway the centre to which Romanian monks (some of them iconographers) travelled, on their return to Romanian lands they propagated a style of painting icons which was different from the traditional Orthodox style, manifesting Western features. In the sixteenth century Romanian Church was also very much connected with the Russian Church (the language in the Romanian Orthodox Church was Slavonic until late seventeenth century). Throughout this century a process of openness towards the West was manifested in Russia, even before that proclaimed by Peter the Great, and their iconography was affected by this process. Monks and priests from Russia and Ukraine, running away from the Catholic and Lutheran proselytism coming especially from Poland, settled temporarily or permanently in Romanian territories and brought with them Western motifs and techniques of painting.

The afore-mentioned examples of Western influence on Romanian iconography, even though there are timid attempts, follow the general trend of renewal through contamination. Accordingly to Voinescu "They are nothing but accidents, and do not go beyond mere impulse,"[229] but I believe that she underestimates the case, since they lasted long time in Church art, and are still present even today, and this in spite of a conscious effort by the Church authorities to remove them. A few foreign masters were also active in Wallachia at this time, such as Mavros, the painter of the icon of *St George Killing the Dragon* at *Viforâta*, 1631 (Fig. 47). The artist added to the images elements

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[229] Ibid.

peculiar to his own training and vision, trying to adapt them to the demands of a public increasingly attached to this type of work.

ii. 1) 'National innovation' in Romanian iconography. Brâncovan and post-Brâncovan periods

In the second half of the seventeenth century, the reigns of Matei Basarab (1632-1654) and Constantin Brâncoveanu (1688-1714) in Wallachia stimulated the development of new values. The icons of this period possess a markedly autochthonous character, in contrast to those of the late sixteenth century when the Western influence is strong. This indigenous character infused the traditional Byzantine forms with a new synthesis elaborated under an increased influence of Mount Athos and the Greek-Cretan schools, and reinforced by the Greek touch of the late seventeenth century Romanian culture.[230] Two phases can be distinguished in this process of 'national innovation' (my own term): the first comprises the reign of Matei Basarab and his successors; the second lasts between the time of Şerban Cantacuzino (1678-1688) throughout the whole era of Brâncovan painting up to the end of the seventeenth and the early eightieth centuries, when Wallachia enjoyed an epoch of relative historical and cultural calm while Ottoman expansionism was concentrated in other areas.

The seventeenth century was a time of prolific church building (and also of building other edifices intended as instruments of internal and external authority in the service of a state connected to a large extent to the Orthodox Church) in Romanian lands. Also the culture of that time was dominated by the voivodes and boyars (Romanian

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[230] Ibid., p. 378.

landowners), who thought that they might prove their Byzantine descent by gaining a place in history. They built rich religious establishments to increase the prestige of their families. This historical context provided opportunities for both indigenous and foreign iconographers to work in the country;[231] the arrival of foreign painters did not impinge on the work of the locals. The late seventeenth and eightieth centuries saw both foreign and local iconographers, and also craftsmen recruited and trained in the Romanian milieu to make icons. Working together in groups or organised teams, in family circles where this occupation passed from father to son, and painting simultaneously murals and portable icons, these iconographers created a number of successful works in the style of their time. From among them there emerged, in the first half of the seventeenth century, masters of mural and icon-painting like Stoica from Brădet, Stroe from Târgovişte, Pârvu Mutu, and a group from the Monastery of *Hurezu*: Ion, Andrei, Istratie, Ion Călugărul [the Monk], and many others.

On the other hand, Wallachia and Moldova found themselves somehow isolated and less subject to cultural influences from immediately neighbouring lands (such as Bulgaria and Serbia) than in the fourteenth century, because these countries were not themselves in a position to develop and enrich their artistic patrimony due of the Turkish domination in the area. The attempt to return to tradition from the Western influence, which Voinescu talks about, lasted here from the second half of the seventeenth century until the middle of the nineteenth century, when the Western style became very fashionable. In the seventeenth century iconographers borrowed the typology of famous works of the past (for example, the *Virgin Hodegetria* and the *Virgin Eleousa* from *Valea* and *Boda*), or copied subjects and figures from murals, as was the case with the icon of St Michael from *Topolniţa*, or the *Deesis* from *Văleni*

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[231] Ibid.

(Fig. 48). This tendency to look back to a golden age, peculiar also to the literary taste of the time, produced a highly personal and sensitive art, despite the persistence of the canons. A bright and lively colour scheme of predominantly warm tones of red at *Valea*, and the glow of the attire and armour of the *Archangel Michael* in the church in *Topolnița*, are representative of post-Byzantine painting at the moment when architecture also was being moulded into specific Wallachian stylistic forms. It was a time of very intense artistic exchange with Moldova, of which the fruit was a number of Wallachian syntheses, best reflected in the icon offered by Matei Basarab to the Monastery of *Arnota* which he founded in 1640. This icon is the work of Stroe, the same painter from Târgovişte mentioned earlier. As shown earlier, after the sixteenth century, some (still few) iconographers signed their works).

At the end of the seventeenth century, icon-painting had a new period of flourishing under the influence of a different stylistic orientation. Historical and cultural conditions caused wall painters to turn towards Mount Athos for inspiration. For example, the church of the *Polovragi* Monastery founded by Danciu Pârâianu of Mileşti in 1648 (during the reign of Constantin Brâncoveanu) is a product of that epoch (Fig. 49). Danciu built the church on an older foundation dating from circa 1505 (belonging to a church attributed to Radu and Pătru, Danciul Zamona's sons); Pârâianu preserved only the lower part of the walls, which were in a better condition. When it was finished, its founder dedicated it to the Holy Sepulchre Church in Jerusalem. The voivode Constantin Brâncoveanu redeemed it in 1693 and placed it under the jurisdiction of the *Hurezi* Monastery. The church is built in the Byzantine style on a trefoil plan. The painting of the church in *Polovragi* is particularly important both from an iconographic point of view and for its technical execution. For instance, the gesture of the iconographer who painted the whole church, Archimandrite loan, to paint himself within the fresco of the *pronaos* (Fig. 50) was symptomatic of that period.

From previous centuries-long anonymity, to depicting themselves among the holy persons was a huge step, which the iconographers made under the influence of the authors of religious paintings in the West. Another example of an iconographer who did the same in about the same period is Pârvu Mutu (1657-1735) who portrayed himself in *Filipeşti* Church, Prahova County. Mutu was very famous and painted, among others, the church called *Mânăstirea* [the Monastery] in *Râmnicu Sărat*, Buzău County (Fig. 51), and the frescoes in the small church of *Sinaia* Monastery (Fig. 52-*The Supper at Mamvre*). Most of the painting in *Polovragi* looks like that of the *Hurezu* Monastery, being the work of the same painters, but it has particular characteristics as well. In the porch, on the east wall, one can admire the two iconographic representations, unique in the country, of the monasteries of Mount Athos, as well as images from the Old and the New Testament and from the lives of the saints. The interior painting is preserved in the original form. The colouring on the blue background is harmonious and sober, as for example, in the case of the *Virgin and Child* in the nave (Fig. 53). The *iconostasis* is a real masterpiece of old Romanian wood carving having a rich and fine ornamentation (Fig. 54). The church is surrounded by other buildings of the monastery. They date from the epoch of Constantin Brâncoveanu and form a stronghold where there are cells, the workshop, the refectory and other dependences (as in any monastery on Mounth Athos). On the northern side of the precinct of the Monastery there is the Infirmary Church built in 1732 by Abbot Lavrentie in Byzantine architectural style with delicate paintings on the interior walls (Fig. 55).[232]

Many Greek-Cretans iconographers came to these regions at the end of the seventeenth century. Western influences were filtered through a Constantinopolitan sensibility, and

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[232] Radu Constantinescu and Mircea Sfârlea, *Monumente religioase. Biserici şi mânăstiri celebre din*

then, once more, through a local one. There existed even a so-called "Moldavian Baroque", for example in the decoration of St George's church in Suceava.[233] Thus Romanian icon-painting was constantly developed by an increasing number of local painters preserving traditional elements but it also evolved, in tune with the taste of a society even more receptive to ideas of progress, into the forms of a new stylistic outlook regarding icon and wall-painting. This entire artistic effervescence at the end of the seventeenth century and the beginning of the eighteenth century was due mainly to Constantin Brâncoveanu, patron of the arts, a supporter of the old traditions but, at the same time, open to the innovations required by that epoch. It led to "the emergence of a style bearing his name, whose influence icon-painting could not escape."[234] This iconography as a part of the Brâncovan phenomenon is neither exclusively Greek (as we might be misled into thinking by the Greek calligraphy of the inscriptions), nor exclusively a foreign work since Brâncoveanu had at his court local as well as foreign painters.

Because of the increasingly stronger influence of the Ottoman Empire into the Balkans, especially after the battle of Varna, 1444 and the fall of Constantinople, 1453, painters in these areas left their homes to settle elsewhere. Some of them came to Romanian lands, and this migration led to the establishment of many Church art centres in cities and around the monasteries of the Romanian countryside. Foreign masters often placed their skills at the service of local rich and influential patrons. For example, a dominant contribution to the iconography there was made by the Greek painter Constantinos, who settled in Wallachia and worked under Brâncoveanu's

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România, Editura Editis [Editis Publishing House], Bucuresti, 1994, p. 146.

[233] St George Church in Suceava was built between 1514 and 1522 by Bogdan the Third and Ştefăniţă the son and respectivelly, the nephew of Ştefan cel Mare [the Great]. In this church the relics of St John the New are kept.

[234] Voinescu, *Post-Byzantine Icons*, p. 378.

patronage. He signed his works "Constantinos iconopsis", and once he became the head of the workshop at *Hurezu* Monastery, "he liked to introduce himself as 'Constantinos of Wallachia', and became both a creator and a supporter of the Brâncovan style in art."[235] What made adaptation to the new artistic outlook easier was that common Byzantine substratum which Constantinos found in Romanian art, despite some infusion of both Western and Eastern elements. In his workshop within the *Hurezu* Monastery, where all kinds of craftsmen worked together, the painters of icons cultivated an art which, like other Brâncovan creations, illustrated not only the aspirations of a single personality or a painter, but the general outlook of an epoch conscious of its own needs and goals. This style could be exemplified in an icon from that period which has survived, among others. The icon represents the *Virgin Entering the Church*, the patron icon of the Princess' Church (*Biserica Doamnei*) in Bucharest, and it belongs to the ensemble painted in 1683 by Constantinos and his associate Ioan. Its style follows the typical Brâncovan style. The features of the characters depicted are pronounced: elongated and well-shaped noses, eyes surrounded by a dark, almost black line. The olive complexions are contrasted by tones of red and glowing gold. The same style is visible in the voivodal church in Târgovişte, and in some of the works preserved in the monastic complex at *Hurezu*. In other icons, such as the *Virgin with Child* (Fig. 56), the icons of *Sts Constantine and Helena* (Figs. 57-58, and the *Deesis* (Fig. 59) from *Hurezu*, "the figures look human under their heavy, burdening crowns. But the golden brocade garments, like the background itself, tell of the Byzantine pomp reigning at the court of the great voivodas. The majestic attitude in the icons of *Sts Constantine and Helena* is part of the artists' attempt to render (by something more than the brilliant accessories) the likeness between the figure of Brâncoveanu's

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[235] Ibid., p. 370.

homonym, the first Christian emperor, and the portrait of the voivode in votive pictures. Actually in *Hurezu* Monastery, there are not only the two icons of Constantine and Helena mentioned above, but also two frescoes inside the church depicting them (Figs. 60-61). This likeness between the Roman Emperor Constantine and the Romanian (Wallachian) Constantin Brâncoveanu, often emphasised in chronicles and other literature of the time, indicates the great prestige enjoyed by Brâncoveanu.[236] The Brâncovan style evolved in courtly, sumptuous forms, appropriate to princely commissions, as is obvious in the *iconostasis* of the Monastery's church (Fig. 62). Icon-painting was one of the cultural factors which played a role in keeping the national identity awake.

Among the others, books were also a decisive factor in this process. Throughout the seventeenth century, the printing presses of the three Romanian main provinces published many religious and legal books which Voinescu regards as "proofs of the maturity of the Romanian elite and their increasing sense of ethnic unity, regardless of political borders."[237] It was this spirit that led to the translation and publication by Varlaam, the Metropolitan of Moldova (1590-1657), of a first Teaching Book (*Cazanie*) for "the whole Romanian people"[238] in 1643. This book is one of the first samples of Romanian literary language of the seventeenth century, so it has a great bibliographical value, and has becomes widely-known throughout the Romanian

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[236] Ibid., p. 379.

[237] Treptow, *A History of Romania*, p. 201.

[238] *Cazania lui Varlaam* has the subtitle: "*Carte românească de învățătură: din multe scripturi din limba slovenească pre limba Romeiască* de Varlaam; cu zisa şi cheltuiala a lui Vasile Voivodul. – Iaşi: Tipariul Domnesc în Mânăstirea a trei Steli, 1643" i.e. "Trei Ierarhi" [*Romanian Book of Teachings: from many Scriptures from the Slavic language into Romanian* by Varlaam; by order and with the money of the Prince Vasile Lupu; Iaşi: the Princely Publishing House of the 'trei Steli' - Three Stars, i.e. Three Hyerachs- Monastery, 1643]; so, this book is a translation from Slavonic of a Greek book attributed to Callistus, Patriarch of Constantinope (d. 1363). The translation of the title (from archaic Romanian) is mine; I have included all the original details from the title.

lands.[239] It contains commentaries on the Gospel, and 74 sermons to be delivered 'on Sundays and most important feasts'. The first legal code ever printed in Romanian appeared in Iaşi, Moldova's capital city, in 1646, under the title *Carte românească de învățătură* [*The Romanian Book of Norms Derived from Imperial Laws and Other Bodies*].[240] Now is the time when the Bible was translated into Romanian and published in Wallachia in 1688 (known as the Bible of Şerban Cantacuzino), an act of great philological, spiritual, and in general, cultural significance.

iii) The third phase of Romanian iconography

With regard to icon-painting, its diffusion after 1700, in the post-Brâncovan period, kept the Byzantine tradition alive in iconographic parallels, as for example the icon in Fig. 63, *The Entry into Jerusalem* from the Metropolitan Church in Târgovişte (Wallachia), proves. This process happened despite the waning of the post-Byzantine model, and this survived until the nineteenth century. This survival "compensated for the rather tardy emergence of post-Byzantine painting in Wallachia and Moldova, as compared to neighbouring countries."[241]

In Transylvania in the eighteenth century many of the folk iconographers who worked especially in churches in the Braşov, Sibiu, Făgăraş, Cluj and Sălaj area, also worked in small churches in the Western Romanian Carpathian

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[239] For the spreading of this *Cazania*, see Florian Dudaş (ed.) and Virgil Cândea (Preface), *Cazania lui Varlaam în Transilvania*, Arhiepiscopia Ortodoxă Română a Vadului Feleacului şi Clujului [The Romanian Orthodox Diocese of the Vadul Feleacului and Cluj], Cluj, 1983.

[240] Andrei Rădulescu (ed.), *Carte românească de învățătură* (*Adunarea izvoarelui vechiului drept românesc*), Editura Academiei Romane, Bucharest, 1961; the title was translated by Teodora Voinescu.

[241] Voinescu, *Post-Byzantine Icons*, p. 379.

Mountains *(Munții Apuseni)*. Chapter 4 will show to some length this phenomenon in the church of *Nicula* Monastery, Cluj County. Some painters who decorated churches most of the century in Transylvania, did it also in Wallachia. Among them, for example, were the priests Ivan, Iacob and Stan (who were brothers), et al. who worked initially in *Răşinari*. In Maramureş, many of the wooden churches were decorated by peasant iconographers (the icons were painted were on canvas, which was then stuck on the beams of a church). One of the important scenes represented was that of the *Last Judgement* since, among the people condemned to Hell, it offered the possibility to include within it some of the local people who had gone astray from the Christian morals (profligates, drunkards, publicans, etc.), rich people who exploited others, or foreign invaders. In Banat, church painting in the eighteenth century was dominated almost half of the century by Nedelcu Popovici Zugravul [The Iconographer]. The deacon Vasile Alexievici from Oltenia [area to the South of Wallachia], who moved to this area and lived in *Srediştea Mică*, painted many icons in Banat, and also taught young people how to paint icons. In our discussion of the eighteenth century, it is worth mentioning at this point icons painted on glass in Transylvania, even though the authors of the *Monograph-Album* consider that this is an older craft there. The oldest and most important centre was *Nicula*, close to *Gherla*, which I will describe in the next chapter because it is still an important place where icons are painted today. In the second half of the eighteenth century there were also other centres of icons painted on glass: *Alba Iulia-Maieri*, *Laz*, *Rahău*, all of them in Alba County; *Poiana Sibiului*, *Scheii Braşovului*, etc. This type of Church art was taught within the family. At the same time the folk

practice of *xilogravură* (icons on paper) is to be found, for example, in *Haşdate* village, close to *Gherla*,[242] as on Mount Athos.[243]

The icons produced during the eighteenth century by local painters spread to cities as well to rural regions, reaching the most remote areas, illustrating the moral content of religious literature and of widely circulated popular books. Most of the icons and murals in the eighteenth century "from rural or monastic environments" were worked "in traditional Brâncovan style, interpreted by a charming, picturesque, and popular vision."[244] For Voinescu this stage is the last one in post-Byzantine Romanian religious art, including that of icon-painting. She believes that painting of the Orthodox Romanian Church in a good Byzantine tradition, as it was accomplished in the churches of the fourteenth-eighteenth century, passed through an epoch of crisis and confusion in the nineteenth century. This crisis was due to the aforementioned influence of Western religious painting on Romanian iconography, and to the development of secular painting with oil and easel. The next chapter of the thesis will provide evidence to show that she was right. The same chapter will prove that actually in the nineteenth century there was a crisis, but not the end of icon-painting of Byzantine lineage in Romania, as Voinescu believed.

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[242] *Biserica Ortodoxă Română*. Monografie-Album, p. 162.

[243] *Treasures on Mount Athos*, Chapter 4, pp. 207 to 211.

[244] Voinescu, *Post-Byzantine Icons*, p. 378.

iii.1) Crisis in Romanian iconography. The Romanian Orthodox Church Synod of 1889

In the nineteenth century there were two movements in Church painting in Romania: one based on the traditional style of Byzantine lineage, especially in fresco painting, practised in villages and provincial towns, and the Western type of Church painting used by iconographers who studied abroad, which spread especially in the second half of the century. The first type of paining was represented by many iconographers in Moldova, Oltenia, and Wallachia. Among them there were Nicolae Polcovnicul (d. 1842) who worked around Bucharest, but also in the city itself, and also Nicolae Teodorescu (d. 1880), who worked especially in Buzău Diocese (the Episcopal Cathedral, the churches of *Ciolanu* and *Rătești* monasteries, etc.). Teodorescu opened a Church painting school in Buzău city with the support of Bishop Chesarie, and many iconographers were formed here, as for example, his own nephew, the famous Gheorghe Tăttărescu (1818-1894).[245] The second movement, evocative of Italian *Renaissance* and based mainly on oil painting, was represented, among others, by Eustație Altini (1772-1845), who studied in Vienna, and who painted many churches in Moldova (Banu and St Spiridon in Iaşi, the Episcopal Cathedral in Roman, etc.). Other iconographers belonging to this orientation were Constantin Lecca who worked mainly in Craiova,[246] and Mişu Popp who painted the church of *Frăsinei* Hermitage,

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[245] Păcurariu, *Istoria*, 2000, pp. 424-425.

[246] Mişu Pop (1827-1892), a Romanian painter who was based in Braşov. Drăguț and Grigorescu, *History or Romanian Art. An Outline*, Editura Enciclopedică [Enciclopaedic Publishing House], Bucharest, 1990, p. 215.

and some churches around Braşov and in the city of Braşov itself[247]) – both of these last two painters were from Braşov.

However, Voinescu is right to identify a crisis in icon-painting in the nineteenth century, when this became a prosperous occupation bringing money to icon painters, but not keeping the quality requirements and the canons of the Church. The prosperous merchant class could afford to order some churches to be built and/or painted according to their uneducated theological and artistic taste. It was a situation similar to that of religious painting earlier in the West,[248] in response to the ever-growing demands of a newly rising social class, the country boyars: "The modest artistic standards of this clientele fostered a rather unassuming indigenous style, which was nonetheless sincere and expressive."[249] Some of the iconographers in Romania began to do secular painting as well, especially after art schools such as the *Belle-Arte* School in Iaşi [250] were opened.

Around 1800 itinerant and immigrant painters (fleeing from the Austro-Hungarian Empire or from other places) came to settle permanently or temporarily in the Romanian principalities, working there in a mixture of styles. For example, Altini, who was born in South of the Danube but lived in Moldova, had a scholarship to study at

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[247] Constantin Lecca (1807 or 1810-1887), Romanian painter who marked the beginning of modern painting in the Romanian lands; he studied in Budapest and established himself firstly in Craiova, where he became involved in cultural life, and when he was 23 years old began working as a drawing teacher at the Central [Secondary] School *Şcoala Centrală*] in that town. In about 1851 Lecca was appointed drawing teacher in St Savah College in Bucharest; Paul Rezeanu, *Constantin Lecca 1807-1887*, Editura Meridiane [Meridiane Publishing House], Bucharest, 1988.

[248] See Giotto's case during the fourteent century in the first chapter of this thesis.

[249] Drăguţ and Grigorescu, *History of Romanian Art. An Outline*, p. 190.

[250] The *Belle-Arte* School in Iaşi was open in October 1864; it obtained university status in 1931, and in 1948 it merged with Conservatorul de Artă Dramatică şi Musică [the Declamation and Music Conservatory] (founded in October 1860 when the university *Alexandru Ioan Cuza* in Iaşi was opened) and forms the George Enescu University of Arts. Aurel Loghin, Gheorghe Platon, Vasile Ababi, et al., trans. Viorica Dobrovici et al., *The 'Al. I. Cuza University' of Jassy*, Litera Publishing House, Bucharest, 1972.

the Academy in Vienna before 1800. In direct contact with neo-classicism, he assimilated the technique of representing perspective in painting and also *chiaroscuro*. By the time of the second unification of the Romanian principalities, in 1859, some iconographers went to study in the West, usually in Italy, France, and Austria, where they were trained by copying *Renaissance* - especially Italian - paintings, and the works of modern artists of that time. They came back to Romania with a new taste in wall and icon-painting which they propagated throughout the country. As previously pointed out, Altini was followed in this direction by Popp, Lecca, Tăttărăscu, the latter marking a crucial moment in icon-painting in Romania, and even by the younger Nicolae Grigorescu (1838-1907), probably the most famous Romanian secular painter, but who began his career as an iconographer. In his youth Grigorescu painted the church of *Puchenii Mari*, the church of *Zamfira* Monastery (Fig. 64), both in Prahova County, and *Agapia*, in Neamț County. For example, in painting the murals for the church of *Agapia* Monastery (where he worked between 1858 and 1861), instead of the hundreds of characters and scenes traditional to the Moldavian iconography, Grigorescu painted big compositions with fewer characters. Some characters and scenes were inspired by different *Renaissance* works, but for most of them Grigorescu used live models (monks, nuns, peasant-women, and children) whom he painted in the life size, performing gracious movements. By his technical execution, chromatical harmony, and the expressivity of the characters (Fig. 65), Grigorescu managed to create the best neo-classic work in all Romanian Church painting. It was considered so good that it has been kept until today; it was not white-washed or covered as were many of the works of 'Academic painters' in churches.

The characterisation made by Voinescu for the time prior to this open orientation towards the Western painting of the nineteenth century is accurate and summarises the

preceding discussions regarding the icon, but also religious painting in Romania between fourteenth and nineteenth centuries:

> These painters, who showed a remarkable sense of reality and a robust power of selection and synthesis, receptive to the taste of succeeding epochs, distilled from the vast iconographic repertoire their favourite types and themes. Adding or suppressing details, they enriched and at times even transformed the conventions according to local requirements. Thus they succeeded in maintaining, with a vision apparently diffuse, the artistic continuity of the Rumanian icon along traditional lines.[251]

But after the first half of the nineteenth century, especially through Tăttărescu and his followers, the Romanian tradition of icon and mural painting reached the deepest crisis that it had us yet been required to confront. As chapter 3 will show, many of Tăttărescu's works were removed soon after his death, and the Synod of the Romanian Patriarchate gathered in November 1889 to issue a document expressing their disapproval of the state of mural and icon-painting in the country, and to propose measures to return to the Tradition as they understood it. The document is called *Decisiunea Sfântului Synod al Sfintei noastre Biserici autocefale drept măritoare de răsărit, privitoare la icoanele, arhitectura, pictura şi ornamentaţiunea bisericilor din toata ţara, cum are să se urmeze pe viitor* [The Decision of the Holy Synod of our Holy Autocephalous Orthodox Eastern Church Regarding the Icons, Architecture, Painting and Decoration of the Churches in the Entire Country as to How these are to be carried out in the Future]. Here is the most important part of the English translation of the text (see Appendix B for the whole text in both Romanian and English]:

> The undersigned [The Primate Metropolitan and the Bishops of the country],

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[251] Voinescu, *Post-Byzantine Icons*, p. 379.

Considering Byzantine painting and, together with it the other decorative arts, as being the only [arts] able to represent with splendour, magnificence and piety the important and Holy Persons of the Christian faith, and to preserve among the people true religious feeling; Taking into account that the Byzantine decorative arts were introduced in our Romanian Church from the very first time of their creation, the fact that our people have become accustomed to them, and the fact that our Romanian artists and craftsmen have learned them; Seeing that sadly they are the object of a tacit action of elimination from the churches, and of a replacement by new arts unknown to our people; Seeing the large influx of all types of foreign icons which have flooded the country from everywhere; Seeing that in some churches there are paintings and architecture, and that in Romanian Christians' houses icons are introduced, which are far from depicting appropriately the image of God and Saints [as they are supposed to be] in the old and God protected Church of the Romanians; Seeing that in general the Church decoration which began to be introduced at the same time almost fails to meet the artistic and liturgical requirements of our rite, and therefore they are far from helping the cultural genius of the Romanian people to develop its religious and national sentiment; And fearing that the introduction of new arts in the Church and in Christian homes could shake the right faith and belief in them;

The Holy Synod takes the following decisions:

1. Their Graces the Eparchial Bishops ought to supervise thoroughly that the painting and decoration to be carried out under their jurisdiction from now on, either in old, or in new, or renewed churches, is to follow the Byzantine style already in use in our Holy Autocephalous Orthodox Eastern Church 2. They [ought] to ask the priests and the officers [*epitropii*] of all churches, before agreeing on a Church-painting contract, to submit for approval to the Diocese the [list of] paintings which are proposed to be made, as well as their models 3. They [ought] to compel the priests to accept for blessing in the church only those icons which have been approved and recommended by the Diocese, or made in the workshops of our Romanian renowned painters for whom at least two or three Bishops of the country can provide a guarantee. The icons which have not been blessed according to the ritual of our Holy Church will be gradually removed from Christian homes through the moral influence of the priests and, instead, those which have been approved by the Diocese will be recommended 4. [They ought] to require the administrative authorities of the counties to ask the mayors also to obey the above dispositions, and not to allow the selling of icons and sacred objects in the territory of their administration;

> these Christian objects to be purchased only through the parochial church 5. The *prosphora* (*prescure - antidoron)* are to be made only by pious Christian women or only by Christians. 6. The breaking of the above dispositions will incur *caterisirea* [defrocking] for the priests, and dismissal for the *epitropi*, and the suing in Court latter for recovery for the parish of the sum spent on the painting, architecture and decoration contradictory to the dispositions of the Holy Synod of our Holy Autocephalous Orthodox Eastern Church 7. The Churches in which the painting, architecture, and decoration were made in contradiction to these dispositions will be closed 8. The breaking for the first time of the third disposition will be punished with suspending [the priest from serving in the church] for three months, for the second time for one year, and for the third time with defrocking. 22 November, 1889[252]

After this document was issued, gradually many of the churches painted under Tăttărescu's direction or influence were white-washed. Also the priests began persuading people to remove the icons which were painted in breaching of the requirements of the Church from their homes. Since in Romania the priests used to go to people's houses at least twice a year (once during the Great Lent and once before the Epiphany) they had enough opportunities of doing it. (The priests still go to peoples' houses today in the same way in the countryside and, in principle, even in the cities).

In conclusion, the distinctive features of Romanian iconography, in addition to the inclusion of folk elements in frescoes and icons, are as follows: with the exception of the very beginning (for example, *Streisângeorgiu* Church), throughout its history this iconography has not been characterized by a rigidity or stiffness of the holy persons depicted, as the Byzantine iconography was from time to time. The characters have always had a certain softness of their features, sometimes even warmth. However, it

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[252] *Monitorul Oficial* [Official Buletin], No. 183, November, 1889, pp. 125-126. See also "Biserica Ortodoxă Română, 1890-1891", reproduced (with a updated language – some norms of the language have changed since 1889) in *Biserica Ortodoxă Română şi Cultele străine din Regatul Român,* Institutul de Arte Grafice "Carol Gobl", Bucharest, 1904, pp. 11-12. See Appendix B for the document in the original Romanian and for the whole English translation; my emphasis.

must be added that, in spite of this softness, the feelings of the persons depicted in Romanian icons are somehow restrained, this being certainly a Byzantine mark. Another characteristic of iconography in Romania is its national spirit concretized in the depiction of the country's enemies as beings punished in the afterlife for attacking the iconographer's country (see *Voroneț* and *Moldovița* Monasteries mentioned above), and also in depicting some of the saints wearing the Romanian national costume (for example, *Radu Vodă* Church in Bucharest (built in 1568) has a fresco in its *pronaos* in which St John the New from Suceava wears it).

Additionally to the Greek influence on Romanian iconography, especially through the work of Constantinos, the Phanariot regime set up in Moldova and Wallachia in 1711 and 1716 respectively, came with a compensative counter-movement to the Westernization in the life of the country, in its culture and Church life, including iconography. No substantial changes took place in Romanian iconography during the Phanariot regime (except from more Greek lettering on the icons - often with mistakes), but there are proofs that some of the rulers of this regime helped to a great extent Romanian culture: Mihai Racoviță (1730-1731; 1741-1747), during his second rule built *St. Elefterie* Church in Bucharest, an impressive construction which is well preserved and functional today.

Chapter 3 of the thesis will describe in greater detail the situation of icon and mural painting in the second half of the nineteenth century, especially through Tăttărescu's activity, as he is the most representative case of an iconographer of that period. After the discussion of icon-painting in the monasteries, Chapter 6 will present the situation of icon and wall-painting in Romania from the beginning of the twentieth century up to the present day.

CHAPER 3

Gheorghe Tăttărescu: a case study of an iconographer who lived in the second half of the nineteenth century

i) Gheorghe Tăttărescu's formation and life in the context of his time

The nineteenth century constitutes, in the political and cultural evolution of the Romanian people, an epoch of challenges and uncertainties specific to a new beginning. Until after the middle of the century these principalities did not know what political fate they would have. (Wallachia and Moldova were united in 1859; Transylvania joined only in 1918). This period of time constitutes the end of the Phanariot regime in the Romanian principalities. The independence from the Turks increased gradually until 1878 when officially their control totally ceased as a consequence of what Romanians call 'the Independence war' (the Balkanic war of 1877-1878).

The echo of the French Revolution had reached the country. Under the strong influence of Western ideas, people were in a search for national principles of government, and also for new forms of expressing themselves in culture, especially in art. In 1863 Prince Alexandru Ioan Cuza (1859-1866) formed a new government led by Mihail Kogălniceanu (1817-1891). He followed the advice of his Prime Minister and dissolved the Parliament in 1864 because they perceived it as retrograde. Liberal reforms were put in place as, for example, the freedom of press (1862), resulting in the abolition of censorship. In December 1863 the monastic lands are secularized; therefore the money which used to go to the monasteries on Mount Athos (of which

many of the Romanian monasteries were dependencies) stopped being sent there, and was invested to a great extent in education. One result of it was that in 1860 the first university opened in Iaşi (it was a totality of previous smaller educational bodies), and in 1864 the University of Bucharest followed suit. In the following year free and compulsory basic (four years) education was introduced. Hospitals, libraries, theatres, and cinematographs were opened also (in 1896 the first film was shown, and in 1912 the first Romanian film – *Independenţa României* [The Independence of Romania] - went to cinemas). People travelled more extensively within the country (the electric tram was introduced in 1893) and communication became easier with the external world through the telephone (first introduced in 1884). Children of the aristocracy either studied with foreign teachers, or went to study in Western European countries and their parents travelled with them. Those who were educated abroad built big palaces in the neo-classical style on their arrival back home, and slowly they departed from the traditional way of life.

In this context, the activity of icon and wall-painting, which in the beginning of the century was still thriving and was still being carried out in a basically Byzantine style, was soon to be degraded by the mediocre artisans who experimented with it in a dilettante way. According to Wertheimer-Ghika, even though icon-painting at that time was quantitatively considerable, it was not of high quality (neither were the isolated cases of portrait painting), because "the Byzantine tradition had lost its freshness."[253] The figure who best illustrates the confusion in the domain of icon-painting during the second half of nineteenth Romania is the icon and Church painter Gheorghe Tăttărescu (1818 or 1820- 1894). A few details of his formation in the context of that time could

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[253] Jacques Wertheimer-Ghika, *Gheorghe Tăttărescu şi revoluţia de la 1848* [Gheorghe Tăttărescu and the Revolution of 1848], Editura Meridiane [Meridiane Publishing House], Bucureşti [Bucharest], 1971, p. 8.

explain, at least partially, how he came to play such a role. The art historians who have written about Gheorghe Tăttărescu speak usually about his secular art, especially about his historical works and about his portraits, mentioning just *en passant* his work in the Church. This is the case with Adina Nanu,[254] Jacques Wertheimer-Ghika,[255] and Teodora Voinescu.[256] However Voinescu pays more attention to this aspect - which actually was the most important in Tăttărescu's career - as will become clear in this chapter.

One can distinguish relatively clearly three stages in Tăttărescu's Church painting career: 1) apprentice to his uncle, Nicolae Teodorescu (from 1826 to 1843), 2) working alone - when he showed real painting skills, and including the six years of his formation in Rome (1843-1851); 3) working with apprentices (1852-1894) - the end of his career - just correcting the work of his apprentices.

However, before going into details of Tăttărescu's career some biographic details are in place. Gheorghe (or Iordache, as he was called as a child) Tăttărescu was born in October 1818[257] to Mihai (from Tătaru village, Buzău County), and Smaranda Tăttărescu (born Teodorescu). His parents died in his childhood as a consequence of plague, and he and his brother, Dumitru, were brought up by his uncle on his mother's side, Nicolae Teodorescu. His uncle belonged to the guild of Church iconographers

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[254] Adina Nanu, *Gheorghe Tăttărescu*, Editura de Stat pentru Literatură şi Artă [State Publishing House for Literature and Arts], Bucharest, 1955.

[255] In addition to Wertheimer-Ghika, *Gheorghe Tăttărescu şi revoluţia*, see also *Gheorghe M. Tăttărescu. Un pictor român şi veacul său* [Gheorghe M. Tăttărescu. A Romanian Painter and His Epoch], Editura de Stat pentru Literatură şi Artă [State Publishing House for Literature and Art], Bucharest, 1958.

[256] Teodora Voinescu, *Gheorghe Tăttărescu (1818-1894)*, Monitorul Official şi Imprimeriile Statului. Imprimeria Naţională, Bucharest, 1940.

[257] In Voinescu and Nanu's books Tăttărescu's year of birth appears as 1818 (both of them mention this date in the titles of their books regarding Tăttărescu). However, the year which he implies himself as the year of his birth is 1820, because when he began the procedures for a new passport in 1851, he wrote a letter to his uncle mentioning that he had "turned 31 years of age." Wertheimer-Ghika, *Gheorghe Tăttărescu şi revoluţia*, p. 7. The year 1820 is also mentioned as the date of his birth on the memorial inscription on the wall of Tăttărescu's house in Bucharest.

("*zugravi de subțire*"), who initially (1795) were in the same association as the house painters ("*zugravi de gros*"), but separated from them in 1831, when the first school for iconographers opened.[258] His uncle was Tăttărescu's first *Maestro*. Bishop Chesarie of Buzău[259] founded the School of [Mural and Icon] Painting ("*şcoala de zugrăvie*") in 1831 under the auspices of Buzău Diocese, having as its director Nicolae Teodorescu. The appearance of this type of school and also of the monastic workshops was possible after a document (*Anafora*) was issued by Alexandru Ipsilanti Voivode (1776-1797) in 1776 in this respect.[260] In these schools during Tăttărascu's time the Byzantine *typicon* was relaxed to a certain extent.[261] Wertheimer-Ghika comments:

> The Director of this school of painting did not have a sufficiently profound knowledge in the art of painting, [a situation] which perfectly mirrored the backward state in which the decorative arts found themselves at that time in Romania. [His knowledge] was not quite sufficient to bring forth a new generation of competent painters. However, Nicolae Teodorescu made a big step forward by introducing in that school's curriculum the study of anatomy, much more extended than just a few basic concepts necessary to understand and keep the canons of Byzantine painting and, in addition to it, the portrait as one of the important subjects [of study].[262]

I do not agree with Wertheimer-Ghika that one needs only a few notions to master the Byzantine style in painting, but as shown already in the outset of the chapter, the beginning of the nineteenth century was in general an epoch which, while undergoing an internal crisis, manifested at the same time, openness toward the Europe of the

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[258] Wertheimer-Ghika, *Gheorghe M. Tăttărescu. Un pictor român*...p. 6.

[259] Chesarie of Buzău was a Bishop between 1825 and 1846. He died on 30 November, 1846. Wertheimer-Ghika, *Gheorghe Tăttărescu şi revoluția,* pp. 7, 13.

[260] Raluca Tănăsescu, Aura Popescu, Cristina Panaite, *Gheorghe M. Tăttărescu 1818-1894*, Alcor Edimpex Publishing House, a catalogue published under the aegis of the the Bucharest Municipal Council and the Museum of Art and History of the Bucharest Municipality (*Primăria Municipiului Bucureşti şi Muzeul de Istorie şi Artă al Municipiului Bucureşti*), [Bucharest], 1994, Cristina Panaite, Foreword, p. 7.

[261] Ibid.

Enlightenment. The strong influence of Western models was observable at all levels of Romanian society, and it included the penetration of secular influences in the religious visual realm.

Tăttărescu was one of the first pupils of the icon-painting school in Buzău. But before that, in 1826 Bishop Chesarie of Buzău entrusted Nicolae Teodorescu with painting the Church of *Sfinții Apostoli* [Holy Apostles] belonging to the skete of *Ciolanu*, near Buzău city, where Tăttărescu helped as an apprentice. Until his first personal project in 1844 (the church in *Oneşti)* he worked under the guidance of Teodorescu. Also as an apprentice, in 1833, Tăttărescu helped his uncle to paint the Episcopal Church in Buzău. In the same capacity, but being allowed a more important contribution by Teodorescu and the iconographer Matei Polcovnicul (he used this title in his artistic activity) from *Căldăruşani*, Tăttărescu helped with painting the Metropolitan Church in Bucharest between 1834 and 1837. In 1837, after an examination, Bishop Chesarie declared Gheorghe Tăttărăscu a graduate of the School of [Icon] Painting in Buzău.

Wertheimer-Ghika considers that in 1840, even before leaving for Italy, in a simple portrait (of Bishop Chesarie), in spite of some hesitation specific to a beginner and of the sombre colours (which, in fact, he will use all his life),

> ...the good drawing, the olive colour of the [character's] face, the eyes which look gravely and with kindness under the half-closed eye lashes, despite following the canonical rules, give to this portrait a natural expressiveness. In spite of its primitivism – actually attractive – the work will open the series of portraits of which the psychological analysis will bring Tăttărescu a deserved fame.[263]

Between 1843 and 1844 Tăttărescu painted the icons on the *iconostasis* in the Church of *Oneşti*. He achieved this initial entirely personal work in a remarkable manner from

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[262] Wertheimer-Ghika, *Gheorghe Tăttărescu şi revoluţia*, pp. 8-9; see Appendix E for the Romanian original.

the technical point of view, and by making certain innovations - the colour of the background is a special grey-blue, but not golden as it was usually in the icons of that time, and the faces of the characters are expressive, 'humanised' (as opposed to the very spiritualized, almost abstract characters in the Byzantine tradition).

After finishing the church in *Oneşti*, together with his uncle, Tăttărescu painted, mainly in oil, the *iconostasis* in the church of *Rătăşti* Monastery, Buzău County. He also painted icons, especially for small churches, hermitages, and for the peasants in the villages and mountains of Buzău County.[264] On 23 April 1845 Bishop Chesarie issued a study certificate to Tăttărescu by which he was sent to Italy in order to perfect himself in painting. The Diocese of Buzău gave him a scholarship of 150 *galbeni* (literally yellow – golden – money, which was the Romanian currency at the time) annually. On 18 May he took the ship (from Brăila Port) to Italy. He travelled via Varna, Constantinople, Smyrna, Syra, Athens, Patras, Corfu and Ancona and reached Rome in July. He lived in a rented room in Via Frattina no 99 for almost six years, after a short stay at no 53, on the same street.[265] Instead of officially registering at *L'Accademia Nationale di San Luca* [The National Academy of St Luke] in Rome,[266] Tăttărescu (considering himself too old to be officially matriculated) preferred to take private drawing lessons, and - from 1846 - painting lessons with the famous

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[263] Ibid., p. 11; see Appendix E for the Romanian original.

[264] Ibid., pp. 9-10.

[265] Ibid., p. 11.

[266] The Accademia di San Luca, was founded in about 1572 (or in 1593, accordingly to *The Oxford Companion to Art*) in Rome, under the direction of Federigo Zuccaro. It has its origins in the Università dei Pittori, Miniatori e Ricamatori [University of Painting, Miniature and Embroidery], which was founded by the Pope Sixtus the Fourth on 17 December 1478, and focused more on teaching art theory than drawing. *The Oxford Companion to Art*, Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1970, p. 4.

contemporary artists Giovanni Silvagni, the *Cavalier* Natale Carta, and Pietro Gagliardi who were teaching in the aforementioned institution.

For the first year his professors asked Tăttărescu to make drawings from nature and from the sculptures in the famous galleries in Rome in order to gain a profound understanding of anatomy and perspective. After that they allowed him to go back to the technique of oil painting, while continuing to make copies after the Old Masters. His teachers asked him to copy the *chefs d'oeuvre* of such famous painters as Raphael, Corregio, Veronese, Titian, Murillo, as well as those of Guido Reni, Salvatore Rosa and many others, including Rubens.[267] These copies were so well realised that some art collectors bought them, so helping Tăttărescu to cover his maintenance costs when the scholarship from Buzău arrived late.[268] Familiarity with the Tuscan drawing and the rich colours of Venetian artists perfected Tăttărescu's manner of painting and enabled him to grasp many of the 'mysteries' of this art. But a 'side - effect' of this learning experience was the fact that some 'echoes' of the works he studied can be found in his painting, as for example, a certain mannerism taken from Guido Reni's works.[269] Most of these copies well executed by Tăttărescu were intended especially for a painting gallery, a national museum which the student planned to open in Bucharest.[270] In 1846 Tăttărescu with another Romanian, Alexandru Orăscu, visited Napoli, Herculaneum

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[267] All this information comes from Tănăsescu, Popescu, Panaite, *Gheorghe M. Tăttărescu 1818-1894*, pp. 17-21.

[268] Bishop *Chesarie* died soon after Tăttărescu's departure (see footnote 250 in this chapter) and the Bishop who succeeded him, *Filoftei*, was not keen to continue sending the scholarship to Tăttărescu. It was necessary for Bălcescu to intervene through a letter to Al. Golescu-Arapilă, whose cousin was the minister Ştefan Golescu (under Prince Gheorghe Bibescu), for Tăttărescu to have the scholarship sent regularly. Wertheimer-Ghika, *Gheorghe Tăttărescu şi revoluţia*, pp. 2, 8-9.

[269] Tăttărescu admired the refinement and elegance in Reni's works. He borrowed a certain mannerism from Reni, especially visible in Tăttărescu's depiction of women (for instance in the painting 'The woman with the tambourine' - *Femeia cu trambulina).* Tănăsescu, Popescu, Panaite, *Gheorghe M. Tăttărescu 1818-1894*, p. 10.

[270] Wertheimer-Ghika, *Gheorghe Tăttărescu şi revoluţia*, p. 8.

and Pompeii, without neglecting at all his painting; actually he worked on most of his travels, either making sketches, or copying Old Masters' works and painting portraits.

In that period Italy was the scene of political passions and revolts. There were plots against the Pope, the king of Naples, the Austrians in Lombardy, and Rome was the center of the conspiracy. While in Rome, in April 1847 Tăttărescu received as a guest Nicolae Bălcescu (1819-1852), the 'soul' of the 1848 Romanian revolution[271], and Ion Arcescu, both passing through Rome. The ideals of the Romanian revolutionaries were common to those of all revolutionaries of Europe of that time. On the first of January 1848 the revolution began in Palermo, Italy, and the 'wave' reached Romania in March. Among the revolutionaries' demands were the following: the formation of the national Romanian state, educational reform, the improvement of the peasant economical situation, the ban of the censorship, the replacement of the Parliament with a more forward-looking one and representative for the country at that moment, etc. Even though, for the moment, the revolutionaries lost the battle and their leaders were sent in exile, only a decade later, during Cuza's reign, most of these demands came true. At least one of the explanations for the new reforms in Romania during Cuza's reign is the fact that his Prime Minister, Kogălniceanu, was one of the revolutionaries of 1848.

Wertheimer-Ghika considers that in Italy Tăttărescu was won over to the cause of the Romanian revolution, and participated in the meeting of the revolutionary society, *Frăția* [Brotherhood] of which Al. Golescu-Arăpilă was a member.[272] I have not found any other mention of Tăttărescu's involvement in the revolutionary

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[271] *Nicolae Bălcescu*, Romanian historian, writer, and the most important leader of the democratic revolution of 1848 in Wallachia. His most important book *Mihai Viteazul* illustrates, among other ideas, his aspiration towards a united Romania.

[272] Wertheimer-Ghika, *Gheorghe Tăttărescu şi revoluția*, pp. 16-18, 20, 51.

movement in the sense of him fighting, or even attending large meetings. However, he met individually Romanian revolutionaries, some of whom he befriended and painted their portraits. They had, for sure, common aspirations specific to the young generation of that time, and the dream of opening a national museum must have been one of them. I think Tăttărescu was too busy studying and working to support himself to have become more involved in the revolution than already mentioned. So, on his arrival home at the end of 1851 there were no negative consequences for him, especially because the new ideas brought by the revolution had gained more terrain between 1848 and that year. On the contrary, Tăttărescu managed to open a painting studio and a painting school, as will be shown further on.

On 30 May 1848 in Rome Tăttărescu participated in the competition called *Concorso artistico dal Panteon* [The Artistic Competition of Pantheon] organised (once every five years) by the *Congregazione Artistica dei Virtuosi al Panteon*, the highest artistic institution in the city, which was under the auspices of the Pope. Tăttărescu won the First Prize and the corresponding medal for his religious painting representing a scene from the Old Testament[273] – that of Simeon and Levi rescuing their sister Dinah kidnapped by Shechem and the King Hamor (this was also the title of the painting which in Romanian reads: *Simeon şi Levi salvând pe sora lor Dina răpită de Sichem şi de regele Hemor*; Fig. 66). In August, the same year, he went to Florence, where he studied the paintings in the Pitti and Uffizi Galleries. On 7 January, 1849 he returned to Rome, rented a studio in Via Mario di Fiori no 8, and made studies for his

[273] Genesis 34: 1-31.

work *Deşteptarea României* [Awakening of Romania], Fig. 67.[274] Wertheimer-Ghika comments on it:

> We think we do not underestimate the painting – executed in a correct and energetic drawing style, with sober and cold colours – if we consider it to be a work of a painter who had three more years of studies ahead of him. The true value of this work consists in the fact that – obtaining the First Prize of Rome in the moment when the first news about the [Romanian] revolution arrived in Italy, this [the painting] made our country known and appreciated in those difficult circumstances.[275]

When the Romanian government opened the first art museum in Bucharest (National Painting Gallery - *Pinacoteca Statului*) in December 1850, Tăttărescu's 'Awaking of Romania' was the first work to be displayed in it (it has as an inventory number '1').[276] Therefore, even though Tăttărescu did not himself open a national museum since the 'time went ahead' and other opened this museum of his dreams in Romania before his return there, his first work to receive international recognition also received notable recognition in his own country.

Between July and September 1850 Tăttărescu travelled to Ischia, Naples, Caserta, Sorrento, Pompeii. In May 1851 he left Rome for good. He went to visit France and on his way stopped in Florence, Bologna, Modena, Parma, Mantua, Verona, and Venice. Then he continued his journey to Milan, Turin, and Genoa. In July he reached Paris where he visited the Louvre, the Luxembourg Gardens (*Les Jardins du Luxembourg*), and Versailles.[277] In September Tăttărescu visited London

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[274] The failure of the revolution in Bucharest inspired Tăttărescu to make this allegorical tableau painting that was to become famous. It exalts the ideas of the 1848 democratic movement and their survival in spite of the repression which took place at that time. This composition was displayed in Rome in June 1850, and then sent to Bucharest where it was introduced to the public at St Savah College (*Colegiul Sfântul Sava*). Wertheimer-Ghika, *Gheorghe Tăttărescu şi revoluţia,* p. 51 from the French summary.

[275] Wertheimer-Ghika, *Gheorghe Tăttărescu şi revoluţia*, p. 19.

[276] Ibid., p. 51, from the French summary.

[277] Ibid.

where he went to the Crystal Palace exhibition, the British Museum, Westminster Abbey, etc. In October the painter reached Munich, passing through Belgium and Holland, and then Vienna, from where he took an Austrian ship to Giurgiu, back home, arriving in November.[278]

In 1853 Tăttărescu painted '*Nemesis*-the Goddess of Revenge' (*Nemesis - zeița răzbunării*), inspired by the tragic death of Bălcescu, and in 1857 'The Union of the [Romanian] Principalities' (*Unirea Principatelor [Române]*), a drawing which foreshadows the event that would take place in January 1859.

On 3 October, 1853 Prince Barbu Ştirbei (1849-1853) awarded Tăttărescu with the title of *pitar*;[279] but he would never sign his works using this title, as other painters of that time did (as, for instance his own uncle, Nicolae Teodorescu, in addition to *Polcovnicul* Nicolae din *Căldăruşani* mentioned in the beginning of the chapter).

In 1859 Gheorghe Tăttărescu accepted the post as Professor of drawing at the St Savah College (*Colegiul Sfântul Sava*) in Bucharest. In 1860 the Romanian government launched the cultural project of publishing a National Album (*Albumul Național*) of drawings focused on the life in the country. During the summer of that year Tăttărescu travelled in Muscel, Argeş and Vâlcea counties, realising the necessary drawings for that album. In December 1860 he submitted to the Minister of the [Religious] Cults and of the Public Education (*Ministerul Departamentului Cultelor şi Instrucțiunii Publice*) a project for the opening of the School of Fine Arts (*Şcoala de Belle Arte*) in

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[278] This information is from Tănăsescu, Popescu, and Panaite, *Gheorghe M. Tăttărescu 1818-1894*, p. 18. In Venice Tăttărescu painted the portrait of the Romanian revolutionary General Gheorghe Magheru, and in Paris of Nicolae Bălcescu, Ştefan Golescu and of other Romanian revolutionaries who were exiled there. The painting of the leaders of the Romanian revolution confirms Tăttărescu's sympathy for the revolutionary ideas. Wertheimer-Ghika comments: "The portraits of the leaders of 1848 [Tăttărescu realised] were not cold or stiff academic effigies, but merely lively portraits of heroes animated by a common cause: the liberation of their country." The information about those portraits and the quotation is from Wertheimer-Ghika, *Gheorghe Tăttărescu şi revoluția*, p. 51, the French summary.

[279] Diploma de Pitar, registered in the Secretariat of State at position 1413, signed B [arbu] D[imitrie] Ştirbey; its content is reproduced in Voinescu, *Gheorghe Tăttărescu (1818-1894)*, footnote 2, p. 27.

Bucharest. This was opened on 14 December, 1864 having Theodor Aman[280] as Director and first Painting Professor, and Gheorghe Tăttărescu the second important person in the school (the second Professor of painting - *profesor de pictură al 2-lea*).[281] In 1865 Tăttărescu was one of the persons on the panel of the first Exhibition of Living Artists ("*Expoziția artiştilor în viață*"). On 1 August 1866, the classes in the School of Fine Arts were suspended, and, consequently, Tăttărescu invited some of the students to work in his own studio.

In 1867 he attended the International Exhibition in Paris with the work 'The Awakening of Romania'.

On the social level, in addition to founding the *Belle Arte* Academy in Bucharest, Tăttărescu was involved in the foundation of the Romanian *Athenée*. On 23 March 1868 the Society for the Education of the Romanian People [*Societatea pentru învățătura poporului român*] was set up, having Gheorghe Tăttărescu among its members.

In May, the same year, he sent some more works – with a 'secular' subject-matter- to the second edition of the Exhibition of Living Artists. Among these works there were: 'Dâmbovicioara Cave' [*Peştera Dâmbovicioara*], 'Peasant Woman from Vlasca' [*Țarancă din Vlaşca*], 'Peasant Woman from Câmpulung' [*Țărancă din Câmpulung*], 'Peasant Man from Câmpulung [*Țăran din Câmpulung*]. He obtained the second class medal for the "Portrait of Emanuel Bacaloglu" [*Portretul lui Emanuel*

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[280] Theodor Aman was a famous Romanian painter who lived between 1831 and 1891. He was born in Câmpulung-Muscel, and after taking drawing lessons with Constantin Lecca at the Central School from Craiova, went to Paris to study painting. He worked under Michel Martin Drolling's direction and from 1851, under Francois Edouard Picot.

[281] Tănăsescu, Popescu, and Panaite, *Gheorghe M. Tăttărescu*, p. 19.

Bacaloglu].[282] In 1870 he was again a participant at the third edition of same exhibition with the paintings 'The Portrait of Mrs Şeicaru' [*Portretul doamnei Şeicaru*], and the painting of Hagar with her son Ishmael in the Beersheba Desert [*Agar cu fiul său Ismail în deşertul Bersabiei*].[283] Also in 1872 the Society of the Friends of the Fine Arts [*Societatea Amicilor Bellelor Arte*] was founded, and Tăttărescu became one of its leaders. In 1873 he attended the International Exhibition at Vienna with four works: 'The Awakening of Romania', 'The Portrait of the Archimandrite Terşoreanu' [*Portretul Arhimandritului Terşoreanu*], 'Decebal', and 'Peasant Man from the Danube' [*Ţăran de la Dunăre*]. Tăttărescu participated in the Exhibition of the Society of the Friends of the Belles Arts with a significant number of contributions, among which there were many copies of Old Masters, but also original works: 'Peasant Man from Câmpulung [*Ţăran din Câmpulung*], 'Peasant Woman from Câmpulung' [*Ţărancă din Câmpulung*], 'The Portrait of the Archimandrite Terşoreanu' [*Portretul Arhimandritului Terşoreanu*], 'The Portrait of a Metropolitan Bishop' [*Portret de mitropolit*], etc.

When Aman fell ill in 1875 Tăttărescu became the Director of the School of Fine Arts. In 1876 Tăttărescu received the medal "*Bene merenti*", second class. In 1881 he attended the fourth Exhibition of Living Artists where he displayed, among others paintings, 'Simeon and Levi rescuing their sister Dinah,' 'Selfportrait' [*Autoportret*] (Fig. 68), 'The Portrait of Mihai Pencovici' [*Portretul lui Mihai Pencovici*], 'God the Father' [*Dumnezeu Tatăl*], etc. On Mai 17, 1884 Tăttărescu visited Russia. In August 1885 he went to Russia for the second time.

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[282] Emanuel Bacaloglu (1830-1891) was a Chemistry Professor at the former School of Bridges, Motorways, and Mines (*Şcoala de Poduri, Şosele şi Mine*), which is now the Faculty of Industrial Chemistry (*Facultatea de Chimie Industrială*) within the Politechnic University in Bucharest.

[283] Genesis 16:1-16.

In 1889 he participated at the International Exhibition in Paris with the painting 'The Portrait of Mihai Pencovici' [*Portretul lui Mihai Pencovici*], for which he received a 'honorary mention' [*Menţiune de onoare*].

In 1890 Tăttărescu became seriously ill and had to take a month sick leave from his position as Director of the School of *Belle Arte*. On 30 August, 1891 he was appointed as Director of the School of Belle Arte replacing Aman. In 1892 Tăttărescu withdrew from the directorship of the School of Belle Arte, and retired. On 24 October 1894 at 5 pm he died.

In June 1951 a donation from Gheorghe Tăttărescu's niece, Georgeta Wertheimer, made possible the foundation of the Gh. M. Tăttărescu Memorial Museum in his house in Bucharest, no. 7 Domniţa Anastasia Street (formerly Belvedere *uliţa* - in the language of that time), which Tăttărescu had bought, with the land around it, in 1855. On 3 September, 1953, the official opening of this museum took place.[284] Fig. 69 in appendix C contains my photograph of the inscription which stands today on the wall of this museum.[285]

ii) Gheorghe Tăttărescu's religious work of maturity

Speaking about Tăttărescu's work of maturity in connection to churches, I have to use the term 'religious work' because what he painted in that period is not so much icon, but religious painting in the sense in which I explained this notion in chapter 1.

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[284] Most of these biographical details come from Tănăsescu, Popescu, and Panaite, *Gheorghe M. Tăttărescu*, pp. 17-21.

[285] The inscription translates: "In this house lived and worked for forty years the painter Gheorghe M Tăttărescu 1820-1894, one of the founders of the first school of fine arts in Bucharest 1864, a fighter for progress in arts, culture, and in social life." See Appendix C for my photograph of the inscription in front of 'Gheorghe Tăttărescu' Museum; the inscription can be read in Romanian on the photograph.

As shown earlier in this chapter and in chapter 2, a vague influence of the *Renaissance* had already begun to make its presence felt in Church painting. I have spoken from this perspective about the works of Eustație Altini who painted many churches in Moldova, Constantin Lecca who worked mainly in Craiova, and Mişu Popp who painted the church of *Frăsinei* Hermitage, Vâlcea County, and some churches around Braşov and in the city of Braşov itself. This influence was manifested in mural painting, and not so much in individual panel icons

In the context of the social and revolutionary events of the European countries and of the revolts in the Romanian principalities (as that of Tudor Vladimirescu in 1821,[286] or that of 1848) a new current appears and the youth of the day demonstrated their support for social, political and artistic reforms. The preference for artistic reforms brought the decoration of the Romanian churches to an impasse, but the practitioners of the Byzantine style, which was in decline, attempted to resist the tendencies inspired by Western art. These tendencies consisted mainly in a realist manner of painting, which, particularly in the depiction of human form, was based on a detailed study of anatomy. This style also implied the use of perspective in art, including the painting of icons.

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[286] Tudor Vladimirescu (ca. 1770-1821) was the leader of the Romanian revolutionary movement which took place in 1821 in Wallachia. The soldiers in his army were known as pandours [*panduri*]. See Gheorghe D. Iscru, *Revoluția română din 1821 condusă de Tudor Vladimirescu* [The Romanian Revolution led by Tudor Vladimirescu] (second edition), The Publishing House and Library Nicolae Bălcescu [*Casa de Editură şi Librărie Nicolae Bălcescu*], Bucharest, 1996, Gheorghe Iscru and Gheorghe Ploscaru, *Tudor Vladimirescu: În memoria poporului român* [Tudor Vladimirescu in Romanian people's memory], The Publishing House and Library Nicolae Bălcescu, Bucharest, 1996, Andrei Oțetea, *Tudor Vladimirescu '821*, Colecția Bibioteca de Istorie [History Library Collection], Bucharest, 1971; A. Oțetea, *Tudor Vladimirescu şi revoluția de la 1821* [Tudor Vladimirescu and the Revolution of 1821] Editura Ştiințifică [The Scientific Publishing House], Bucharest, 1971; Vladimir Osiac, *Pandurii din Țara Românească* [The Pandours from Wallachia], Scrisul Românesc [Romanian Writing Publishing House], Craiova, 1995; Dan Berindei, *L'année révolutionnaire 1821 dans les Pays roumains* [The revolutionary year 1821 in the Romanian lands], trans. from Romanian into French by Madeleine Costescu and Radu Crețeanu, Éditions de l'Académie de la République Socialiste de Roumanie, [Bucharest], 1973; Mircea T. Radu, *1821: Tudor Vladimirescu şi revoluția din Țara Românească* [1821: Tudor Vladimirescu and the revolution in Wallahia], Scrisul Românesc, Craiova, 1978.

After his return from Italy Tăttărescu established himself in Bucharest, and began painting churches in their entirety, usually the walls, but also their *iconostasis*. Tăttărescu made a list of (at least some of) the churches he had painted before a certain date, entitled: "1852 – 80 churches I have worked on".[287] Among them there were: Oteteleşanu, in *Măgurele* (near Bucharest, 1852), *Cetățuia* (near Râmnicu Vâlcea, 1853[288]), *Zlătari* in Bucharest (1853-1854), the *metochion* of the Holy Romanian Metropolitan Church in Bucharest[289], *Băleni-Rumâni* (Dâmbovița County), both in 1854, and the Episcopal Church in Râmnic (1854-1855). In 1855 Tăttărăscu finished painting the church of *Bistrița* Monastery, Vâlcea County, Wallachia (to be distinguished from *Bistrița* Monastery from Suceava County, Moldova).[290] In 1858 he received the commission of painting the Church of St Spiridon the New (*Biserica Sfântul Spiridon cel Nou*) in Bucharest, including the icons on the *iconostasis*, which he finished in 1860 (see the photograph of one of them in appendix C, Fig.70).

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[287] Gheorghe Tăttărescu, *1852 - 80 biserici lucrate de mine* [1852 - 80 Churches I worked on]. Mentioned in T. Voinescu, *Gheorghe Tăttărescu (1818-1894)*, p. 26 (the list was published for the first time by Emil Vîrtosu, in *Pictorul G. Tăttărescu şi Italia*, "Studii italiene" [The painting G. Tăttărescu and Italy; "Italian Studies"] V, Bucharest, 1938, p. 15.

[288] A. Lăzărescu, an author who published some critical articles about art, dedicated a poem called *Cetățuia* to Tăttărescu after he finished decorating this church from which a fragment translates as follows:

> "And Gheorghe Tăttărescu in lines of light
> By producing sacred images in the temple
> This Romanian Michel Angelo, by his divine art
> Gives again to *Cetățuia* its past splendour."

The periodical Romanian Literary Album [*Albumul litterariu român*], December 1856-May 1857, Bucharest.

[289] Corina Popa, *Mânăstirea Plumbuita*, Editura Meridiane, Bucharest, 1968, p. 7.

[290] Petre Baron, Getta Mărculescu-Popescu, Florin Andreescu et al., *România. Schituri, Mânăstiri, Biserici. Romania. Ermitages, Monastères, Eglises. Romania. Hermitages Monasteries, Churches* (Album in Romanian, French, English), Editura Royal Company [Royal Company Publishing House], Bucharest, 1999, pp. 54-55, and Mihail Diaconescu, *Biserici şi Mânăstiri Ortodoxe. Orthodox Churches and Monasteries* (Album in both English and Romanian), Alcor Publishing House, Bucharest, 1998, p. 69.

In 1859 Tăttărescu painted the side chapel (*Paraclisul*) of *St. Antim* Monastery and that of the Episcopal Church in Râmnic (1860-1861). The most important work of this period in Tăttărescu's professional life is the decoration of St John side chapel from the courtyard of the Monastery in *Câmpulung* (Muscel County or today Vâlcea County, 1860-1861). This achievement was considered by Voinescu "his work of maturity",[291] (Figs. 82-83). Voinescu appreciates that,

> With knowledge and full mastery of the skills of his art, Tăttărescu realised at Câmpulung a work of real artistic value. Over the old painting he laid in cold, but pleasant colours harmonious compositions on the subject of the lives of the Saviour and St. John [...] in oil and encaustic techniques.[292]

In 1864 Tăttărescu painted the church of *Ghighiu* Monastery, Prahova County (Figs. 71 and 75), and in 1871 the *Colţea* Church in Bucharest[293]. In 1872 he painted the Greek Church in Brăila town, and in 1873 he began painting *Biserica Albă* [The White Church] in Bucharest (Figs. 76-77). In 1877 he painted the chapel of the Princess Elena Asylum (*Aşezământul Doamna Elena*) from Bucharest (Figs. 78-79),[294] and in 1878 the *Florescu* chapel from Sinaia. In 1880 the artist painted the church of St

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[291] Voinescu, *Gheorghe Tăttărescu (1818-1894)*, p. 36.

[292] Ibid.

[293] Tănăsescu, Popescu and Panaite, *Gheorghe M. Tăttărescu*, p. 20.

[294] The Princess Elena Asylum for foundling children [*Aşezământul or Azilul de copii găsiţi Doamna Elena*] from Cotroceni ward, Bucharest was founded in 1862 by Elena Rosetti-Cuza (1825-1909), the wife of the Romanian Prince Alexandru Ioan Cuza.

Paraskevi (*Sfânta Vineri*) from Ploieşti, (Figs. 80-81).[295] On 17 Mai, 1884 Tăttărescu left for a study visit to Russia and Ukraine, visiting Odessa, Kiev, Moscow, and St Petersburg, in order to regain familiarity with the style of the Orthodox Church because he was in negotiation about painting the Metropolitan Church in Iaşi in a more traditional manner. In August 1885 he had another trip to Russia, signed the contract, and in 1886 he finished this church in Iaşi.

In addition to oil and encaustic techniques (the latter was new in Romanian Church painting), Tăttărescu used tempera and even fresco, although only rarely because these two techniques did not suit his rapid way of working, since the fresco technique involves a much longer period for the decoration of a church than the few months which he normally took for it. Wax (encaustic) painting, even though familiar to the Romanian Church painters from the *Hermineias*, was not widespread in the country, or in Europe in general. It is much more specific to the Middle East, as it is very resistant to a dry environment (for example, most of the icons in St Catherine Monastery in Egypt were worked in this technique, and they have survived that environment, in some cases for more than a thousand five hundred years). Tăttărescu used it extensively, making it one of the specific elements of his system, in order to cause the figures to shine, and to highlight the ornaments and the embroideries which he put on the holy person's clothes- something also not specific to Romanian traditional icon-painting, which is in general more sober.

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[295] All this information is taken from Voinescu's book *Gheorghe Tăttărescu (1818-1894)*, especially from pp. 26-30. Voinescu says that "one of the artist's biographers cites as the first church painted by Tăttărescu that of Măgurele, Oteteleşanu" (p. 26). The rest of the churches listed in this chapter are documented by contracts; a few of these contracts from the above-mentioned Appendices will be used later in the chapter. Voinescu comments on the number of churches Tăttărescu painted: "From the confrontation of this [list] with the existed authentic contracts [signed by Tăttărescu; many of them attached as Appendices to Voinescu's book] I have noticed that when writing the list the artist did not keep the chronological order in which the works were done, and also he omitted some of them"; p. 26.

In order to save time, Tăttărescu used the work of his apprentices to a great extent, especially to begin and to finish his work, and also to fill the empty spaces. [296] At the end of his career he just corrected the apprentices' works. It seems that this practice even brought him some criticism, in spite of his fame. This is why in some of the contracts he signed, the institutions or the person who commissioned a certain work included as an express stipulation that Tăttărescu should personally carry out the work: "The painting in general, both on the walls and of the icons will have **all** characters done **by Mr Tatterascu** *(sic)* **himself, and not under any circumstances by his apprentices**."[297]

It happened frequently that before finishing the decoration of one church, he was asked to begin another. For example, while working at the Episcopal Church in Râmnic (1854), he received a request to paint the church of *Bistrița* Monastery, Vâlcea. In such a case he either left his apprentices to finish his work, going there personally only to do the final touches, or he sent them ahead to prepare what was necessary for a new work.[298]

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[296] Voinescu, Gheorghe Tăttărescu (1818-1894), p. 77.

[297] *Idem*, *Contract pentru zugrăvirea Bisericii Albe (după Calea Victoriei) din Bucureşti* [The contract for painting White Church (on Victoria Road) in Bucharest] of 9 July 1873; in *Gheorghe Tăttărescu (1818-1894)*, p. 111, my emphasis.

[298] "In the autumn of the same year (8 November 1854) Tăttărescu is commissioned by Calinic, the Bishop of Râmnic, to paint [...] the church of this Bishopric [...] The commissions kept coming as a chain – he was at the same time in negotiation to decorate the [church of] *Bistrița* Monastery" , and also: "During the two years when he was working at St Spiridon [Church], we find him busy working also to other places. The church at *Brânceni* owned by the [Army] Major Mişa Anastasievici, the Chapel of *Antim* Monastery, the *iconostasis* of St Spiridon the New and the Episcopal Church of Râmnic, as well as the frescoes in the *Creţulescu* Church on Victoria Road in Bucharest, are realised at the same time." Ibid., pp. 29, 35.

iii) Naturalism and perspective. Byzantine style in Tăttărescu's painting

Adina Nanu clearly states that in his Church-painting, Tăttărescu "manifests his wish to come close to reality, and to escape the rigidity of Byzantine canons." She continues by exemplifying the way in which the painter managed to do it:

> Thus, ignoring the large number of themes indicated in *Hermineias*, he limited the church decoration to a few more important scenes, each of them realised as an independent painting, often endowed with a (painted) framework in the same way in which a [secular] painting has often a wooden one. In doing this, Tăttărescu gives to these paintings a more veridical appearance, closer to life than [the other Church paintings] in the past."[299]

As has been seen so far in this chapter, the reduction of the number of Biblical scenes painted in a church (contrary to the recommendations of the *Hermineias* and Orthodox Church *typicon*), and the introduction of perspective are the aspects which most of the researchers refer to as Tăttărescu's personal contribution to Church painting. It must be added, however, that even though Tăttărescu did not obey the rules of the *Hermineias*, he still used them as a guide in order to put the elements of a fresco or an icon in the right place, and as a source from which the physical descriptions of the holy persons could be taken. Below there are other fragments from two of Tăttărescu's contracts and Voinescu's comments on them as regarding the requirements of the Byzantine style. These contracts mention as the main clause for the painter in decorating the church under discussion to keep "that Byzantine [style]

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[299] Nanu, *Gheorghe Tăttărescu*, pp. 14-15. Since Nanu's book was written in 1955, when Socialist Realism was at its peak, it shows a strong tendency to praise Tăttărescu's realism in painting; nobody can say for sure if the author sincerely appreciated it, or she only followed the trend of the day, or even worse, she had to obey the politico-ideological commandments, (and, probably to please the censorship) in order to have the book published.

customary to our [Orthodox] Church."[300] In the contract for painting the White Church it is written: "All these above-mentioned paintings will be worked in oil, and the Byzantine style which pertains to our Eastern Church will be kept throughout."[301] That requirement occurs once more in the same contract when it stipulates that in the free space among different scenes "there will be architectural works also according to the Byzantine [*typicon*] of the Church."[302] Also the contract from *Zlătari* obliged the artist to execute a painting in oil (which is not at all specific to Byzantine icon-painting) while stressing that the Byzantine style was to be kept. Voinescu underlines that a distinction should be made between the conditions in the contract, which stipulated a large number of scenes, according to the old iconographical order, and the detailed plan (*deviz*) done by the artist which stipulated, in addition to other innovations (as introduction of space, the techniques of painting, the 'personalisation' of the faces that show emotions and the age of the characters depicted, etc.), and a much reduced number of painted scenes.

Tăttărescu reduced the number of the painted 'bands' on the walls from five (the number prescribed by the *Hermineias*) to two, or at the most three, when the church was higher. He kept the most important scenes for each band, which such guide-books indicate. In the altar, on the upper band and on the ceiling he usually painted the *Virgin and the Child* and *Sts. Archangels Michael and Gabriel*; on the lower band he painted prophets, bishops and other holy clergy, inside the *naos*'s cupola the *Pantokrator* with the ranks of angels on the pendants (and when the church had one more tower, he painted more angels); on the *pronaos*' ceiling Tăttărescu

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[300] *Idem*, Contract pentru zugrăvirea Bisericii *Zlătari* [The contract for painting Zlătari Church] of 16 July 1853; in Gheorghe Tăttărescu (1818-1894, p. 75.

[301] *Idem*, Contract pentru zugrăvirea Bisericii Albe (după Calea Victoriei) din Bucureşti [The contract for painting White Church (on Victoria Road) from Bucharest] of 9 July 1873, ibid., p. 110.

[302] *Idem*, Contract pentru zugrăvirea Bisericii *Zlătari*, 16 July 1853, ibid., p. 75.

painted God the Father; and *Sts Peter and Paul* were painted to each side of the entrance. Allowing himself a considerable liberty Tăttărescu removed to a large extent the scenes from the Old Testament, and from the New Testament he kept only the most representative, such as: *The Nativity*, *the Baptism*, *The Crucifixion*, *The Resurrection*, and *Jesus in the Gethsemane Garden*. In doing this, Tăttărescu transformed an ordered narrative cycle in which the scenes have a logical connection (as the lives of Jesus, Virgin, and St John) into isolated religious paintings, with very precise frameworks. The largest compositions and the faces of the holy persons in his paintings are of Western inspiration, some of them copied openly from religious paintings by foreign artists, such as, for example, from Leonardo da Vinci's 'The Last Supper', from Guido Reni's 'The Archangel Michael' (after his panel which is in the Church of the *Santa Maria della Concezione* in Rome), or from engravings.[303] The spaces made available in this way were in general filled with architectural decorations, or formed the framework for the religious subject-matters contained within them."[304]

In the view of Wertheimer-Ghika, Tăttărescu's principal biographer, the painter's political *credo* is responsible for his renunciation of Byzantine style. He considers that since the painter was a supporter of the ideas of the democratic revolution of 1848 in the Romanian principalities that promoted reforms in all domains of society, and his main work was to decorate churches, here was the terrain where he could express his sympathy for reforms to the greatest extent.[305]

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[303] The information is taken mainly from Voinescu, *Gheorghe Tăttărescu (1818-1894)*, pp. 62-63, but it is based also on from personal observations on Tăttărescu's works either *in situ* (St Spiridon the New Church and White Church, both in Bucharest, Episcopal Church in Iaşi, etc.), or from different reproductions, albums, and books mentioned here.

[304] Ibid., p. 26.

[305] Wertheimer-Ghika, *Gheorghe Tăttărescu şi revoluţia*, p. 51, the French summary.

Ghika's argument is logical, and I tend to agree with it. But the main reason for Tăttărescu's activity of changing the traditional Romanian style of Church painting is of a purer artistic nature. He worked hard in Italy, and the education he received there, as well as the long period of copying Old Masters' works, gave him skills which he was eager to share with his contemporaries either directly in his works, both religious and secular, or (somewhat) indirectly through the achievements of his students. The requirement of his professors to practise painting according to different styles and techniques (none of them of Byzantine lineage) helped him to perfect his painting skills. Tăttărescu struggled to have the Academy of Fine Arts open in Bucharest, and in his capacity as a Painting Professor in such a school, he wrote a small painting manual signed George M. Tăttărescu[306] for the benefit of the students of the Art Academy in Bucharest. In this manual Tăttărescu affirms his *credo* for naturalism in art inculcated in him especially by Silvagni[307] from *L'Accademia San Luca*, to whom he refers:

> [The *Maestro*] formed a system which for the most part goes easily close to nature [...] This made him to especially focus all his attention on the proportions of the most famous Antique statues, and also on nature (because of his experience of many years with it).[308]

He states that Painting students need to study anatomy, perspective and proportions ["*anatomia, perspectiva şi proporţiunele*"[309]]. In addition to expressing his support for the idea of perspective in painting, in his manual Tăttărescu gives to the Painting

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[306] George M. Tăttărescu, *Precepte şi Studii Folositoare asupra Corpului Umanu şi Dessemnu dupe Cei mai Celebri Pictori* [Useful Norms and Studies on the Human Body after the Most Famous Painters], Belle Arte [Academy], Bucuresci, 1865; the title is written in the orthography of the time, which I have also kept.

[307] Silvagni died in 1855; Voinescu, *Gheorghe Tăttărescu (1818-1894)*, p.41.

[308] Tăttărescu, *Precepte...*, p. 4.

[309] Ibid.; his emphasis.

students four "rules of proportion" (*regule de proporțiune*). Most importantly, Tăttărescu encourages them to be creative. In such a context, he affirms: "Here are the measures of proportion in general, describing how they should be used more or less, without establishing fixed norms and precepts" because, he says, "nature herself is never uniform [...]; therefore, especially common sense, an eye for *perspective* and deep feelings can form a true artist." Moreover, he thinks that if the latter were only

> ...servile to the limitations of the rules, and were to follow them continuously without having understood the spirit of these rules, [this could cause] the artist to smother his genius, and to kill within himself that divine spark which by a fortunate development would have elevated him above the common sphere.[310]

Voinescu comments on Tăttărescu's attitude towards his pupils. She finds that,

> The freedom which [Tăttărescu] allows to his students, takes him close to those *Maestri* with an open mind, who do not coerce their apprentices, and do not limit their learning to the strict application of the atelier formulas.[311]

Tăttărescu's treatise is unsystematic and without pretensions; it does not propose a new method of study, and does not imitate any similar work belonging to a famous artist or theoretician. It simply reflects the artistic education its author received in Italy, adding a few personal observations to Silvagni's precepts, especially respect for nature in art, surprisingly for a painter of academic formation.

Tăttărescu's own religious belief is not mentioned either in his treatise or anywhere in the literature consulted. But in the context of the thesis, it is important to raise the question of Tăttărescu's relationship with the Church. One can only assume that in his youth Tăttărescu must have been a Christian believer or at least a church-goer since he

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[310] Ibid., p. 11.

[311] Voinescu, *Gheorghe Tăttărescu (1818-1894)* pp. 41-42

attracted the attention of Bishop Chesarie of Buzău. Tăttărescu did not study icon-painting in a monastic milieu, but in a school of painting which functioned within a Seminary. There is not enough evidence to say if he was a believer even for those years, and there is nothing to justify any view that later on in his life he would have practised in any way his faith, even if it had existed in early years. After the basic school years, Tăttărescu's education was essentially that of any other Western artist. Perhaps the meeting of the young revolutionaries in Italy is, at least partially, also responsible for his alienation from the Church, if my assumption is right. The generation of the early and mid-nineteenth century Europe -Romania included- had avant-garde ideas regarding society. The Church would have been perceived as a conservative institution which could have hampered their ideals. After all, this is the generation which, when it received power, secularised the monastic lands and wealth, and abolished the monastic orders in Romania. Since Tăttărescu was a part of that movement, it would not be a surprise that he would have shared this attitude to the Church with people of his generation. In addition, the fact that while being in Italy - still young- he had no churches from his denomination around him could have been another factor to make him to give up a religious life. In any case, we cannot conclude with certainty anything about Tăttărescu's spiritual life, and his treatise does not help from this point of view.

The other reason for Tăttărescu renouncing the strict Byzantine style is that to paint a church in such a style usually takes years. But using his new style Tăttărescu, as shown above, finished a church in months, sometimes even working simultaneously on several churches. The space among these paintings he filled in a radically non-traditional manner, often with painting representing imitation of marble. All this

constituted an obvious freedom granted to Tăttărescu, which in fact meant renouncing the strict rules of the Church painting tradition. As Voinescu shows:

> Perhaps this weakening of the customs [in Church painting] is not independent of the influence exerted by earlier painters such as Anton Chladek,[312] Mişu Popp, Constantin Lecca and others, whose innovations in the Western style had penetrated [Romania] to a certain degree and had been adopted by [some of] the Church painters of that time.[313]

To this I would add that, as seen in previous chapters, especially in Chapter 2, this openness to many influences was a constant of Romanian culture; it should be mentioned also that, while in general it was an advantage for the respective culture, there were situations when it constituted a disadvantage. It happened sometimes throughout human history to be necessary for people to destroy works done in a certain period and to return to previous better situations; thus a precious 'cultural time' is wasted. This was the case with some of Tăttărescu' s works condemned to deliberate destruction by the Church authorities as being too foreign to the Romanian spirit.

In spite of the visible difference between Tăttărescu's and Romanian traditional works, there were opinions during his life time which consider, paradoxically though it may seem, that actually Tăttărescu did paint in the Byzantine style. Moreover, the fact that in 1860's he was very famous is interpreted, in the periodical Romanian *Athenée*

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[312] Anton Chladek, who sometimes signed his works also as Chladec, lived between 1794 and 1882. He was a portrait, historic and religious painter, and a lithographer. Chladek was born in Elemer, his family having moved to Romania from the Czech lands (Bohemia) at about the end of the eighteenth century. (His passport gives as the year of his birth 1804, but after speaking with Chladek 's family, Voinescu affirms that the correct date is 1794). He studied in the Academy of Fine Arts in Milan (founded in 1776). He tried to open a drawing school in Pesta. He was one of the painting teachers for Grigorescu. Among his religious painting there are 'Jesus as a judge' which is in *Căldăruşani* Monastery, near Bucharest, and a part of the fresco in *Zamfira* Monastery, Prahova County representing 'The Crowning with Thorns'. Chladek was also a teacher for Nicolae Grigorescu's older brother, Gheorghe-Ghiţă. T. Voinescu, *Anton Chladek şi începuturile picturii româneşti* [Anton Chladek and the beginnings of the Romanian painting], Monitorul Oficial si Imprimeriile Statului. Imprimeriile Statului, Bucharest, 1936 (p. 12, footnote 2, for the controversy on Chladek's year of birth).

[313] Voinescu, *Gheorghe Tăttărescu (1818-1894)*; p. 26.

[*Ateneul Român*] as being a "just recompense for his long and conscious studies in Byzantine painting, because we are indebted to him especially for *correcting the Byzantine style* in our country."[314] Even Voinescu says that "Tăttărescu does not despise the Tradition, but he modified it in the spirit of Western art."[315] The fact that there are some *Hermineia* books which seem to have belonged to Tăttărescu[316] could constitute – for someone who would look for it - a proof that his intention was not to renounce altogether the Byzantine style.

Voinescu has an explanation for Tăttărescu's situation in the context of that particular historical epoch. She thinks that,

> The understanding of what the [Church] painting in the Byzantine style means had been lost to such an extent that the clergy of the time themselves [who usually commissioned the painting of the churches], instead of seeing a break in the Tradition in this lack of respect for the old order, were full of admiration for these innovations and ready to accept them without any opposition. They allowed themselves to be attracted by [Tăttărescu's] skilfulness of execution [in painting churches], and by the different [new] manner in which the themes were interpreted.[317]

The foreign people from the West who travelled to Romanian lands at that time were very appreciative of Tăttărescu's paintings. For instance, a Frenchman mentioned by Voinescu, Théodore Margot,[318] while unimpressed by the old and valuable paintings of

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[314] The periodical *Romanian Athenée* [Ateneul Român], Anul [Year] I, No 6 and 7, Bucharest 1866, p. 148; my emphasis.

[315] Voinescu, *Gheorghe Tăttărescu (1818-1894)*, p. 61.

[316] In the Manuscript no. 1801 in the Collection of Manuscripts of the Romanian Academy there is a *Hermineia* which has, among other notes, the name Iordache sin Mihai (Iordache, the son of Mihai - Iordache was the name he was called during his childhood, as I have shown in the beginning of the chapter), and another one writing in pencil saying: "de G. M. Tăttărescu la A. 1859, 12 Sept. S-a zugrăvit la leat 1859." ["by G. M. Tăttărescu at A. 1859, 12 Sept. It was painted [NB: there are some nib sketches on it] in the year 1859"].

[317] Voinescu, *Gheorghe Tăttărescu (1818-1894)*, p. 27.

[318] Théodore Margot, *O viatorie în cele şaptezprezece districte ale României, antiquităţi şi curiozităţi naturale, situe, oraşe, monumente, date istorice, usuri şi moravuri* [A journey in the seventeen districts of Romania, and natural curiosities, places, cities, monuments, historical data, customs and morals], C. Rosetti, Bucharest, 1859.

Hurezi Monastery, highly admired Tăttărescu's works from *Bistrița* and the Episcopal Church in *Râmnic*. But this was to be expected since Margot's artistic taste was formed in the West, which has its own characteristic religious paintings.

Together with Aman, Tăttărescu is one of most important representatives of the Romanian Academism. Cristina Panaite comments:

> If being more sensitive to the winds of change in the renewal movement [of that time] Aman would practice a flexible, open Academism which allowed him to introduce nuances into the official art, in turn Tăttărescu used a paradigm of a Classicism of Rafaelesque persuasion filtered through the Italian [especially of Rome] Academism.[319]

Today Tăttărescu's decorative work cannot be studied in its entirety. Some of the churches he painted have been cleaned in order to restore older, more specifically Romanian painting. Other churches have suffered repeated restorations either by the students from Tăttărescu's school (with inferior artistic ability), or by untalented contemporary painters. The Decree of the Romanian Orthodox Church Synod of 1889 (so, when Tăttărescu was still alive), even though it does not mention him by name, it had him (among others) in view. Therefore, the Decree is surely to a significant degree responsible for the disappearance and destruction of many of Tăttărescu's works. Even what has survived from the artist's work has deteriorated because the oil technique, as used by Tăttărescu, was not resistant enough to withstand the effects of time. It has, however, historical importance.

His most important achievement is that, through his very fruitful activity as a religious painter (but not so much as an iconographer) Tăttărescu gave a definitive form to the innovative tendencies, thus managing to create a style (Fig. 84). It would be difficult to say if he really created 'a school' because people who worked with him are not

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[319] Panaite, 'Foreword', in Tănăsescu, Popescu, and Panaite, *Gheorghe M. Tăttărescu (1818-1894)*, p. 7.

remembered today; so he did not have disciples to carry out his legacy. They were only the people who implemented his ideas, most of them in his life time, and did not work on their own initiative. Of course, once that taste for such a work was created on the market, there were some people who would have liked to have painting worked in "Tăttărescu's style" around them, even later on, after the Church intervened to eradicate it. And there have been, also, painters able to paint in such a style, but none of them on the same scale as Tăttărescu did, but in a mannerist way. None of them achieved fame. If regarding the secular painting the contribution of Tăttărescu's generation was important, in the realm of Church painting Tăttărescu's experience did not lead to the results he wished and expected, even though art historians will not be able to ignore the traces he left in church and icon-painting.

My view is that the cultural confusion manifested in Romanian secular visual arts in the nineteenth century, which at that time were seeking to establish a 'territory' for themselves, encroached also onto the domain of religious art. The period which followed was able to correct partially the abuses that had occurred in the middle of the nineteenth century.

CHAPTER 4

Monasteries as training centres in religious arts, including icon-painting

i) Monastic life in Romania. The beginning

Romanian monastic tradition is of Byzantine origin, because, as Obolensky shows, "The work of East Roman missionaries, and the administrative build-up of territorial churches that followed it, resulted in the transplantation of the Christian Orthodox tradition of Byzantium to the countries of Eastern Europe. Nowhere perhaps is the wholesale nature of this borrowing more apparent than in the field of monasticism."[320] A proof of it is the fact that the Romanian monastic terminology is of Greek origin, as will be shown below. Later, especially from the fourteenth century on, the Romanian monastic life had very close connection with the centre of Orthodox monasticism which Month Athos is. Many Romanian monks went to that sacred place at least once in their lives, and on their return imposed in their communities rules based on Athonite principles. In same cases, they imposed even the most extemes rules obeyed in Athos, not only the dietary ones that forbid monks from eating meat with only few exceptions in a year, but also that of forbidding women from entering some of the monastic settlements (which is still the case today with *Frăsinei* skete in Vâlcea County). Paisy Velicikov (1722-1794) is the best example in this respect, as the chapter will prove further.

The practice of icon-painting itself is well rooted in the monasteries of Mount Athos; therefore it was natural for iconographers in Romanian lands to keep links with the Athonite monasteries also from this point of view.

However, there is a high degree of uncertaincy about the beginning of monastic life in Romania, as elswhere. Regarding Romania, the first clear evidence of monasticism is from the fourteenth century, but traces of such a life go a long way further back. Certainly, a monk Nicodim [Nicodimus] (d. 1406), who was later canonised, lived in the fourteenth century and spent most of his life in the monastery of *Tismana*, in the south of Wallachia.[321] More attention will be paid further on to St Nicodim's life and work in the context of his century, but first I shall mention the result of the newest archaeological discoveries which might constitute proofs that monastic life in Romania began in the early centuries of the Christian era.[322] Păcurariu sees as possible the existence of a monastic settlement at Basarabi (Murfatlar), near Constanța, in the fourth century.[323] In literature about this period there are mentioned two men who might have been monks: John Cassianus [Ioan Cassian] and Germanus [Gherman] from the former province Scythia Minor (today Dobrogea), who also lived in the fourth century.[324] No historian, though, indicates the certain place where the two might have become monks. Păcurariu affirms that "On the territory of our country [Romania] there existed until the end of the sixth century a strong religious life, with bishops, chorepiscopes, priests, monks (the Scythian monks), and believers."[325]

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[320] Obolensky, *The Byzantine Commonwealth*, pp. 294-295.

[321] Păcurariu, *Istoria*, 2000, p. 90.

[322] *Idem*, *Istoria*, 1991, pp. 302-303.

[323] Ibid., pp. 167-169.

[324] *Idem*, *Sfinti daco-romani şi romani*, [Daco-Romans and Romans Saints], Editura Mitropoliei Moldovei si Bucovinei [The Publishing House of Moldova and Bucovina Metropolitan Diocese], Iaşi, 1994, pp. 64-68.

[325] Păcurariu, *Istoria*, 1991, p. 180.

In approximately 1000 A. D. a monastery in the Eastern architectural style was built in *Morisena* fortress (on Mureş River) dedicated to St John the Baptist.[326] In Sălaj, Buzău and Argeş areas there have been discovered 'traces' of old monastic settlements with small churches and cells carved in rock from the twelfth century.

In Romanian the terms that describe the monastic reality are of Greek origin, one more proof for what Obolensky implied – that the Romanian monasticism originated from the Greek-speaking world. In Romanian language a monk is called *călugăr* (from the Greek καλόγηρος), a monastery is called *mânăstire* (μοναδτήριον), a hermitage is called *schit* (σκήτη), and the cell of a monk is called *chilie* (κελλίον). Many names of places around the country (*Călugăreni*, *Valea Călugărească*, *Poiana Călugăriței*, *Chilia, Chilii*, *Mânăstirea*, *Mânăstioara*, *Schitu*, etc.), show that monasteries existed in those places, in many cases before the foundation of the medieval state structures.[327] In the West of Romania, in addition to the eleventh century monastery in *Morisena*, there were monasteries at *Hodoş* (twelfth century, Arad Country), *Voivozi* (thirteenth century, Bihor County).[328] In the south, a hermitage at *Negru Vodă* in Argeş County, built in 1215, has also been discovered.[329]

Păcurariu affirms that more recent research shows that among the oldest Romanian monasteries of which evidence exists is that of *Peri*, in Maramureş County, which is dedicated to the Holy Archangel Michael. The monastery was built by the Prince (Voievod) Sas, the son of Dragoş, one of the first defenders of the other Romanian territory, Moldova, against the Tartars (ca. 1352-1353). Sas reigned in Maramureş until 1359, and was succeeded by his sons Balc (Balița) and Drag. In 1391 they dedicated

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[326] *Idem*, *Istoria*, 2000, pp. 58, 89.

[327] Ibid., p. 89.

[328] Ibid., p. 84.

[329] Baron, Mărculescu-Popescu, Andreescu, *Monks and Monasteries* , p. 27.

(*au închinat*) this monastery to the Patriarchate of Constantinople. For this purpose one of the brothers went to Constantinople, to Patriarch Anthony IV (1389-1390; 1391-1397). The abbot of *Peri* Monastery was appointed Patriarchal *exarh*, i.e. he was given the same rights as a bishop, except for the ordination of priests, a responsibility which belonged to the local bishops (*arhierei* or *episcopi*).[330]

Even if he was not the 'founder' of monasticism in Romanian lands, Saint Nicodim of Tismana, as mentioned above, is still an important figure – he is representative for the type of the fourteenth century monasticism in that area. Information about his origins, childhood and youth before he came to Wallachia is scarce. Păcurariu shows that St Nicodim was thought to be either Greek, or the child of a Greek father and a Serbian mother (a relative of *Knaz* Lazar of Serbia). Păcurariu himself tends to agree with the Romanian historian Nicolae Iorga and considers St Nicodim "probably" an Aromanian from Prilep, modern Macedonia.[331]

He was a novice in the Hilandar monastery on Mounth Athos where he studied Greek and Slavonic, the teachings of the Holy Fathers, and other theological writings of that time. He worked there (mainly in copying manuscripts) and lived an exemplary monastic life which seems to have led to him being elected by the community as abbot. Seeking a quieter life, he left Mount Athos and went to a place called *Saina* (Kladovo area) close to the Danube (across from what is today the town of Drobeta-Turnu Severin in Romania). There, together with some men who became his disciples, he built a small church dedicated to the Holy Trinity. Popular Serbian tradition considers that he is the founder of *Vratna* and *Mânăstiriţa* monasteries, in the Timok Krajina region. Shortly after St Nicodim settled there, this area was occupied – for just a few

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[330] Păcurariu, *Istoria*, 2000, p. 83.

[331] Păcurariu, *Istoria*, 1991, p. 306; *idem*, *Sfinţi daco-romani şi romani*, pp. 64-68; and *idem*, *Istoria*, 2000, p. 90.

years - by the Hungarian King Ludovic the Great, who, through the agency of Franciscans, immediately sought to introduce Catholicism there. Under these circumstances, St Nicodim crossed the Danube to Romania during the reign of Vladislav (Vlaicu) Vodă (ca. 1364-1377). Here he established another monastery at *Vodița* (probably before 1372), on the site of an older hermitage or monastery. This monastery was a *samovlastie*, i.e. it copied the Athonite model of internal organization, being administered by its own members, without any external intervention.[332] During his time spent at *Vodița*, Nicodim was one of the members of a delegation of clerics which went to Constantinople to mediate in conflicts between the Serbian Orthodox Church and the Ecumenical Patriarchate. On that occasion Patriarch Philotheos (1354-1355; 1364-1376) made St Nicodim an archimandrite, giving him the right to consecrate churches. He was given also small parts of the relics of Sts John Chrysostom and Ignatius of Antioch, and of the Martyr Theophilus, which are still in *Tismana* Monastery in Romania.

Because of the Hungarian invasion of the Severin area before 1376 (the region in which *Vodița* was situated), St Nicodim had to leave it and to look for another place for a new monastery. This was built in the North of Oltenia, in the valley of the Tismana River. Perhaps in recognition of the way in which he had accomplished his mission in Constantinople, he received some material help from the *Knaz* Lazar of Serbia. The construction of this monastery took a long time – it spanned the reigns of the Wallachian princes Radu I (ca. 1377- ca. 1383) and Dan I (ca. 1383-1386), and was finished ("probably" - Păcurariu) under Mircea cel Bătrân, 1386-1418 – all of the three princes made donations towards its building.[333] Since about 1383-1384 the Severin

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[332] Ibid., 2000, p. 90.

[333] Ibid., pp. 90-91.

area returned to Wallachia, St Nicodim became the abbot of *Vodița*, while being also the abbot of *Tismana* Monastery.[334] He led the monastic life in both places until his death. Tradition also ascribes to him the foundation of the first monastic settlements at *Topolnița* (next to *Vodița), Cosuştea-Crivelnic*, *Gura Motrului* and *Vişina*, all situated in Oltenia, and also at *Prislop*, in Țara Hațegului (Hațeg Land). Păcurariu affirms that in fact they were built by St Nicodim's followers, but in their internal life they kept the same rule as *Vodița* and *Tismana*. Păcurariu also affirms that St Nicodim was a loyal advisor of Prince Mircea cel Bătrân, who endowed the two monasteries with land and money.[335]

Regarding St Nicodim's theological-cultural activity, a manuscript of a Four Gospels book *(Tetraevanghelier)* in Church Slavonic copied by him on parchment in 1404-1405 in *Prislop* Monastery (the first manuscript which can be certainly dated in Romania) has been preserved.[336] The decorations of the manuscript are very beautiful: the headings are in golden lettering, and the covers depict, in silver work, *The Crucifixion* and *The Resurrection*. St Nicodim had correspondence with Patriarch Evthymios of Bulgaria, a very erudite theologian of the time. Two of the letters which the Patriarch sent to him have been preserved. In them he answers St Nicodim's questions: one about the angels, and one about the moral requirements of someone who wants to become a priest.[337]

The believers considered him a saint even during his life time because he was a miracle-worker: among other incidents, he and a deacon dressed in their church-vestments passed through fire without being harmed, and he healed a young lady (a

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[334] Ibid., p. 90.

[335] Ibid. 1991, p. 306.

[336] Păcurariu, *Sfinți daco-romani și romani*...., pp. 64-68, and *idem*, 2000, p. 91.

[337] Ibid., 1991, p. 306; *idem*, 2000, p. 91.

relative of the Hungarian King Sigismund. He died on 26 December 1406 and was buried in *Tismana* Monastery.[338]

Also in the fourteenth century the monasteries of *Râmeț* and *Geoagiu* (Alba County) were founded, as well as other monasteries in *Ilidia, Partoş, Săraca, Sângeorge, Şredişte a Mică, Vărădia, Mesici, Caransebeş, Lugoj* (fourteenth-fifteenth centuries), all located in Banat area; *Cuhea* and *Giuleşti* in Maramureş, etc.[339] As shown in Chapter 2, some of the churches of these monastic settlements were decorated with beautiful frescoes, for example, *Streisângeorgiu* (in 1313-1314 by the iconographer Teofil [Teophil]), *Strei, Sântămăria Orlea, Lesnic, Crâşcior, Ribița, Densuş* (in 1443 by the painter Ştefan), and *Râmeț* (by Mihul).[340] Other Orthodox monasteries from the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries have later disappeared: *Scorei*, in Țara Făgăraşului [Făgăraş district], *Răşinari*, near Sibiu, *Râşnov* and *Zărneşti* (next to Braşov), etc. [341] Some of the monasteries - and some churches too – of Transylvania were built with the material help of the princes of Wallachia (for example *Scorei* and *Zărneşti*), proving that the people from all Romanian lands were aware of their common Christian faith, language, and origins.[342]

Other Wallachian monasteries in the fourteenth century, in addition to *Vodița* (consecrated in about 1372), were as follows: *Bolintin*, attested by a 1433 document recently discovered on Mount Athos as being a foundation of Basarab the First,[343] *Dealu*, near Târgovişte (1431), rebuilt in the present form by Radu cel Mare [the Great] (1495-1508), an important cultural centre, built on the place of an older one

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[338] Ibid., 1991, p. 306; *idem*, *Sfinți daco-romani...*, pp. 64-68, and *idem*, 2000, pp. 90-91.

[339] Ibid., 2000, p. 84.

[340] Ibid.

[341] Ibid.

[342] Ibid.

[343] Ibid., p. 92.

from the thirteenth century. The most important abbot here was Nicodim, who arrived in the coutry during Vladislav (Vlaicu) Voevod's reign (1364-1377), and, as shown above, built *Tismana* Monastery. The church of this monastery was made out of wood, and then later in stone during Radu the First's reign (ca. 1377-1383). Probably the building of the monastery was finished during Mircea cel Bătrân's rule (1386-1418). *Cotmeana* Monastery was also probably erected in Vladislav's time.[344] Mircea was the founder of *Cozia* Monastery, which was an important cultural centre of that time.

In Moldova, as in Wallachia, there were wooden sketes in remote places. The oldest monastery there is considered by tradition as being Neamț, founded by three hermits, Sofronie, Pimen and Silvan, during Petru Muşat's rule (ca. 1375-1391).[345] Petru founded a new church, and wished to be buried here, but there is a debate if this is indeed his resting place. There is no record of his burial, but Ştefan cel Mare did not place a funeral stone to Petru in *Rădăuți* Church, as he did for other of his ancestors. Păcurariu considers that this could mean that Petru is not buried there.[346] Since he built a church in *Neamț*, and there were not so many churches at that time in the area, it can be inferred that Petru Muşat was burried in *Neamț* Monastery. The first church was replaced with a stronger one by Alexandru cel Bun, who in 1402 also constructed a stone church in *Moldovița*, ruins of which can still be seen today. Some other important monasteries in Moldova are *Probota* (built by Stephan the Great in 1398, where his mother, Oltea, was burried in 1465), and the Monastery of St Nicholas in *Poiana Siretului*, also from the fourteenth century.[347] All these monasteries still exist either as ruins, or in pristine condition (as *Moldovița*, for example).

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[344] Ibid. p. 106.

[345] Ibid., p. 92.

[346] Ibid., p. 93.

[347] Ibid.

It has become even clearer now that the origins of Romanian monastic life are to be found in the Greek world. In addition to the Greek etimolology of the words used in the monastic context, the architectural style of the first monastic settlements in Romanian lands was also of Greek influence, as *Morisena* case proves. These Romanian-Greek bonds were reinforced many times throughout Romanian history by the practice of dedicating local monasteries to monasteries either in Constantinople or on Mount Athos. As early as 1391 Balița and Drag dedicated *Peri* Monastery to Constantinople, and other princes offered monasteries to those on Mount Athos; *Plumbuita*, the subject-matter of Chapter 5 of the present dissertation, is one of them (it became a *metochion* of *Xiropotamou* on 21 October, 1586 on the initiative of the Prince Mihnea Turcitul; 1577-1583; 1585-1501). Also the practice of local monks traveling to Month Athos helped the process. The alleged founder of Romanian monasticism. Nicodim, lived for a while on the Holy Mountain where he was the abbot of *Hilandar* Monastery, and after arriving in Romanian lands he propagated the Athonite principles. As shown above in this chapter, from the beginning of their establishment, Romanian monasteries had their internal organization based on the *samovlastiei* principle of Athonite origin which allowed the monastic communities to elect their own abbot by the monastic community. In emergency situations another monk (a *catigumen*- κσθηγούμενος) was nominated as proxy to the abbot. In maintaining monastic discipline the abbot was assisted by the confessor/confessors of the community (through the services and the sacrament of confession). The monasteries had (and they still have) a person appointed to take care of financial and material aspects of monastic life, assisted by other monks with specific functions. In time, probably in the sixteenth century, the Church hierarchy, the civil authority of the

place or even the prince of the country began to appoint the superior of the monastery, a custom which, after many protests, ceased.[348]

Since many monks were iconographers, as for example Archimandrite Ioan from *Polovragi*, Vâlcea, the works of the Athonite monks were known, and often copied, in Romanian monastic communities. As shown in chapter 2, the author of the book *Polovragi*, Arhimandite Tohăneanu, declared that in order to paint the church of that monastery in 1648, Ioan turned for inspiration to Mount Athos.

ii) Hesychast tradition. The skete as a part of monastic reality. Other Romanian-Athonite connections

The hesychast movement started by the establishment of the monastic settlemets on Mounth Athos is very strong in the fourteen-sixteen centuries Romanian lands. As a consequence, the number of the monks seems to have been high in these territories. Some of the married priests (*preoți de mir*) and boyars, after becoming widowers, entered the monasteries to become monks. This was the case, for example, of the treasurer of the Moldavian Court, Ieremia, who as a monk, taking the name Evloghie (he founded the *Sălăjeni* Monastery), and Toader Baloş, who become the monk Teofilact. In Wallachia, the armbearer [*vornicul*] Bârseanu became a monk in *Snagov* Monastery, Teodora (the mother of Mihai Viteazul) became the nun Teofana (she was tonsured in *Cozia* Monastery, in spite of the fact that it was a monastery for monks; she was sent somewhere else after her tonsure). At that time, the monasteries for nuns were

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[348] Ibid., pp. 576-577.

less numerous than those for monks. Some examples of nunneries of that time are *Valea* and *Ostrov* in Wallachia, *Socola* and *Vânătorii Pietrei* in Moldova.[349]

At times when education was a luxury availably mainly to aristocracy, the monks were the few privileged to receive it in monasteries and to became authors and initiators of culture. The monk who left a lasting mark on Romanian monasticism, and had an impact on the country's culture at the time; therefore he consequently was canonised (in 2003) is Basil [*Vasile*] from *Poiana Mărului* (1692-1767). He was a Russian by birth, and "We do not know exactly where [he] began his monastic life, but all indications point to a small hermitage in the vicinity of Chernigov."[350] The community in which he lived was secluded and followed the hesychast tradition, which was suppressed under Peter the Great. Therefore, Basil left that region and went to Moshny hills, close to Kiev which, even though under the ecclesiastical jurisdiction of the Metropolitan of Kiev, was under the political control of Poland. Here in the St Nicholas monastery known as *Medvediv* he was tonsured as a rasophore monk, and he moved to Wallachia. This principality was a convenient place to be for a monk because, like Moldova, in spite of being a vassal to the Ottoman Empire, it enjoyed a special regime and was ruled by its own prince who was an Orthodox Christian. "By the time of Elder Basil, throughout the territory now known as Romania, in addition to fourteen monasteries, there were ninety-three sketes or *hesychasteria.*"[351] He came with a priest-schema Ştefan and others to a hermitage called *Valea Stipului* in the diocese of the Bishop of Buzău in the beginning of the eighteenth century. He was tonsured to the great schema in 1705-1706 in the skete of *Dălhăuți*. In 1715 he was

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[349] Ibid., 1991, p. 576.

[350] *Elder Basil of Poiana Mărului, Spiritual Father of St Paisy Velichkovsky*, trans. and ed. by "A Monk of the Brotherhood of Prophet Elias Skete, Mount Athos", St John of Kronstadt Press, Liberty, Tennessee, 1976, p. 10.

[351] Ibid., p. 13.

elected abbot of this skete of 30-40 monks and was in that position for about twenty years. In 1730 he founded a new skete –*Poiana Mărului* ('Apple field')- where he moved with 12 Russian monks in 1733. He became a spiritual father for the multitude of monks of many nationalities living throughout the Buzău area. These monks were from Russia, Ukraine, Mount Athos, and also from the three Romanian lands. One of them was St Paisy Velichkovsky, in whom he planted the determination to go to Mount Athos (St Basil was to visit St Paisy there in 1750). In *Poiana Mărului*, Basil collected a patristic library of both books and manuscripts, and with his community began copying and translating books from Greek and Slavonic into Romanian. He personally translated here the *Philokalia*,[352] and wrote some original works among which there are *Instruction or Preparation for those who Wish to Read the Book of our Holy Father among the Saints Gregory of Sinai, that they not Misconstrue the Meaning of its Contents, Introduction to the Chapers of Blessed Philotheos of Sinai, Introduction to the Book of Blessed Hesychios, Commentary on the book of the blessed Father Nil Sorsky* (all four written in Russo-Slavonic and later published by Optina Hermitage).[353]

As mentioned above, St Paisy Velichkovsky was St Basil's disciple. St Paisy (1722-1794) studied at the Theological Academy founded by the Romanian Metropolitan Petru Movilă in Kiev, but he discovered that he was attracted by the monastic life and left the Academy. After living in various monasteries, including *Petchersky Lavra*, he came to Romanian lands when he met St Basil in *Poiana Mărului Skete*, Buzău County, who advised him to go to Mount Athos; Paisy followed this advice in 1746. On the Holy Mountain he founded the *Prophet Elias Skete*, learned Greek and began

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[352] Ibid., p. 13, pp. 25-27.

[353] Ibid., p. 31.

translating the Holy Fathers from Greek into Slavonic; he also revised older translations. In 1763 he came back to Romania (but to Moldova province) and for twelve years he was the abbot of *Dragomirna* Monastery. Here he led the life of the community based on Athonite rules of a working communal life; his rule was called "*Aşezământul lui Paisie*".

The community in *Dragomirna* Monastery had an international character- the monks were Russians, Romanians and Ukrainians- and reached about 350 members who either worked in the monastery's hospital (for poor and old people), or copied manuscripts and translated books from Greek into Slavonic and Romanian. He translated especially from St Anthony the Great, Theodore the Studite, Mark the Ascete, etc. He also translated *Philokalia*, and printed it here in 1739. The Austrian occupation of this part of Moldova, Bukovina (1774) forced St Paisy to go with about 200 disciples to *Secu* Monastery, where they lived for four years. In 1779 the Moldavian Prince Constantin Moruzzi (1772-1782) asked St Paisy to go to *Neamț* Monastery. In *Neamț* St Paisy established again a community based on Athonite rules of prayer and work. He founded here a Church music school (*Neamț* is where the Creed was chanted for the first time), and organised two teams of copyists and translators, including himself, to work incessantly on the translation of the *Philokalia* into Slavonic and Romanian. About 300 manuscripts were written during his time in Neamț, and 44 are his own work. St Paisy was buried in *Neamț* Monastery.[354]

Another impressive monastic figure is Archimandrite Gheorghe from *Cernica* Monastery (1730-1806), who continued following strict ascetic rules in a monastery into the nineteenth century. Born in Sibiu area, he went first to Bucharest, and then to

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[354] Schema-monk Metrophanes, *Blessed Paisius Velichkovsky*, Saint Herman of Alaska Brotherhood, Platina, California, 1976 (a translation of the *Life of Blessed Paisius* published by Optina Monastery in 1847); see also Chetverikov, *Starets Paisii* Velichkovskii. *His Life, Teachings*.

Mount Athos where he was tonsured hierodeacon in *Vatopedi* Monastery. There he became a disciple of St Paisy Velichkovsky in the *Skete of Prophet Elias*, where he was tonsured hieromonk. When St Paisy went back to Moldova, Gheorghe followed him in both *Dragomirna* and *Neamț* monasteries. In 1781 Archimandrite Gheorghe became the abbot of *Cernica* Monastery. At that time the monastery was empty. The Archimandrite completely refurbished it, gathered monks among whom he settled the 'Paisian rule', and initiated a cultural life in this community with mainly Romanian disciples. He also established a school for copying manuscripts. Archimandrite Gheorghe wrote a book (a '*Diată*') in 1785, which comprises teachings from the Bible, Holy Fathers, and some instructions for the service in the Church. This book was widely distributed and became very well known throughout the country. In 1794 Archimandrite Gheorghe became the abbot of *Căldăruşani* Monastery as well, and he led skilfully the life of the two monasteries until his death.[355]

It is not mentioned in the bibliography of the time as it was considered a normal part of monastic life, but fresco and icon-painting might have been an incessant activity in many monasteries of the eighteenth century, as it is today. The churches of these monasteries were decorated and icons might have played their role in the Liturgy. Actually the schools of iconography in *Cernica* and *Căldăruşani* became widely known at the outset of the nineteenth century.

Between 1818 and 1850, the monk Calinic, the most influential figure in Romanian monastic life of the time, was the abbot of *Cernica* Monastery. A founder of monasteries, churches, hospitals and orphanages, he was also responsible for the construction of the most important buildings of this monastery. He built the fortress

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[355] This information is from Stanciu Ioan Ieronim, *Viața și activitatea Starețului Gheorghe de la Mănăstirea Cernica* [The life and activity of the Abbot Gheorghe from Cernica], (Teza de licență –

and made alterations to St George Church (1831-1838). The hieromonk Calinic, whose relics are in the Church of St George, was declared a saint in 1955, one the worst years for Christian faith in Romania because of the persecution organised by communists. In that year several important clergy, monks, bishops and archbishops lived, at different periods, in the monastery. The bishops and archbishops of Bassarabia and Bucovina, exiled from their territory after annexation to Russia, were also its guests.

In the twenteenth century a few names of monks became known thoroughtout Romania. Archimandrites Cleopa Ilie (1912-1998) from *Sihăstria* Monastery, Neamț County, Visarion Coman from *Clocociov* Monastery, Olt County, Sofian Boghiu (1912-2002) from *Antim* Monastery in Bucharest (who was also a renowned iconographer and answered my questionnaire in chapter 6), and Arsenie Papacioc from St Mary Monastery in Tekirghiol, Constanța County, became, in a way, national confessors. Even during his life,[356] but especially after his death, many of Archimandrite Cleopa's teachings were published.[357] People from all over the country (lay people, but also priests and monks) went to them for confession or just advice. Some of these monks are still active, as Archimandrite Visarion, and also Archimandrite Arsenie Papacioc. Archimandrite Arsenie has published a book containing a part of his correspondence with his spiritual children in which Christians can find useful advice for their spiritual needs.[358]

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graduating dissertation), Institutul Teologic Universitar [Theological University Institute], Bucharest, 1979.

[356] Arhimandrite Cleopa Ilie, *Valoarea sufletului* [The souls's value], Editura Bunavestire, Bacău, 1999;

[357] Arhimandrite Ioanichie Bălăn (ed.), *Ne vorbeşte Părintele Cleopa* [Father Cleopa is talking to us], Editura Episcopiei Romanului şi Huşilor [Publishing House of Roman and Huşil Diocese], 1995; Arhimandrite Cleopa Ilie and Arhimandrite Ioanichie Bălăn, *Lumina şi faptele credinţei* [The light and the acts of the faith], Editura Mitropoliei Moldovei şi Bucovinei, Iaşi, 2002.

[358] Arsenie Papacioc, *Scrisori către fii mei duhovniceşti* [Letters to my spiritual children], Editura Mănăstirea Dervent [Publishing House of Dervent Monastery], Constanța, 2000.

In Romanian monasteries, prayer has always been accompanied by work. In addition to compulsory attendance at the religious services (the morning, evening and midnight services, the liturgy and other special services – numerous in the Orthodox Church), each monk and nun did have and still has, a separate occupation[359].

To paint icons has been one of these occupations. The activity which this occupation implies is not one of the favourite subjects of many art historians today. However, since this activity still takes place in our contemporaneity, one of the ways to know it and to make it known is the direct contact with people who undertake it. Since this is only a part of the cultural life of a monastery, an introduction to put it into context is in place here.

iii) Romanian monasteries as cultural centres, including icon and wall-painting. Past and present

Monks have always laboured in the gardens, vineyards, etc. belonging to the monastery, and took care of the animals. The nuns did the same, and also weaved and made tapestries and embroideries, and often weaved icons, as still happens today, for example in *Agapia* and *Văratec* monasteries. The most educated monks were and are ordained as priests (*hieromonks*) or deacons (*hierodeacons)*. Other monks or nuns have taught in schools, when the respective monasteries had their own educational institutions. In the early monastic schools the clerks (*dieci*) for the Chancellery of the ruler received their training,[360] while in *scriptoria* other monks copied manuscripts for religious services or for the communal readings (as, for example, during the meals);

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[359] Păcurariu, *Istoria*, 1991, p. 577.

[360] Ibid., and *idem*, *Istoria*, 2000, p. 93

later some of them would become print workers.[361] As shown above, some of the monks wrote original works, as for example Filotei, a monk in Cozia Monastery, whose hymnographical work, *Pripealele, care se cântă la sărbătorile împărăteşti ale Născătoarei de Dumnezeu şi ale sfinţilor* [Short chants for the Royal feasts of the Mother of God and of the saints], was accepted by all Orthodox churches of the Slavonic tradition.

Many museums and libraries existing around the monasteries are witness to the cultural life of the respective monasteries in the past and today (a few of the larger monasteries have now their own small printing workshops which function sometimes as a local publishing house, as is, for instance, the case with *Nicula* and *Plumbuita* monasteries). An example of such a museum is that of *Cozia* monastery; it stores a precious collection of old icons, monastic objects, coins and antique books, among which there is an Epitaph' from 1396, and a Gospel from 1644 printed by the Metropolitan Bishop Varlaam. Another important book preserved at Cozia is *Psaltirea în Versuri* or *Cartea Psalmilor în versuri* [The Versified Psalter – 1673], edited by Metropolitan Bishop Dosoftei, a remarkable scholar, translator and creator of cultivated Romanian poetry, as well as a promoter of Romanian as a Church language. *Cozia* Monastery was an important medieval cultural centre where monastic scholars and their disciples printed, translated and interpreted many religious books written in Slavonic, and thus rendered them accessible to Romanians.[362] But no records mention that icon-painting took place in that monastery. Further significant examples of monks' work include *Viaţa şi mucenicia Sfântului Ioan cel Nou de la Suceava* [The Life and

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[361] *Idem*, *Istoria*, 1991, p. 577.

[362] Archimandrite Gamaliil Vaida, *Mânăstirea Cozia ieri şi astăzi* [Cozia Monastery Yesterday and Today], Editura Episcopiei Râmnicului şi Argeşului [Publishing House of the Metropolitan Diocese of Râmnic and Argeş, [no location], 1983.

Martyrdom of the St John the New of Suceava in Moldova] written in Moldova at the beginning of the fifteenth century.[363] Monks also made miniatures (as in *Dragomirna* Monastery in Moldova), or carved objects inside the monastery churches such as doors, pews, and *iconostases*.

Other monks painted icons and some still do so today in certain monasteries. The nuns have also continued to paint murals and icons, as for instance, in *Galata* Monastery in Iaşi. As I said before, to paint icons in a Romanian monastery was, and still is considered a casual job. Therefore, such an occupation does not receive substantive recognition in the presentation of a monastery, even when a monograph of that monastery is written. A factor in this lack of focus on icon-painting could also be the traditional custom of retaining the anonymity of the iconographers. Although occasionally icons were signed from the sixteenth century on because of West European influence (as Weitzmann shown in *The Icon. Holy Images*), it was considered appropriate to maintain discretion regarding the iconographers' painting talent, since it was is considered a gift from God for which they can claim little merit. Under these conditions there is no literature specifically concerning icon-painting in monasteries. In order to write about it, the best solution is to go to the monasteries where monks or nuns paint and try to persuade them to share with you the experience of their work.

Below follows a presentation of two monasteries which have constituted important historical moments in Romanian culture, especially in icon-painting (*Hurezi* already described in chapter 2 and, at a later date, *Căldăruşani,* near Bucharest), and of five monasteries with icon-painting workshops which I visited either before beginning this research, or during my field-work in Romania in the summer of 2002. They are

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[363] Păcurariu, *Istoria*, 2000, pp. 93-94.

Brâncoveanu-Sâmbăta de Sus, Sibiu County; *Galata*, Iaşi County; *Nicula*, Cluj County; *Cernica*, in Ilfov County, near Bucharest, and *Plumbuita*, in Bucharest.

I am aware that there are other monasteries in the country which had or still have icon workshops, such as *Mânăstirea dintr-un lemn* (The 'One Piece of Wood' Monastery) in Vâlcea County (Fig. 85) which, in addition to the workshop where the nuns paint icons, holds a precious collection of antique books, icons painted on wood, religious objects and attire.[364] There is also *Bistriţa* Monastery, Suceava County (Fig. 86), famous especially for the miracle-working icon of St. Anna holding the Holy Virgin as a child, received by Anna, Alexandru cel Bun's wife, from Manuel Paleologos (1395-1427) as a gift in 1404, (Fig. 87).[365] Furthermore, it is here that the monks wrote the first chronicle of Moldova which covers the period 1359-1506.[366] Ioanichie Bălan affirms that icons of great value were painted here.[367]

Icons are painted today also in *Trei Ierarhi* [Three Hierarchs] Monastery, Iaşi County (Fig. 88), of which church is dedicated to Basil the Great, Gregory the Theologian and John Chrysostom. This church was built between 1637-1639 by the Prince Vasile Lupu (1634-1653), and was consecrated on 6 May 1639 by the Metropolitan Bishop Varlaam. In July 1641, after the Patriarch and Synod in Constantinople sent St *Paraschiva*'s (Paraskevi) relics to this church as a token of gratitude for the generous actions and donations of Prince Vasile Lupu, a monastery was raised around the church.

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[364] Diaconescu, *Biserici şi mănăstiri*, p. 70.

365 Ierodiacon [Hyerodeacon] Ioanichie Bălan, *Mănăstirea Bistriţa*, Mitropolia Moldovei şi Sucevei [Metropolitan Diocese of Suceava], [Suceava] 1977, the reproduction of this icon received from Byzantium is on the page facing p. 8; the year of the gift's donation is 1404.

[366] Ibid., p. 34.

[367] Ibid., p. 35.

I will however focus on the icon-painting activity in the monasteries which I have visited. *Plumbuita* Monastery will constitute the sole subject of chapter 5 since it has a special status as hosting the icon and wall-painting workshop of the Faculty of Theology in Bucharest, and storing and preserving icons with a great diversity of influence and from different historical periods. It also holds icons from the twentieth century which will help me to introduce the activity of contemporary Romanian iconographers. I have presented firstly a general view of each of these monasteries to show that, in spite of their very different historical backgrounds, the icon-painting has managed to survive until today as a natural part of these monasteries' lives.

iii 1) *Hurezi* (*Horezu*) Monastery (Vâlcea County)

Using the peace within the borders of Wallachia, which he ruled at that time, Constantin Brâncoveanu asked, in the summer of 1690, for the construction of one of his most valuable foundations, *Hurezi* Monastery (Fig. 89). This monastery is considered as the most representative monument of the seventeenth century in Wallachia's architecture. It was raised by Brâncoveanu with the thought that it would be a point of defence from attacks on the Western part of the country, and stands near the other foundations of his family - *Bistriţa* of the Craioveşti family and *Arnota* of Matei Basarab (both of them in Vâlcea County). It suffered much deterioration over time: During the Russian/Austro-Turkish war of 1787 the lead roof of the main tower, the icons and windows, and the furniture from the boyar houses and cells were destroyed. In the 1821 revolutionary movement of Tudor Vladimirescu *Hurezi* was used as a fortified centre for storing provisions. The many repairs and modifications of

the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries have altered the architecture and the originality of the façades.

As shown already in Chaper 2, at the end of the seventeenth century, *Hurezi* Monastery had a real painting and sculpture school of which influence was visible until the late eighteenth century throughout Wallachia. The leader of the painters' team was Constantinos who, together with the Romanian artisans, painted the church of that monastery.[368] In the ensemble of paintings from *Hurezi* the features specific to the Brâncovan style of Church painting are evident: a realistic manner in depicting portraits which expresses human feelings and the use of some elements from real life.

In the cells of this monastery, books were translated by learned monks – and not only religious books, but also books with a secular theme - for example "1001 Nights". Having a great passion for culture, Brâncoveanu had put together a great library beginning in his days as only a boyar, before becoming the ruler of the country. In 1860 the Romanian writer Alexandru Odobescu, researching the archives and the libraries of some monasteries, found at *Hurez*i Brâncoveanu's books brought there after his execution by the Turks in Istanbul in 1714.

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[368] Ion Miclea and Radu Florea, *Hurezi*, Editura Meridiane, Bucharest, 1989.

ii 2) *Căldăruşani* Monastery[369]

Thirty kilometres north-west of Bucharest, on a peninsula of the *Căldăruşani* Lake, lies the *Căldăruşani* Monastery complex (Fig. 90), built in 1637-1638 by Prince Matei Basarab around the church bearing the same name, on the site of a former wooden hermitage.

The initial compound consisted of a large church surrounded by defensive walls and a single row of cells. Later, between 1652 and 1754, thanks to donations made by the Princes of the time, the complex expanded into a fortress. The exterior of the church of this monastery today is plastered, and the niches framed by profiled bricks are covered entirely in paintings. The church has three towers, of a form similar to those at *Curtea de Argeş* and *Dealu* monasteries. The porch has three massive pillars and two well balanced side arcades in an architectural style which was a novelty in the seventeenth century. The porch leads to the the *naos* through a stone-framed door. At the same time, having a rectangular shape, with an axis perpendicular to the church, it presents elements similar to those of churches on Mount Athos, vaulted into a dome whose arches are supported by two octagonal pillars. The square *naos* is dominated by the dome with the *Pantokrator*, supported on four columns completed by semicircular arches on the sides. Only the commemorative paintings representing Prince Matei Basarab and his wife, Princess Elena or Elina, have survived from the original frescoes. Each of the octagonal steeples has a tall narrow window. The exterior has a girdle that divides the wall into two sections where niches are painted in watercolour and slahmetal.

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[369] The description of *Căldăruşani* Monastery is based partially on the information from the historical notice on the wall of the church within precincts, and partially on my own observations during my visit there in summer 2002.

The defensive wall has a rectangular shape and the entrance opens into a narrow passage, above which rises the tower which originally housed a guard room. The cemetery church, which dates back to the eighteenth century, is outside the perimeter of the monastery. In the time when Archimandrite Dositei was abbot (1807-1837), the cemetery church was painted in tempera (ca. 1814) by the monks from the icon-painting school of the monastery in the Byzantine (non-naturalistic in this case) style.

The monastery also has another church outside the precinct, *Cocioc* Church, which was built in 1825 on the existing foundations of another religious building.

During the first decades of the nineteenth century *Căldăruşani* Monastery flourished. This process lasted until the secularisation of the monasteries' land and wealth, in 1863. Being close to Bucharest and having strong defensive walls, this monastery, among others, protected the population of Bucharest during Vladimirescu's revolution of 1821. In February of that year, for instance, people, scared by the *Hetaireia*, the Greek army led by Alexandru Ipsilanti,[370] took refuge in the monastery; the Greek attack on *Căldăruşani* failed.

The monastery in *Căldăruşani* underwent a series of extension towards the middle of the nineteenth century, especially triggered by the earthquake in 1838 which destroyed the cupolas of the main church, which were rebuilt in wood, and also by the fire of 1850 which burnt the houses outside the fortress. In that period the monastery had a wide range of buidings beside the churches, including a hospital with a chapel and a pharmacy inside, a smithy, a laundry, a tannery, an oil 'factory', a house for fishermen and storage space for fish, a shoemaker's workshop, stables, a wine cellar, a book-binding workshop and many other workshops for both the needs of the monastery (for

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[370] *Philikí Hetaireía* (Brotherhood or the Friends' Society) was a Greek secret organisation formed at Odessa in 1814 to fight for the independence of Greece. David Brewer, *The flame of freedom. The Greek war of independence 1829-1829*, John Murray, London, 2001, p. 26.

instance, to make the monks' clothes), and of the people who lived around the monastery.

The monks who lived in this community were from Wallachia, Moldova, and Transylvania (some of whom were fleeing from the hardship imposed on Orthodox churches and monasteries by the Hapsburg regime). There were also monks from the south of the Danube, Russia, and Ukraine.

The monastery was home to rich cultural activity, especially until 1860. Metropolitan Bishop Grigorie Dascălul (1823-1834) worked here on translating the 'Fathers of the Church' from Greek into Romanian. In this monastery there existed also a printing workshop. Nicolae Bâtcoveanu, logothete (*logofăt*) of the Metropolitan Church in Bucharest, built a mansion for himself at *Cocioc*, where the monastery has one of its churches, at the insistence of the Metropolitan Grigorie Dascălul. Bâtcoveanu agreed to have a large printing workshop installed within it, which became culturally very important for Wallachia (Moldova had similar workshops in *Neamț* Monastery, and also in *Three Hierarchs*, Iaşi, as already mentioned).

From September 1834 to June 1836, the monk Macarie managed to print 600 copies of *The Lives of the Saints*, a notable achievement for the time. He was helped by the monk Meletie from Athos, Gerontie from Neamț, and Iona from *Căldăruşani*. On the orders of the Bâtcoveanu brothers the book *Oglinda omului celui dinlăuntru* [The mirror of the internal person] was also printed there in 1835. It is a book of Christian morals well known at the time, which had been printed before (in 1833) in Neamț (after being translated from Russian) on the orders of an erudite Metropolitan, Veniamin Costache. Macarie intended to print an anthology of Psaltic music, but the project never materialised because he died in 1836.

An attempt to revive the printing activity was made in 1878 by Archimandrite Teofilact Dinu, who brought new machines and printed the book *Rugăciuni de suflet*

folositoare pentru evlaviosii creştini [Prayers for the soul of pious Christians], with the blessing of the Primate Metropolitan Calinic Miclescu.

About the middle of the nineteenth century, the library within *Căldăruşani* Monastery had become one of the most important in Wallachia for both manuscripts and printed books. Because many of the copied and decorated manuscripts were signed, the names of some of the monks who worked in the 'scriptorium' of *Căldăruşani* Monastery are known. They were: the Transylvanian monk Acachie, a man of great talent and the leader of this school of copysts, the hieromonks Serafim, Daniil and Teodosie, the monk Rafail, the Archimandrite Nicodimus Greceanu, and others. Among the manuscripts which were written at *Căldăruşani* at that time, 83 are in the Library of the Synod of the Romanian Orthodox Church from the *Antim* Monastery in Bucharest, and others (23) are in the Library of the Romanian Academy (9 of them are signed by Acachie, but the information that they would have been written in *Căldăruşani* is missing). In the manuscripts and books printed here, there is religious, as well as historical information: episodes from the Russian/Austrian-Turkish wars, Tudor Vladimirescu's entry into Bucharest and the fleeing of the boyars, the fire in Craiova in 1799, and some calamities of the time (the plague in Gheorghe Bibescu's reign (1842-1848), the great earthquakes of the period, the harsh winters, the introduction of new taxes, etc).

Icon-painting in *Căldăruşani* Monastery

Căldăruşani Monastery was famous from the end of the eighteenth century up to the first half of the twentieth century for its school of iconography. The school opened in 1778, during the reign of Alexandru Ipsilanti (1774-1782), and was the official icon-painting school of the Metropolitan Archdiocese of Bucharest. It was entrusted to the

iconographer Ioan Rusul [Ivan the Russian], who arrived in Romania with the Russian troops when the war against the Turks broke out in 1777. After his death, in the earthquake of 1802 while he was working on the painting of *Unguriu* Church, Buzău County, Matei Polcovnicul was appointed leader of that school as a popular iconographer of the time. Among his apprentices were Nicolae Teodorescu (who translated in *Căldăruşani* a *Hermineia*), Tăttărescu's uncle and teacher - as shown in the previous chapter- and other iconographers such as Chiriță Zugravul [the Iconographer], Costache Focşeneanu, Ilie Ploieşteanu, Pantelimonescu, Anton Serafim, and Evghenie Lazăr. The masters and apprentices of this school accomplished at *Căldăruşani* Monastery important mural paintings, and also many *iconostases* and icons. For example, they painted the main church of the monastery in 1817 and, in 1853 its *iconostasis*, the latter being preserved in the monastery's museum. They also painted the cemetery chapel and its *iconostasis* in 1814. They worked on the *Cocioc* Church and its *iconostasis* between 1825 and 1826 (the latter can be found today partly in the cemetery chapel, and partly in the monastery's museum). Many of the icons exhibited today in the museum come from the former refectory built during abbot Meletie's time. Many portraits of the abbots from the monastery's collection, which are kept in the former house of the Metropolitan Ghenadie Petrescu, were also painted in the monastery's icon-painting school. Most icons in the collection are panel icons painted on wood; they include some painted by the famous Nicolae Grigorescu. All of these, along with the religious objects in the 'Matei Basarab Hall', illustrate the height of cultural activity in the monastery.

Nicolae Grigorescu (1838-1907), the well known painter from the second half of the nineteenth century, worked in *Căldăruşani* between 1854 and 1855. He began his career as an apprentice to Anton Chladek and to his own older brother, Gheorghe. After painting the church in Băicoi, whilst only 17 years of age, he stopped on his way

to *Zamfira* and *Agapia* monasteries to work for a while at *Căldăruşani* where he painted many icons, of which seven today form the core of the monastery's collection. They are as follows: 1) Sts George and Dimitrie (1854); 2) The Holy Trinity of the New Testament (*Sfânta Treime Noutestamentară*; *sic*), and The Crowning of the Virgin (1855), both signed with the name Nicu Grigorescu; 3) Jesus Christ, the Righteous Judge; 4) Holy Emperors Constantine and Helena; 5) The Healing Spring; 6) Jesus and the Samaritan Woman; 7) Sts Stelian, Ştefan and Pantelimon. The last two icons, despite not being signed, are attributed to Grigorescu, on the basis of certain characteristics of the style of painting. [371]

Like many monasteries in Romania and elsewhere *Căldăruşani* was a centre of spirituality and culture for many years; it still is, but not at the level it enjoyed up to the first half of the twentieth century.

ii 3) *Brâncoveanu* Monastery - *Sâmbăta de Sus* (Mânăstirea *Brâncoveanu – Sâmbăta de Sus)*

The history of *Brâncoveanu* Monastery (Fig. 91) began in the seventeenth century, when Preda Brâncoveanu erected on *Sâmbăta* Valley the first church built out of wood. In its place, around the year 1696, Constantin Brâncoveanu re-built a monastery in stone, in order to strengthen and save Romanian Orthodoxy from the 'danger' of Catholic proselytism, which occurred when Transylvania fell under the Hapsburg rule (1683). In 1785 the monastery was partially demolished on the order of General Bukow from Vienna. All cells were destroyed, the church became a ruin and the

[371] Ibid.

monks were driven away. There were many unsuccessful attempts to restore the monastery, made by people belonging to the Orthodox Church in Transylvania, such as the Metropolitan Bishop Andrei Şaguna, the Bishop Ilarie Puşcariu, the nun Maria Boroş. Eventually the second founder of the Brâncoveanu Monastery, Metropolitan Nicolae Bălan, started the restoration work in 1926. The consecration of the monastery's church took place in 1946, in spite of the fact that the precincts were not rebuilt at that time because of the scarcity of the resources as a consequence of the war. The architecture of the monastery is typical of the Brâncovan style. The church within its precints has a trefoil plan, and a cruciform interior, common throughout Romania. The pillars of the church are cut in stone, as are the carved surrounds of the windows and front door.

The tower is octagonal outside and cylindrical inside. Traditional Orthodox wall-paintings adorn the entire church and the porch. A part of the original painting has survived the difficult trials of the past. An inscription preserved above the door to the *naos* reads '1767', which is probably the year when the wall-painting was restored. The painting of the *nartex* is entirely new and includes scenes from the Old Testament. On the west side of the *naos*, where the Holy Virgin is painted, one can also see the portraits of the founders. The entrance from the porch to the *naos* is through a solid oak door, framed by sculpted stone.

Around 1889 the external walls of the church were entirely painted with frescoes. Tohăneanu mentions Bishop Ilarion Puşcariu's testimony to it; he visited *Brâncoveanu* Monastery at that time and was surprised to find these exterior paintings. Tohăneanu assumes that, probably in an excess of devotion, the painters covered these walls having been inspired by the external frescoes of the monasteries of Northern Moldavia. During the restoration work these frescoes were removed, and the church regained a Brâncovan appearance (based on whitewash and a brick belt). In 1977 a chapel in the

Brâncovan style was rebuit on the site of the one built in Brâncoveanu's time. It has carvings in oak (by D. Iliescu who carved also the gate of the monastery), and frescoes in a style of Byzantine influence painted by P. Flescaru.[372]

The monastery houses five bells cast in Vienna of up to 2,000 kg, and very well harmonized. Their ringing is today electronically controlled.

The precincts which have been rebuilt are quadrilateral; they include two-storeyed buildings in a Brâncovan style. Three carved-stone towers adorn the precincts both on the inside and on the outside. On the ground floor of the northern buildings there are the offices of the monastery and the cells for the monks. The ground floor of the southern buildings comprises a large refectory, the kitchens, an extensive library and a xenodochium (a hostel for pilgrims). Within the monastery's precincts there is also a carved canopy which surrounds the 'Spring of Healing' (which Tohăneanu affirms was already known in the sixteenth century).

In addition to the church and the chapel, *Brâncoveanu* Monastery houses a museum and a workshop for glass painting. In the museum there is a rich glass painting collection from the eighteenth and the nineteenth centuries, mostly painted in a naive folk manner, and very rare and historically valuable documents. Besides the glass icons, the museum keeps old letters, the first edition of some newspapers, clothes used by monks in the past, ecclesiastical objects, and an extensive library.[373]

In 1981, when Archimandrite Veniamin's book about *Sâmbăta* Monastery was written, the head of the icon-painting workshop was hieromonk Timotei Tohăneanu.[374] In 1998 and still today the monk Ieronim [Hieronymus] Coldea (who also takes care of the

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[372] Archimandrite Veniamin Tohăneanu, *Mânăstirea Brâncoveanu- Sâmbăta de Sus*, Editura Centrului Metropolitan Sibiu [The Publishing House of the Metropolitan Centre Sibiu], Sibiu, 1981, pp. 22-24.

[373] Ibid., pp. 5-25.

[374] Ibid., p. 25.

beehives of the monastery) and other few apprentices paint icons, mainly in a Western manner.[375] Tohăneanu writes that,

> It should be mentioned that the school for iconographers, founded by Brâncoveanu at Sâmbăta de Sus, cultivated the Brâncovan style of painting. This style spread later, firstly in the paintings of the walls of the churches, and then in glass-painting. [The latter] is a practice which occurred in *Făgăraş* and the surrounding area, including Scheiul Braşovului, and then spread towards *Laz* and *Nicula*, in Northern Transylvania.[376]

ii 4) *Galata* Monastery

The Church of the *Galata* Monastery (4 Mânăstirii Street, Iaşi), dedicated to the Ascension (Fig. 92), is a foundation of Prince Petru Şchiopul [Peter the Lame], who reigned twice: 1574-1579; and 1582-1591. He named the monastery after the area in Constantinople where the Moldavian princes stayed when they went to the Porte to receive their confirmation of regency.

Before building *Galata* Monastery, Petru Şchiopul had built another one, 'Galata in the Valley' which was next to the Miroslava Hill, and probably finished in 1579. Since that original building collapsed shortly after its completion, during his second reign, Petru decided to build another monastery on a firmer terrain in 1584 and he chose the above-mentioned hill, and later a church was once again constructed in the valley. The main church of the present monastery, *Biserica Înălțării* [the Ascension Church] reflects the evolution of the Moldavian architecture and the influences which have

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[375] I visited *Sâmbăta* Monastery in winter 1998 with my colleagues when I was working as an Advisor for the Secretary of State for Religious Affairs in Romania. On that occasion I met the monk Ieronim and saw the monastery's icon-painting workshop.

[376] Tohăneanu, Mânăstirea Brâncoveanu, p. 24.

occurred since the last two decades of the sixteenth century. The layout of the church is specifically Moldavian, triconic, with three round apses and, in addition to the customary three divisions, it also houses a crypt. The church's walls are made of stone blocks carved within three rows of bricks, giving the building a discreet polychromy. Nine stone counterforts, in steps, support the church's walls. The whole exterior of the church is decorated with alternating rows of stone and brick.

The painting within the church, in fresco technique, was not finished during the time of the founders, but in the seventeenth century. This is indicated by an inscription from 1627 which was discovered after the removing of a layer of oil painting added later on the walls. The sixteenth century painting was seriously damaged by a fire in 1762. In 1811 the iconographer Vasile Dubrosky repainted the church. The painting in oil which exists in the church was completed around the middle of the nineteenth century, probably during the restoration works initiated by the Prince Mihai Sturza. Some of the old frescoes have been preserved in the nave. These include a part of the votive painting, the Holy Trinity, a group of angels and the Angels' Liturgy. The present *iconostasis* is from 1800 and has been sculpted in the Baroque style. The church was restored between 1971 and 1976 to its original shape.

The restoration gave unity to the monastic ensemble. The church of Galata Monastery is important because it marked a new stage in Romanian religious architecture, and influenced the structure of other churches of the sixteenth century.[377] It served as a model, for example, to *Aroneanu* Church (1594), for the church of the *Dragomirna* Monastery (1609), and for the church of the *Trei Ierarhi* Monastery (1637-1639). Constantinescu and Sfârlea consider that the importance of this monastery from an architectural point of view lies in the "strong influx of stylistic forms received from

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[377] My notes during the visit to the monastery in summer 2002.

Wallachia."[378] This was the first time a second tower [on the nave] had been introduced into Moldavian architecture,[379] thus increasing the scale of the church.

The restoration works of the 1970s revealed the princely tombs of Petre Şchiopul`s wife, Maria Amirali, who died probably in 1583, of his daughter Despina, who died as a child in 1587, and of Vlad, his son, who also died very young.

The only building of Galata Monastery preserved in its original form is the Church of Resurrection, consecrated in 1584. Surrounded by a strong wall with an imposing bell tower, the church of *Galata* Monastery is an exceptional architectural achievement, a novelty for that period, and a result of the synthesis between the Moldavian traditional elements and influences of a Byzantine-Wallachian origin. Thus certain architectural elements, unprecedented in Moldavia until then, are characteristic of this church. Beside the presence of a second tower above the *naos*, they include the replacement of the wall between the *pronaos* and the nave with three arches supported by pillars, the introduction of a medial band separating the façade into two equal parts, and the illumination of the apses through three windows.

The original painting of the church has not been preserved, being destroyed together with the *iconostasis* and many ecclesiastical objects by a fire in 1762. Only a few fragments of fresco have remained, the most important of them being the votive painting. Paul of Aleppo, the Archdeacon of Patriarch Macarios III of Damascus (ca. 1636-1666), during his visit at Galata as a part of his tour around Moldova in 1653 admired the frescoes, paying special attention to the portraits of Petru Şchiopul and his family. He describes the church, giving the following details: the princely throne was gilded and had above it a cross, and the two-headed eagle which was at that time and

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[378] Constantinescu and Sfârlea, *Monumente religioase. Biserici şi mânăstiri celebre din România*, Editura Editis, [n. l, Bucharest], 1994, p. 87.

[379] Ibid.

still is a part of the country's emblem, the Holy Table was covered by a wooden canopy supported by narrow columns decorated with gilded lily flowers and various leaves and other sculptures. The Antioch pilgrim also mentions the four gilded wood-carved candlesticks and the pews in the nave.[380] The fragments of the fresco discovered during the church restoration have proved that when the church was repainted in the nineteenth century, the iconographers attempted to copy the original painting, but did not succeed in equalling its quality. The situation is similar regarding the painting in St James chapel, founded by Petru Şchiopul in the princely house built near the church. Because of the way in which the chapel was built, the Prince was able to listen to the holy services from his house. This shows that the founder of the *Galata* Monastery might have been a deep believer. Having undergone restoration, the chapel is still in use today. Petru Şchiopul built this house at the same time as the foundation of the Church of the Ascension. The house subsequently underwent various architectural modifications (for instance, in the eighteenth century another floor was laid), although the structure of the ground floor and the cellar has been preserved from the old building. The princely house has now been restored and it shelters, beside the chapel of St James, the monastery's museum, in which a fragment from an old fresco painted in a shade of red characteristic unique to *Galata* has been preserved. The monastery still uses the bell that Petru Şchiopul gave to the church.

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[380] See the historical notice on the wall of the Resurrection Church of *Galata* Monastery (*Galata din Deal* – on the Hill).

Nuns working in *Galata* Monastery's workshops, including in the icon-painting workshop

Initially *Galata in the Valley* Monastery was inhabited by monks. In the second half of the seventeenth century, a very talented monk named Gherasim lived there. He produced, among other things, different vestments and embroidered icons on the orders of the founders of some of the monasteries in Wallachia[381].

After 1990, with the blessing of His Eminence Daniel, Metropolitan of Moldavia and Bucovina, *Galata* Monastery became a nunnery. The nuns and sisters in the monastery still manufacture liturgical vestments and embroideries.

In the cemetery church Sts Athanasie and Cyril, [*metochion* of *Galata* Monastery] there is a small icon workshop. The iconographers there are the nuns: Macrina, Tatiana, and Oana (still a novice when I met her; she replied to the questionnaire which I use in chapter 6). Fig. 93 from Appendix E shows two of the icons made by Sister Oana Donose: the Mother of God of *Hodegetria* type and Jesus Christ painted in the Romanian style of Byzantine persuasion.

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[381] Ibid.; my emphasis.

ii 5) *Nicula* Monastery

Nicula Monastery (Fig. 94 a, b) is situated in Fizeşu Gherlei, Cluj County, near the town of Dej in Transylvania, and under the jurisdiction (actually, under *ascultarea* – the obedience) of the Romanian Orthodox Archdiocese of Cluj. The monastery was established in the sixteenth century (ca. 1552) and now has two churches. The first (wooden) church built by the hermit Nicolae burnt down in 1973. People brought a similar one from *Fânaţe*, near Bistriţa-Năsăud, and replaced the old church. The newest church of *Nicula* Monastery was constructed between 1875 and 1879. It has a circular *iconostasis* carved out of wood in a unique style, with numerous post-Brâncovan artistic elements (Fig. 94 c). In this church of *Nicula* Monastery there is a wonder-working icon which was painted in 1681 by the iconographer-priest Luca from *Iclodul Mare* village (Fig. 94 d, e). During the time of the Hapsburg persecution and forced conversion of the Romanian Orthodox of Transylvania to Eastern rite Catholicism, the icon wept, and through the years has been known to be a source of miracles. The patronal feast of *Nicula* Monastery is the Dormition of the Mother of God (August 15), and its annual pilgrimage draws hundreds of thousands of people to the monastery.[382]

In the nineteenth century *Nicula* Monastery was the most prolific centre of icon-painting on glass in Transylvania, and today it has a rich collection of icons painted on such a medium (Fig. 94 f).[383]

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[382] Protosinghel Dumitru Cobzaru, *Monografia Mânăstirii 'Adormirea Maicii Domnului' Nicula*, [The Monograph of 'The Dormition of the Mother of God' Monastery], Editura Ecclesia [Ecclesia Publishing House], Nicula, 2001.

[383] Constantinescu and Sfârlea, *Monumente religioase*, p. 54.

Today the monk Ilarion Mureşan paints icons in a style consisting of a mixture of naïve and folk painting executed in bright colours, specific to this area of the country,[384](Fig. 94 g-h).

ii 6) *Cernica* Monastery

Cernica Monastery (Fig. 95 a, b), located in Ilfov County, near Bucharest, is an ancient centre of prayer and culture, and was built in 1608, during Radu Vodă Şerban's rule, by order of the Governor Cernica Ştirbei. In that year, the Governor *Cernica* decided to have the old monastery endowed with land, forests and villages, and named the monastery by the name *Cernica* in memory of his family. Set in an unusual location (on land as well as on a small island in a lake) the monastery is surrounded by ancient forests.

The monastery consists of two imposing churches, some chapels dedicated to the most famous saints, cells, the kitchen, the refectory-Fig. 96, and a book and religious art museum. The complex as a whole has the appearance of a fortress. The main church of the monastery, which is on dry land, is dedicated to Saint George, as it is detailed below.

The churches of *Cernica* Monastery

Owing to its position beside the lake, *Biserica Sfântul Gheorghe* [St George Church] is not easy to see, in spite of its great size (Fig. 97 a). It was re-built during the time of Archimandrite Gheorghe (1781-1806), on the place on a previous church. On

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[384] Dumitru Cobzaru, *Monografia Mânăstirii 'Adormirea Maicii Domnului' Nicula*, pp. 90-91 focus on the 'Workshop in the Holy Monastery', including a short biography of the Archdeacon monk Ilarion

Archimandrite Gheorghe's initiative, the reconstruction of the monks' community (destroyed by war and plague) was realized. In 1815, after his death, one more church, *Sfântul Nicolae* [St Nicholas], was built on a peninsula (*Ostrov*), close to the main buildings of the monastery (Fig. 97 b). St Nicholas Church was also erected on the ruins of an older church, and was decorated with frescos by *Master* Fotache, one of the last medieval painting masters.[385]

Between 1818 and 1850, Archimandrite Calinic was the abbot of *Cernica* Monastery. He rebuilt one of the monastery's churches in *Grădiştea Mică* (1818-1840), and opened a school for scribes and an icon-painting school; (Fig. 98 illustrates a few of the works of the latter).[386]A very important institution has been the Seminary, in which many remarkable representatives of the Church were educated. Among them was Teoctist, the present Patriarch of Romania, who studied for eight years in this school. During the Second World War, the Seminary and monastery printing workshop were closed. Today, with the blessing of the monks there, people who want to follow the monastic life can become, according to their individual inclination, printing-workers, teachers or craftsmen while living a life of prayer. Since 1995, the Theological Seminary has been reopened, and the two churches of the monastery restored. The monastery's museum has rare and precious manuscripts, overlays, icons, and cult objects.[387]

What is to be especially retained in terms of iconography at *Cernica* is the fact that the School of iconography opened there by Archimandrite Calinic created a special blue

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Mureşan.

[385] My notes and a summary from Stanciu Ioan Ieronim, *Viaţa şi Activitatea Stareţului Gheorghe de la Mânăstirea Cernica*. See also Athanasie Mironescu, *Istoria Mânăstirii Cernica* [The History of Cernica Monastery], Tipografia Sfintei Mânăstiri Cernica [The Publishing House of Cernica Monastery], 1930, and Diaconescu, *Biserici şi Mânăstiri Ortodoxe. Orthodox Churches and Monasteries*.

[386] Diaconescu, *Biserici şi Mânăstiri*, p. 32.

[387] Ieronim, *Viaţa Stareţului Gheorghe; Diaconescu, Biserici şi Mânăstiri*, p. 32.

for painting frescoes called *albastru de Cernica* [*Cernica* blue], of which I found about during discussions with the monks of the monastery, especially with Father Ieronim Stanciu, who is in charge with the monastery's museum. I have managed to find traces of this blue only on the ceiling of a panoply which shelters the well in the monastery's cemetery.

It seems that the activity of painting frescoes and icons in these different from each other monastic settlements (different as geographical area of placement, particular history, size, wealth and number of dwellers) is one of the factors which gives to all of them a common specially beautiful atmosphere. This makes even more regretful the lack of bibliography on the subject of icon-painting in modern and contemporary Romania, which I tried to compensate by undertaking extensive field-work.

The final monastery to be described, *Plumbuita*, will be discussed in greater detail as the subject of the next chapter.

CHAPTER 5

Plumbuita Monastery: the body of icons and the icon-painting workshop

I have chosen to discuss the body of icons belonging to *Plumbuita* Monastery as a case-study in the first place because most of the icons and frescoes here were painted in the period covered by my thesis. In addition to the icons and frescoes in the church, the monastery used to have many icons and even fragments of frescoes (as that shown in Fig. 136, for example) in the monastery's museum, which was forced to close in 1990 because the government stopped sending the funding to assure the necessary environment conditions to preserve the objects. It also contained very precious books, and it seems that some of them have been lost. The contents of this museum are now kept in two store rooms, in inadequate conditions, and the community of the monastery, which today consists in ten monks and, from time to time, two or three novices, try their best to preserve as much as they can. The writing of this thesis and the publishing of some parts of it will, hopefully, draw attention of the authorities in the Ministry of Culture and [Religious] Cults to the need to reopen the museum within *Plumbuita* Monastery.

Another reason why I have chosen this monastery is the fact that within its precincts there have always been the workshops of the Romanian Patriarchate. Today the students of the [Icon] Painting and National Heritage (*Pictură [de Icoană] şi Patrimoniu Naţional*) Division of the Faculty of Theology, University of Bucharest, have their classes and practical exams here. Even though they do not work any more under the guidance of monk iconographers, but usually under that of lay Art specialists, the vicinity of the students' studios with the church ensures that the

conditions for icon-painting are being kept close to the canon. The students attend the religious services (many, if not all of them, apparently are believers), and spiritual guidance is available at any time. This helps them, or at least some of them, in their work, as it is shown in the answers to the questionnaire in chapter 6.

i) The history of *Plumbuita* Monastery

Plumbuita Monastery is on the shore of Colentina Lake, in the north-eastern part of Bucharest (Fig. 99). It started being erected during the reign of Prince Petru cel Tânăr [the Young], (1559-1568), as the defence fortress of the capital, and was finished at the time of Mihnea Turcitul [The Turkified], (1577-1583; 1585-1501). At the time when it was built, the monastery was outside the city, and therefore exposed to Turkish attacks, like that of Sinan Pasha in 1595, which seriously damaged *Plumbuita*. Due to such an exposure to external threats, the monastery was given the form of a fortified settlement; even today there are strong walls around the monastery. Before Mihnea, his parents Alexandru al II-lea [the Second], (1568-1577), and his wife Ecaterina, furnished, decorated, and made donations to *Plumbuita* Monastery. They are considered by historians as second founders, after Petru cel Tânăr. As shown in previous chapter, in 1586 Mihnea Turcitul dedicated *Plumbuita* Monastery to *Xiropotamou* Monastery.

On 15 October 1632, in the vicinity of the monastery, Prince Matei Basarab defeated the armies of Radu, the son of Prince Alexandru Iliaş, and removed him from the throne. In memory of that victory, Matei Basarab had the monastery refurbished and within its precincts built a princely house (*conac*) in 1647. The inscription above the entrance of the monastery's church (*pisania*) indicates the date when the works were

finished there: 10 April 1647 (at least for that 'second stage'). Zăvoianu supposes that on that day "Matei Basarab would have attended the consecration ceremony with hierarchs and boyars, according to the princely custom."[388] In 1802 and 1838 the buildings were severely damaged by earthquakes. The destruction was repaired between 1933 and 1940 when the Commission of Historical Monuments (*Comisia Monumentelor Istorice*) carried out extensive restoration works. Many important discoveries regarding the initial form of the church were made especially in 1935, allowing the monastery to regain some of its original appearance.[389] *Plumbuita* Monastery played an important role in the history of the capital city towards the end of the sixteenth century. Thus, among other activities, a printing machine (*tiparniță*) was installed there in 1573, the first in Bucharest. This was organised by a very influential clergyman, Metropolitan Eftimie the First,[390] who is mentioned for the first time in a document issued by Alexandru the Second Mircea on 8 September 1568, through which the village Aninoasa was confirmed once more as belonging to the Metropolitan Church of Ungro-Wallachia.[391] During the time when Eftimie was Metropolitan, Alexandru al II-lea Mircea was the prince of Wallachia. It was with the support of both that the printing house was open at *Plumbuita* Monastery, and the printing house began functioning. The hieromonk Lavrentie (Laurențiu) and his apprentice Iovan (Ioan)

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[388] Corneliu Zăvoianu, *Mânăstirea Plumbuita. Monografie* [Plumbuita Monastery. Monograph], Editura Aşezământul Mânăstirea Plumbuita [Publishing House of the Monastic Complex Plumbuita], Bucharest, 2001, p. 55.

[389] Radu Constantinescu and Mircea Sfârlea, *Monumente religioase. Biserici şi mânăstiri celebre din România*, Editura Editis [Editis Publishing House], [Bucharest?], 1994, pp. 155-156.

[390] Metropolitan Eftimie was appointed in July or August 1568; probably died in 1576. He is the first hierarch in Wallachia whose portrait has been preserved until today in a church; it is in *Olteni* Church, Vâlcea County. Mircea Păcurariu, *Istoria Bisericii Ortodoxe Române*, Editura Institutului Biblic şi de Misiune al Bisericii Ortodoxe Române [The Publishing House of the Biblical and Missionary Institute of the Romanian Orthodox Church], Bucharest, 1991, vol. 1, p. 452.

[391] Păcurariu, *Istoria*, 1991, vol. 1, p. 452.

worked there. They printed a Four Gospel Book (*Tetraevanghelier*) in two editions - first edition in 1582- and a Psalter, all of them in Slavonic.[392]

Plumbuita Monastery used to have a museum, which was founded by Ion Sachelarescu who was a priest within this monastery between 1933-1944 – and also an author of writings with religious subject[393]. After the museum was closed, what was said by Sachelarescu (in 1940), and Popa (in 1968)[394] regarding the disappearance of many of the objects received as donations by *Plumbuita* Monastery from the founders, is even more true today. At least in 1968 when Popa published her book *Mânăstirea Plumbuita* the museum was still in existence and was preserving some of the objects. In addition to the ancient objects which are deteriorating due to the inappropriate environmental conditions, more than one hundred and thirty portraits of saints and Romanian princes sculpted in stone by Archimandrite Neculai Simeon Tatu are affected.

The monastic complex has the shape of an irregular quadrilateral with two 70 meters sides and two 50 meters sides, and includes the church, the belfry, the cells and the princely house (see the attached plan, Fig. 100). The entrance into the precinct is through the base of the bell-tower located on one of the shorter sides of the rectangle. When entering the precinct, on the right, there is the old princely house built by Matei Basarab, which is today the abbot's residence and office. From the initial building only

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[392]Ibid.

[393]Ion Sachelarescu, *Din istoria Bucureştilor. Plumbuita*, I. publisher, Bucharest, 1940, p. 133 (on this page Sachelarescu declares that he is the founder of *Plumbuita* Monastery's museum). In addition to the afore-mentioned book, he wrote another one in 1932, *Problema miracolului creştin în faţa criticii ştiinţifice* [The problem of the Christian miracle in scientific critical approach], and some articles. Because of the content of one article written in 1941 about the Freemasons (or, at least, this was the official pretext), Sachelarescu was sent to prison by the Communist authorities in 1954, but was pardoned in 1955.

[394]Sachelarescu, *Din istoria Bucureştilor*, pp. 132-133; Corina Popa, *Mânăstirea Plumbuita*, Editura Meridiane, Bucharest, 1968, pp. 35-36.

the colonnades of the porch facing the yard and two cellars with arched ceilings have been preserved. Across the entrance, passing a fountain, there is the kitchen, next to a larger room, and the refectory. The kitchen is square with an arched roof and a small tower with windows (Sachelarescu assumes that they could have been used for letting the smoke and fumes out). Along the wall of the precinct are the monks' cells, and on the left, the rooms which house the icon-painting workshop (Fig. 101).

The bell tower is slender and dominates the other buildings in the monastic complex. It is solidly made and connected to the walls of the fortress which encircle the monastery. Sachelarescu considers that the fact that it is built from the same material as the fortress, and that it has on the front two holes for weapons (*muskets*) to defend the fortress, proves that it is an original building, erected at the same time as the fortress. It seems that in 1802-1806 the abbot Dionisie rebuilt at least the upper part of the tower which had collapsed because of an earthquake.[395]

Approximately in the centre of the precinct is the monastery church having as its patron saint John the Baptist. The church is 20 meters long and 7 meters wide[396], and was built on a trefoil plane (cruciform shape); on the nave it has a tower.

As shown in chapter 1, in general a close connection between the architecture, wall-painting, and the placement of icons in a church is supposed to exist. In the case of *Plumbuit*a, however, the iconographers have not obeyed all canonical requirements to the detriment of harmony. Also, despite the practice in the churches of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries to have their *naos* separated from the *pronaos* either by a full wall (as for example, in the church of *Plătăreşti* also founded by Matei Basarab,

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[395] Ibid., pp. 143-147.

[396] Ibid., p. 122; the sizes of the church have not been modified since 1940, when the book was written.

1646[397]), or by archways (as for example, in the church of *Gura Humorului* Monastery, 1653), the latter solution being almost the standard during the construction works at *Plumbuita*, none of these was followed in the case of St John Church.

With regard to this defiance of the norm, Corina Niculescu affirms that,

> ...in case of the Plumbuita Monastery the division between *naos* and *pronaos* before the last restoration was not made either through a full wall, or through archways, but probably by columns or pillars of which the restorers found traces.[398]

Initially, the church had one big tower on the nave, and two other smaller towers, but the two smaller towers collapsed as a consequence of the earthquake in 1802, and have not been rebuilt since. The current main tower on the nave, the result of the restoration in 1935, supports itself on three arches and on a short semicircular arch in the western part of the church. The irregular form of the nave means it cannot support a high tower or dome, making it necessary to give it an arch form inside as a safer solution. The church was plastered over, and then false bricks were painted in red on the plaster, some of which were visible in a wall fragment in the former museum of the monastery.[399] In previous centuries churches' facades had been constructed using red bricks, but to the end of sixteenth century and in the first half of the seventieth century false bricks were painted on plastered walls, as in *Plumbuita* Monastery.[400] The façades of St John Church are divided into two bands: a lower one, decorated with rectangular panels and round cornices, and an upper one, decorated with beautiful recesses and double arches. The three small windows which light the apses in the

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[397] Nicolae Ghica-Budeşti, *Evoluţia arhitectonică în Muntenia şi Oltenia. Secolul al XII-lea* [The evolution of architecture in Wallachia and Oltenia. Twelfth Century], Buletinul Comisiei Monumentelor Istorice, fasc. 71-74, Bucharest, 1933, p. 56.

[398] Popa, *Mânăstirea Plumbuita*, pp. 24-26.

[399] Ibid., p. 28.

[400] Zăvoianu, *Monografie*.

upper part 'break' the 'belt' of the facades. This system is common; it can be found in *Biserica dintr-un lemn* [The 'One Piece of Wood' Church] of the same name monastery; first decades of the sixteenth century], Vâlcea,[401] and in *Biserica Doamnei* [Princess' Church, 1683] in Bucharest. These small windows as an architectural device constitutes the transition from the round windows decorated with sculpted rosettes, to the small stone-framed windows typical of Brâncovan art. The frame of the windows and of the entrance door, sculpted in stone, was specific to the seventeenth century and was inspired by Moldavian models. This is a specific type of Gothic - Moldavian Gothic - which first entered Wallachia with the building of *Stelea* Church (1645) in Târgovişte. The Moldavian Gothic is a local adaptation of Serbian triconic architectural plan (which was taken from Byzantium). The Moldavian architects replaced the pillars that use to flank the apses and supported the dome's tower by arches propped up by short buttresses. Thus, the pressure within the building is transmitted to the counterforts in the same way in which it happens in the typical Gothic architectural style. In addition, the local builders reduced the interior diameter of the dome by using many arches placed oblique on the ceiling, which sometimes intersect each other (similarly to Oriental and Armenian models).[402] The construction of *Stelea* illustrates Vasile Lupu's (of Moldova) and Matei Basarab's (of Wallachia) custom of building churches in one another's provinces.

The simplification in the architectural style which happened in Wallachia is due, firstly to influences from Moldova of which sculpture had left partially the principles of

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[401] *Mânăstirea dintr-un lemn* [The One Piece of Wood Monastery] is located in *Frânceşti*, *Vâlcea* County. According to tradition, on the place of the present monastery it was a skete built from a whole oak three. Constantinescu and Sfârlea, *Monumente religioase*, p. 145.

[402] Alexandru Moraru, *Scurt istoric al Eparhiei ortodoxe române a Vadului, Feleacului şi Clujului* [A short history of the Romanian Orthodox Diocese of Vad, Feleac and Cluj], Editura Renaşterea [Renaşterea Publishing House], Cluj, 2001. In this book Moraru exemplifies the Moldavian Gothic through the church in *Vad*, on Stephen the Great's domain.

Gothic art, becoming simpler than before. Secondly, after these principles were borrowed, they were interpreted by the local masters who considered simplicity more suitable to the local taste. Another interesting phenomenon is that, despite the fact that the Gothic style did not last for long in Wallachia, its forms were modified during this short period in the sense of a reduced depth of the relief in carvings;[403] however, there are just a few churches built in the Gothic style in this province.

ii) The icons and frescoes within St John the Baptist Church and the store rooms of *Plumbuita* Monastery; the icon-painting workshop

The mural paintings in the monastery's church date from four different periods. As much as can be estimated with any degree of certainty is that the oldest ones, from the Alexandru the Second's time, are those which cover the *naos*' apses (Fig. 102 a, b), the areas around the windows, and the side walls of the *pronaos*. The second series of frescoes, from 1806-1834, are those from the altar, the interior of the dome in the *naos* (Fig. 103 a, b, c, d), and also the two low bands on the walls of the nave. All of them are painted by the iconographers who were trained in the icon-painting school of *Căldăruşan*i. The other areas were re-painted in 1956-1958 (Fig. 104 a, b), and the new buildings of the monastery are painted after 1982.[404] To the restorers' surprise in 1935 the paintings in the *naos* (in the apses and around the windows), and on the side walls of the *pronaos* prove to be the original ones. They discovered that no earlier layer of painting was found under the existent frescoes in these areas. Sachelarescu

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[403] Popa, *Mânăstirea Plumbuita*, pp. 28-30.

[404] Constantinescu and Sfârlea, *Monumente religioase*, p. 156; also Sachelarescu, *Din istoria Bucureştilor*, p. 129.

affirms that, judging by the fact that the votive portraits are on the left side (not on the right, as is usually the case), it is likely that the painting is the original one. This implies that the portraits date from the time of Voivode Alexandru and his wife, Ecaterina, so from 1568-1577. The haloes in golden plaster relief around the heads of the saints can also help in dating the frescoes as belonging to the sixteenth-seventeenth centuries, when to make such haloes was common practice.[405] However, there are always exceptions to a general rule or atypical manifestations in any particular period. From the iconographic point of view, the frescoes of the church depict the usual cycles of the Biblical narratives which are in any Orthodox church: the Mother of God and the Child (in the altar), then the Last Supper, and a band with the hierarchs of the Orthodox Church.[406] In the two apses there are scenes depicting Christ's life, prominent in the southern apse being the Magi's veneration, and in the northern one, the Resurrection. The upper band, which is very high up on the walls, portrays military saints. The frame of the windows is decorated with angels. In the church of *Plumbuita* Monastery the old paintings have Greek explanatory inscriptions. Some of them, and also some of the painted scenes up on both walls of the nave, were painted in tempera in the nineteenth century. One of the inscriptions from 1806 written in Greek says: "ΔΙΑ THS NHOS TAUTHS EIKONIZETAI 'H KAΘOLIKH TOU XPISTOU' EKKLHCIA (*sic*)" [The boat in this icon represents the Catholic Church of Christ"].[407] The four scenes on the right wall represent the following: one of them Jesus walking on the water, two of them Jesus followed by the apostles, and the last one represents

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[405] Sachelarescu, *Din istoria Bucureştilor*, pp. 127-129.

[406] Popa, *Mânăstirea Plumbuita*, p. 32.

[407] Sachelarescu, *idem*, footnote 2 on page 129.

the two demon-possessed men from Gadara. On the left wall two scenes in which Jesus is followed by his apostles are depicted.[408] In Sachelarescu's opinion,

> If we ignore the modern character of the latest painting, the frescoes of Plumbuita are rich from an artistic point of view. The Byzantine style with Athonite accent represents the uniqueness and the importance of the painting in the church of Plumbuita.[409]

The paintings in the nave are difficult to distinguish firstly because they are covered in smoke, and secondly because they are smaller than the paintings in the lower band. As I mentioned above, in the case of Plumbuita, the iconographers did not conform to the proportions which normally exist between the architecture of a church and the surfaces which are decorated. In this case, the iconographers who worked here paid attention to the frieze with saints to the detriment of scenes more important from the liturgical point of view.

In addition to the religious scenes, in the churches from the seventeenth century votive portraits are also very important. Usually they are on the west wall of the church, or on those of the south and north of the *pronaos*. In the monastery church of *Plumbuita,* on the north wall of the *pronaos* there are Alexandru Voivode and his wife, Ecaterina, and Matei Basarab with Elena, holding the model of the church. The location of the votive portraits shows that they were painted after the removal of the dividing wall between the porch and *pronaos*. The old paintings of the church were discovered only after the building of the porch and the restoration of 1802-1806. During the last restoration (1982), when the wall between the *pronaos* and porch was rebuit, new votive paintings

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[408] Ibid., p. 129.

[409] Ibid., pp. 129-130.

were made of the same four founders, but not holding the model of the church in their hands.[410]

In 1940 Sachelarescu enumerated and described some of the remaining icons in the monastery (actually in the monastery's museum), and identified them as of more recent date than the foundation of the monastery. Sachelarescu mentioned the so-called royal icons 'Our Lord Jesus Christ' and 'Our Lady'. He also speaks about the icon 'The Birth of St John the Baptist', which has disappeared from the monastery – probably destroyed due to chronic deterioration. Sachelarescu describes this last icon as being very beautiful and of a high artistic quality, but Popa affirms that, even though the icon "is interesting as a testimony of a representation of some compositional principles and schemes which became usual in icon-painting", within it

> it can be found a manner of painting that organises the persons of the icon in a hierarchy based on the role they play in the scene which is depicted, and the architectural background is treated without the preoccupation of creating a correct perspective.[411]

Popa shows that the icon was signed 'Răducanu Pop - painter- 1806, 15 February.' She also speaks about an icon which was in the monastery in 1968, painted with 'refined colours' representing Sts Constantine and Helena. Popa supposes that this icon might be a donation from the first founders (so, from the last quarter of the sixteenth century, or the first quarter of the seventeenth century).[412] Unfortunately, because of time and the improper conditions in which the icons are kept there, today the figures of the saints within that icon are difficult to recognise (see, for example the icon in Fig. 138). The other icons which the author of the book *Plumbuita* mentions are as follows: 'St.

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[410] Ibid., pp. 32-35.

[411] Ibid. p. 36.

[412] Ibid.

Nicholas', which Sachelarescu says is highly expressive, 'The Annunciation', and another icon – a narrative one representing a donor's scene. This latter icon is described by Sachelarescu as "very interesting", and represents a metropolitan bishop who offers the model of the church to St John (Fig. 114). It represents St John as an angel, and also various Biblical scenes as, for example, the Ascension. It also depicts Alexandru Voevod and his son Mihnea standing next to the saint, and the *voievod*'s wife, Ecaterina, next to the bishop. Both of the founders wear crowns. Below that scene the icon contains a representation of *Xiropotamou* Monastery from Mount Athos to which *Plumbuita* was dedicated by Mihnea. In the scenes on the margins, in small rectangles, there are depicted episodes probably from the lives of the forty martyrs (the Forty Martyrs are the patron saints of *Xiropotamou*). At the foot of the icon there is also an inscription written in Greek which translates as follows "This icon was painted through the advice and the money of the very pious holy Archimandrite Dionisie of Xiropotamou, abbot of Plumbuita Monastery, Bucharest, 14 September 1817 by the iconographer and Church singer Mihai."[413]

Sachelarescu mentions an icon of St Gregory the Decapolite dated from the beginning of the eighteenth century, made in a manner which recalls the Brâncovan icon-painting school. I was not able to find that icon, and it might no longer be in the monastery.

I will describe below, among others, some of the icons mentioned by Sachelarescu and Popa, going in greater detail. In general it has been difficult to find out the provenance of the icons, and the dates when they arrived in the monastery. In the inventory from 31 March 1945 there are mentioned only icon-frames (see Appendix D). As a consequence of compiling this inventory, the nuns decided to ask the hierarchy of the church to deduct from the list of monastery goods what was lost during the "events

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[413] Sachelarescu, *Din istoria Bucureştilor*, pp. 139-140.

through which the country went" in 1944-1945, and what became worn out because of long usage.

I have only managed to find some of the icons mentioned in the *The General Inventory of the Institute of the Charity Sisters "Virgin Mary"* (Institute which belonged to the *Pasărea* Monastery of nuns) from 31 January 1946,[414] which records what goods were received in *Plumbuita* Monastery during the year 1945 when Romania was involved in the Second World War (Appendix C). It was impossible to find more details about these icons either in the monastery' inventories, or in the monastery's Monograph. Most of the icons which I found and measured in the two store rooms of the monastery are presented below. The majority of them have the year or the century in which they were painted written on the reverse or - those which come from the former museum - on small labels stuck on the front. I have chosen to describe in more details the icons which follow because they are very different from one another, and most of them are preserved well enough to allow a description. Their variety illustrates the troubled history of *Plumbuita* Monastery, and the different influences to which the monastery and its icons have been subjected by the country's history. The state in which many icons in the monastery's storage are now, and the uncertainty regarding their future have been additional reasons for me to describe them; fearing that, in the unfortunate situation that no cultural authority in Romania will intervene in time to save them by re-opening the monastery's museum (and to create the proper standard conditions for the preservation of such exhibits), at least their memory will be saved in writing. Of course, this is not enough; it is not like having the real object in front of one's eyes, but

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[414] The General Inventories of the Institute of the Charity Sisters "Virgin Mary" of Pasărea Monastery [*Inventarul General al Institutului Surorilor de Caritate "Fecioara Maria"* de la Mânăstirea Pasărea] from 31 March 1945, and 31 January 1946 which there are today in Plumbuita Monastery's archives within the monastery.

it is a little better than having them totally destroyed. In the eventuality of publishing an article based on the thesis (in Romania), I will produce it as a warning to the authorities; so there is a greater chance for the icons and the other art and cultural objects to be saved.

The description and the attempt at dating the frescoes and icons from the monastery (from both the church and the storage) have been tedious tasks since there are no documents about them, and not all icons and frescoes are well preserved. In the monastery's inventories some of them are just listed, without any details of the author, the location where they were painted, etc. Not all are even listed; and some which were in the monastery's old inventories do not exist anymore. In any case, there are no details about the frescoes in the official documents, although I have found some description in bibliography.

I have tried to describe the following:[415]

a) Frescoes:

Fig. 105. The birth of St John the Baptist (the Forerunner) – a fresco in the nave, 1568-1577; it was to be expected that it would be in the church since St John is its patron. Elizabeth is sitting in a bed leaning against the hard green head of the bed behind her, with a yellowish pillow under her head. She is attended by three maidservants (the fact that they do not have a halo indicates that they are ordinary people – not saints), one of whom is carrying a vessel with water. To the left of the scene (depicted rather unusually here – very small and sitting on a very low chair) Zacharias writes the

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[415] I measured most of these icons by myself when it was possible (especially in the store rooms). Where that was not possible because they were in their place in the church and immovable for different reasons, I took the information from the Monastery Monograph written by the C. Zăvoianu [*Mânăstirea Plumbuita. Monografie*], and from various papers found in the monastery's archives, especially from the last inventory (20 March 1999) It is important for the accuracy of the information to read the last inventory since many icons disappear between inventories and sometimes new icons enter the monastery between the dates of the inventories (but not as often as they disappear).

child's name on a tablet - 'John'. It is not very clear in the photograph, but it is still visible that it represents Zacharia's 'classical' position in iconography in the scene of St John's Birth.[416]

Fig. 106. The Holy Archangel Michael vanquishing under his feet a man, or rather an ape; 1568-1577. The representation of an ape in the Church throughout the history has varied, but in general it was associated with the Fall and vice, since "man recognized a distorted, lesser image of himself in the ape"[417]. The Archangel, as a heavenly being, is victorious over all vices, so it is natural to be represented in this way. Nevertheless this is rather an atypical representation in the Orthodox Church.

b) Iconostasis:

Fig. 107. Christ *Pantokrator*, tempera on wood; a part of the heavily gilded *iconostasis* of St John Church; ca. 1800. In the icon of Christ *Pantokrator* Christ is depicted from the waist up in a full face pose. He is blessing with his right hand, and holding a Gospel in his left hand. The book is open and the text on the two pages (in Greek and Slavonic) reads, with the phrases from the Mystical Supper: "Take, eat…' and 'Drink ye all of it…'." In iconography, the usual text in the open book is different ("I am the Light of the world"). In the icon from St John Church of *Plumbuita* Monastery, Christ wears a red tunic and a dark blue *himation*, both with golden bands along the edges, as trimmings. The painting is in the Wallachian Brâncovean style.[418]

Fig. 108. The Virgin *Hodegetria* ('Indicator of the Way'), tempera on wood; a part of the heavily gilded *iconostasis* of St John Church; ca. 1800. The Virgin is depicted from

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[416] *Treasures of Mount Athos*, pp. 180-181 where the scene from this fresco appears in an icon dated with some probability to the first half of the eighteenth century, in the Athonite tradition. In the case of the Romanian fresco, Elizabeth's halo in plaster shows a work of the sixteeth-seventeenth centuries.

[417] James Hall (Introduction by Kenneth Clark), *Dictionary of Subjects and Symbols in Art*, John Murray, London, 1974, p. 22.

[418] *Treasures of Mount Athos*, pp. 69-71, 111-112.

the waist up, holding the Child Christ and turning slightly to the right, according to the austere type of *Hodegetria*. Christ is portrayed in an erect forward looking pose, making a gesture of blessing with his right hand and holding a closed scroll in his left. The Virgin wears a blue tunic edged with a golden decorated band around the neck and on the sleeves, and a pale pink *maphorion*. The pink kerchief is edged with a golden band with embroideries and tassels and is held in the front with a flower-jewel. Christ wears a white-yellowish tunic edged with a golden band with dark ornaments, and a red *himation* with dense gold highlights.

Iconographically and typologically, this icon seems to be on Athonite lines: it looks similar to the Mother of God *Hodegetria* in Iviron Monastery painted in 1535-1545 by Theophanis the Cretan. As regarding the style, the faces of Christ and the Virgin are very expressive, and reflect a serene and peaceful air. As in Theophanis' icons of *Hodegetria*, the intense gaze of the Mother of God is full of sadness, as she foresees Christ's future passion.

c) Portable icons:

Fig. 109. *Deesis* ['Intercession'], print on canvas, beginning of twentieth century, 60x48 cm. Christ *Pantokrator* sitting on a sumptuous high-back throne, as the King of Kings and High Priest. His right hand is raised in blessing, and his left hand holds, in a rather unusual position, a Gospel open to the letters 'α' and 'ω'. His vestments are blue, with a golden band on the sleeves.

Christ as High Priest appears in iconography after the Fall of Constantinople, usually as depicted in this icon (except that the vestments are much richer – the episcopal vestments). Usually on the open book there is the following text: 'My kingdom is not of this world', while the mitre, episcopal vestments and splendid throne are common elements. In the icon from *Plumbuita*, Christ is flanked by the Mother of God on the

right, and St John the Baptist on the left. This is a very beautiful icon in the eighteenth century Brâncovean style, but painted probably between 1860 and 1900.

Figs. 110-111. Two bema doors (*molene*): one with the Mother of God, and one with St John the Evangelist; the maximum point of the semicircle is 66x24 cm for each of them. These two bema doors represent part of the Crucifixion scene on the *iconostasis*; the Mother of God standing on the right side of the Cross, and St John on the left side, ca. 1800, Brâncovan rustic style (here, in addition to the traditional Romanian style, the folk influence is very strong); a peasant iconographer probably added these icons over other much older ones.

Fig. 112. The icon of *Buna Vestire* [the Annunciation], tempera on wood, of the size 97x53 cm, ca. 1870-1920, copy of Western type, in the Nazarene style.[419] Around the oval cartouche there are *Renaissance* floral motifs. Archangel Gabriel is holding a white lily in his left hand (a motif which has been used in painting since the time of Simone Martini[420]). He finds Virgin Mary reading (the theme comes from the Carolingian period, and it is painted in a Western style specific to the ninth century, as opposed to the Byzantine type of this icon in which the Archangel finds the Virgin Mary spinning, as shown in Chapter 1 and described in the *Protoevangelion* of

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[419] The Nazarenes were initially a group of German painters, mainly of religious subjects (known also as Lucasbruder – The Brotherhood of St Luke). The group was founded in Vienna in 1809 by Friedrich Overbeck and Franz Pforr, and was later joined by artists as Cornelius. Dissatisfied with current academic training and its rutine, they turned to the Italian, Flemish and German 'Primitives' for inspiration, admiring in particular Dürer and Perugino, and including the early works of Raphael. In this choice of models they were influenced by German Romantic writers. One of the aims of these artists was to revive the monumental fresco as it was practised in the Middle Ages. They managed to obtain two important commissions which made them internationally known: Casa Bartholdy, 1816-1817, now in Berlin, and Casino Massimo, 1817-1829, Rome (Some of them moved to Rome). As a group they ceased to existed before completing the Casino, but their ideas continued to be influencial for a while; Harold Osborne (ed.), *The Oxford Companion to Art*, Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1970, p. 767.

[420] Simone Martini, Italian painter who lived between 1283-1344; See Andrew Martindale, *Simone Martini 1283-1344*, Phaidon, Oxford, 1988 about Martini's life and work.

James[421]). The Archangel appearing on a cloud is also a Western motif. The building in the background illustrates *Renaissance* architecture.[422] It is an atypical icon even for the West because the Mother of God is depicted standing, and her book lies on the table, while usually she is seated, and the book is on her lap.

Fig. 113. The icon of Christ, tempera on wood, the middle of the nineteenth century, 96x52 cm, on the left side of the icon is written in Greek 'Martyres', and on the right side 'Oligoi'm' [*sic*]; there is also a larger text at the foot of the icon, which in a very approximate Greek, describes the content of the icon, especially what are the punishments which the characters depicted in the icon undergo for various sins.

Fig. 114. The icon mentioned above of a donor's scene with St John the Baptist as an angel, and also other different biblical scenes such as the Ascension; tempera on wood, 99x64 cm. It contains also two Greek inscriptions and has a text attached to it, explaining that it is made in the "Greek-Romanian" style. The icon is dated 14 Sept 1817 (probably the date when it was finished); it was painted by Mihail the Iconographer and Church-Singer ['*Zugravul*' and '*Psaltul*']. The person who offers the model of the church to St John after taking it from the Founder-Prince's hand is a bishop. As usual in such scenes in the Byzantine tradition, the Saint will intercede for the founders of the church to Jesus. The founders depicted in this icon could be either Voivode Alexandru the Second with his wife and his son Mihnea, or Matei Basarab who refurbished the monastery in 1647; I think it is probably the former since Matei Basarab had more children, and usually the founders are depicted with all their family (as it is at the moment of founding that particular shrine). In the lower third of the icon

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[421] As in *Treasures of Mount Athos*, pp. 63 (a part of the *Annunciation* scene with the Mother of God spinning; the bema door from *Vatopedi* Monastery, c. 1200) and pp. 127-130 (the whole Annunciation scene); p. 129 contains the icon in *Stavronikita* Monastery, 1546, by Theophanis the Cretan.

[422] Drăguț, Florea, Grigorescu, et al., *Romanian Painting*, Meridiane Publishing House, Bucharest, 1977, p. 57.

there are monasteries on the Mount Athos with Simon Petra Monastery in the foreground.[423]

Fig. 115. a, b, c; A fragment from an *iconostasis* -the central doors- with Annunciation, 104x45.5 cm, maximum height 150 cm, painted in the beginning of the twentieth century in tempera on wood, in a rustic style; it is a copy of an icon in the Western style (see Fig. 112). Archangel Gabriel is again holding a white lily in his left hand, and appeares on a cloud. He also finds Virgin Mary reading, but she is depicted kneeling (either she was reading in that position, or rather she knelt out of the reverence toward God, or towards his messenger and to the content of the message he brings. This painting illustrates very well a strong Western influence, connected to the strong influence of Romano-Catholicism in Romania in 1920's-1930`s.

Fig. 116. A bas-relief icon with the Mother of God and saints, cast in yellow bronze, 58x51 cm, with a frame (made of black wood with a black cross on the top, which is not entirely visible in the photograph), and 42x33 cm without a frame. This icon was made in the first half of the twentieth century by G. Ilaor; the iconographer's signature (in red colour, as are the names of the other characters) is next to St John Crysostom's name; no details about this painter have been found. The icon contains on the upper part the Mother of God of the type *Hodegetria* flanked by two military saints: George (*Gheorghe*), and Dimitrie. On the lower part there are the three hierarchs of the Orthodox Church: Basil the Great (*Vasile cel Mare*), Gregory the Theologian (*Grigorie Dialogul*), and John Chrysostom (*Ioan Gură de Aur)*; in iconography they usually appear together. The icon is in Byzantine style, but the features of the characters are heavy because of the material used. The bas-relief within this icon

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[423] Ibid., pp. 123.

imitates the very precious (expensive) silver-gilded icon covers from eighteenth-nineteenth centuries.

Fig. 117. The Hierarch Saint Spyridon,[424] icon painted in tempera on wood probably between 1870 and 1920, 59x31 cm. This icon is executed on a horizontal plane and has a blue background. The Bishop holds his arms open, and gives the blessing with his right hand in the Greek manner ('manner' in this case means the way in which he holds his fingers). He holds in his left hand a brick which he used during the Council of Nicaea in 325 to illustrate his concept of the Holy Trinity. It is said that while he was explaining to the other participants to the Council that the Holy Trinity is a unity of the Father, Son and the Holy Spirit in the same manner in which a brick is a unity of three elements: earth, fire, and water, water began to drip from one end of the brick he held in his hand, and fire to burn at the other. The style of painting in this icon is Western. This icon is of a good artistic quality, which might mean that it was painted by one of Grigorescu's pupils, or by someone who was intensely exposed to the Western way of painting (perhaps in the Academy of Arts in Iaşi, since Grigorescu painted in that area – he painted the new church of *Agapia* Monastery, as shown in chapter 3).[425]

Fig. 118. The Mother of God with the Child of the type *Asumpta* (sitting on a half-moon) handing a thistle to Christ as a symbol of his future passion. On the reverse of the icon (which used to be exhibited in the former museum of the monastery) is written that it is a 'Greek icon' from the nineteenth century (I would advance a more precise

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[424] St Spiridon or Spyridon, d. 348, was a Bishop of Tremitheus, in Cyprus. He performed many healings and is called the Wonderworker. After being sent to Constantinople and than to Serbia (because of the Turkish invasion), his body is now on Corfu. See Alan Mack (ed.) *St Spiridon Cathedral. A Century in Seattle*, St Spiridon Cathedral Publishing House, Seattle, Washington, 1995.

date: 1850). Even if the manner in which the Virgin is painted is Greek. the iconography is very Western (See for comparison Fig.119 in Appendix E – Bartolomeo Montagna's religious painting of the Virgin and the Child Jesus holding a bird); in addition, four *putti*[426] are depicted within the icon in *Plumbuita* beside of the Mother of God. The theme of handing the thistle can be found, for example, in Dürer's work.[427] The icon in Plumbuita is painted in tempera on wood, and sized 78x60 cm. The Mother of God of *Assumpta* type signifies the ascension to Heaven of the Mother of God with her body. This is an academic work done by a good painter.[428]

120. The icon of the Holy Bishop Nicholas the Wonderworker (*Cv Nikolai Ciudot* - '*Ciudotv*' = abbreviation of the Slavonic word '*ciudotvotet*'= wonderworker). Twentieth century Russian style with bright colours noticeable not only on the saint (*Sviate*)'s vestments, but also on the Mother of God and Jesus'. St Nicholas' vestments are decorated with crosses; some of the priests in the Orthodox Church still wear this kind of vestments. The icon is an imitation of a St Petersburg School's work. A naturalistic approach is very obvious in the painting of St Nicholas' face, the shadows on vestments, and the presence of perspective. It is a print on canvas, 107x48 cm, with a simple wooden frame. St Nicholas is blessing with his right hand, and holds a book (the Gospel-?) in his left hand. [429]

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[425] Weitzmann et al., *The Icon*. See also Drăguț, Florea, Grigorescu, et al., *Romanian Painting*, chapters 1-2.

[426] *putto* in the singular (from the Latin *putus*- boy). The term is used in art to describe a naked boy, which in the *Renaissance* was either a cupid, or a cherub.

[427] Albrecht Dürer's (1471-1528) painting has as a subject matter the Mother of God offering a thistle to the child Jesus. Dürer has also other religious works, as for example, the woodcuts about the Apocalypse of St John, of which portofolio he published between 1496 and 1498. Scholars have suggested that the portofolio may have been intended as a veiled expression of support for the Reformation, with Babylon used as a metaphor for Rome.

[428] Albert C. Moore, *Iconography of Religions*, London, SCM Press; 1977; E. Kirchbaven (ed.), *Lexikon der christlichen Ikonographie*, Herder, Freiburg, 1968 f, English index, vol. 4, pp. 626-652.

In the smaller store room there are as follows:

Fig. 121. An icon of the Mother of God carved in wood by Archimandrite Neculai Simion Tatu,[430] of the size 95x78 cm; the end of the twentieth century. The Mother of God's image is of a Western expression, however still having the halo around her head. It represents the Mother of God weeping by the Cross (with tears on her cheeks), which is a Western theme. The Virgin has the traditional 'Byzantine' sign, the star as a sign of purity, on her shoulders, which in iconography always helps in identifying the Mother of God. If three stars are present on the head covering, in the Orthodox context this is a representation of her three fold virginity: before, during and after the birth of Christ. The icon has a nicely decorated border. The floral motifs are Western, but the geometric patterns and the 'rope' or spiral along the edge of the icon are of Eastern influence, being widely present in Byzantine works. Therefore, a mixture of styles is present in this case.

Fig. 122. Another icon by the same monk-priest is carved in wood, combined with what seems to be pyrography, representing the Mother of God *Hodegetria* – 'Showing the Way' with the Child held on the left side. This icon measures 82x36 cm. The expression of the Mother here is different from that in the previous icon sculpted by Archimandrite Simeon; she looks directly at the viewer in a Byzantine 'fashion', but the presence of clouds under her feet again indicates Western influences.

Fig. 123. An icon representing a military saint, probably St Theodore the Recruit (Tyro), worked in the same combined technique by Archimandrite Simeon in 1990, according to the inscription on the back; it is sized 90x31 cm. The icon has no

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[429] Kirchbaven (ed.), ibid.

inscription with the name of the saint, which is theologically wrong. The face and the general expression of the character is of Byzantine persuasion. The saint is represented as a very young, rather medieval soldier, with armour and footwear similar to those of a Middle Ages Romanian –or any other European – knight or prince, and holding a cross in his right hand and an unfolded scroll in his left hand. Accordingly to the *Hermeneia*,[431] on the scroll which the saint is holding there must be an inscription corresponding to his/her life. But in this case, on the scroll is written in Romanian "Let us stand with awe [or upright]; let us stand with fear…", which is the first verse from the Holy Oblation during the Orthodox Liturgy, said immediately after the Creed (literally 'Let us stand well').[432]

Fig. 124. A tempera painted wooden Crucifixion on a blue background with wooden beams, 120x104 cm; painted in the twentieth century (1920-1950) in the Western style. It contains a mixture of Byzantine and Western elements. In the upper part the Trinity is depicted as a triangle, which is a Western element.[433] The Nordic face (blondish) of Christ and the type of the crown of thorns are also Western. The Moon (at Chist's left hand) and the Sun (at his right hand), and also the halo are Byzantine. The inscriptions (HOON) are roughly the abbreviations in Greek (ό ών) for 'He Who Is', and in Latin (I. N. R. I) for 'Iesus Nazarenus Rex Iudaeorum'.

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[430] Archimandrite Neculai Simeon Tatu was the former abbot of *Plumbuita* Monastery until his death, in 2000. He was an iconographer and sculptor in wood and stone; he painted more then 25 churches in fresco, oil, and tempera. He also carved and pyrographed [(worked in wood and poked wood] in his own manner many icons, and sculpted in stone the porch and the Brâncovan watch tower of the Episcopal Church in Buzău (between 1982 and 1985).

[431] Dionysius of Fourna, *Hermeneia* - The Painter's Manual-, Mount Athos, eighteenth century.

[432] *The Divine Liturgy of Our Father Among the Saints John Chrysostom*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, New York, Athens, 1995; my translation. In reading all these icons carved by Archimandrite Simeon Tatu I was helped by some suggestions in Gabriel Filoteitou, *Glimpses of the Holy Mountain*, Thessaloniki, 1977, pp. 60-61 (wood-carving on Mount Athos); Moore, *Iconography of Religion*, and E. Kirchbaven (ed.), *Lexikon der christlichen Ikonographie*, pp. 626-652.

[433] Albert C. Moore, *Iconography of Religion*, p. 256 (about the representation of Trinity in the West); E. Kirchbaven (ed.) *Lexikon der christlichen Ikonographie*, pp. 626-652.

In another (larger than the previous one) store room of *Plumbuita* Monastery there are:

Fig. 125. Another icon of St Nicholas (in a mixture of Old Slavonic and Greek it is explained that the character within this icon is '*C. Ierarh Nekolae* [St Hierarch Nicolas]. The saint is depicted with an Episcopal mitre on his head. The icon was is in tempera on wood, 57x43 cm, and was painted in the first half of the twentieth century, but following the nineteenth century traditionalist Romanian style. Probably it was painted by a monk; the very sober and austere face of the person depicted indicates that it might be the portrait of an abbot. The halo and the vestments of St Nicholas are very richly decorated. His right hand is in a blessing gesture, and the left hand holds the Gospel, which is the typical pose in which St Nicholas is depicted in the East.[434]

Fig. 126. The icon of St Spyridon, tempera on wood, 92x72 cm, eighteenth century, with a brass cover added probably in the nineteenth century (better known by its Russian name-*oklad*). This technique was widespread in Russia, especially in that period.

Fig. 127. The icon of St Paraskevi covered with a black scarf, tempera on wood, of the size 65x47 cm. St Paraskevi was born in Iconium (Asia Minor), and was martyred during the persecution of Diocletian. The Greek name Paraskevi (Friday) was given to her at baptism to commemorate the day of the Crucifixion of Jesus Christ; Friday is still considered a day of mourning in Orthodox Chrsitianity. Because of this connection the saint wears usually a black scarf and black clothes in Romanian iconography. Usually Romanians refer to her as *Sfânta Vineri* or *Sfânta Paraschiva*, in the same manner in which Russian use their translation of the name – *Piatnitza*. She is the patron of the work of women, and because Friday was the market day, St Paraskevi is also the patron of trade. Her memory is celebrated on 28 October. The characteristic

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[434] Drăguț, Florea, Grigorescu, et al, *Romanian Painting*, 1977, pp. 123 f.

feature of St Paraskevi was her courageous preaching of Christianity. The gesture with which she holds the cross, the concentrated expression of her face (depicted, in spite of the sobriety of her vestments, not as austere in this Romanian icon as it is usually within the Russian iconography,) express the firmness with which she preached and endured her tortures.[435] The black colour of her clothes underlines this impression. Even though the general style of painting in this icon is traditional, there are some elements of Western influence manifested in the presence of the beams of light which are painted around the halo. On the back of this icon is written that it was donated by Antoaneta Chrihaia in 1945. The Romanian traditional style of painting, the presence of some iconographical elements (especially the black scarf), and the date of donation lead to the presumption that the icon was painted at that time, just before the donation. It was, and it is still customary in Romania, for the members of a parish to order icons and to donate them to the church immediately after they have been painted. A certain fading and the removal of the colour in some places in the icon's background during many moves of the icons in this monastery allow one to guess that another layer of painting – probably from the nineteenth century- was beneath the present one.

Fig. 128. A representation of the Crucifixion with the two thieves (The equivalent of this type of icon in Western religious painting is called usually 'Golgotha'). The icon is on a horizontal plane, and was painted in oil on wood, of the size 268x50 cm. The style of painting looks like seventeenth century Flemish or German. It might be a school exercise painting by a student either at the Art Academy [Belle-Arte School] in

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[435] Ouspensky and Lossky, *The Meaning of Icons*, p. 138.

Iaşi,[436] or at the Academia de Belle Arte, Bucharest from the end of the nineteenth or the beginning of the twentieth century. This piece constitutes a good example of what is not an icon, but merely a religious painting.[437]

Fig. 129. The icon of Jesus with the thorn crown, painted in oil on plywood, 71x52 cm. This type of crown of thorns is a Western influence. The beams of light around the halo are again present. The overall style of painting in this icon is sixteenth century Western (Italian), but of a very poor quality.[438] Icons of this type in the Orthodox tradition were often used at the Bridegroom, Matins Service on the first three days of the Great Week.[439]

Fig. 130. The icon represents the Coronation of the Virgin Mary, a Western theme, tempera on wood, 120x90 cm. It was painted in a nineteenth-twentieth Western naturalistic style. The *putti* element is a supplementary proof of the style. However, the crown which is being placed on the Virgin's head is of Byzantine type. This combination of elements could mean that the icon belonged for a while to an Eastern Catholic (*Uniate*) Church.[440]

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[436] The *Belle-Arte* School from Iaşi was opened in October 1860, after the "Declamation and Music School' had been founded on the first day of the same month (and year); the latest was called in 1864 the "Declamation and Music Conservatory. The *Belle-Arte* School received a University status in 1931, and in 1948 the two schools merged into one: The *George Enescu University of Arts*. For general information about the higher education in Iaşi throughout the Romanian history see Aurel Loghin, Gheorghe Platon, Vasile Ababi et al., *The "Al. I. Cuza" University of Jassy*, trans. from Viorica Dobrovici et al.; a very specific information on Belle-Arte School in Iasi see on Internet: http:/ www culture.ro/pages/arte-iasi/index-eng.html.

[437] Drăguț, Florea, Grigorescu, et al., *Romanian Painting*, 1977, pp. 123-142.

[438] *Treasures of Mount Athos*, pp. 176-202.

[439] Information from Bede Gerrard, a reader in the Orthodox Church in Oxford.

[440] *Gheorghe Tăttărescu (1818-1894)*, Alcor, 1995, p. 5.

131. The Mother of God *Zoodochos pege* [of the Life-Giving Spring][441] with saints. On the upper band, from the left corner cloak-wise: i) Sts Peter and Paul; ii) Western symbol of Trinity; iii) a saint difficult to identify. There are also four saints around the Mother of God and the Child, also difficult to identify. This icon is of the size 61x43 cm, and painted in the Greek style.

Fig. 132. An icon representing St John Koukouzeles[442] (in Romanian *Ion Cucuzel*); measures 49x39cm, 1913. It has an explanatory text saying that it was donated on 21 Nov 1961 [to *Plumbuita* Monastery]. Only the face and the hands are painted in the Russian style; the naturalism in the icon is of Western influence. The rest of this icon is a combination of weaving and embroidering technique in metallic yellow (actually, a kind of golden) thread on canvas.

Fig. 133. An icon of the two deacons: Sts Stephen and Lawrence (in Romanian Ştefan and Laurenţiu); oil on wood, 55x30 cm. It is written on the back that it was painted in the middle of the nineteenth century in the '*Renaissance*' ('Tăttărescu') style. The two pieces which form the icon are mounted in the wrong way from a theological/iconographical point of view: the saints within an icon are not supposed to be depicted back to back. It seems likely that originally there were two separate icons which have been joined.

Fig. 134. The Mother of God of the 'Kazan' type, tempera on wood, 36x29 cm. It was painted in the nineteenth century as an imitation of Russian iconographic models. On its back is written that it was painted in the 'Russian style'. The icon has been damaged, especially its background, but its original beauty is still visible; the face of

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[441] Ibid., and particularly for this type of representation of the Mother of God, Konrad Onasch and Anne Marie Schnieper, *Icons. The Fascination and the Reality*, trans. Daniel D. Conklin, Riverside Book Company, New York, 1995, p. 175. For the representation of the Trinity in the West; see Moore, *Iconography of Religion*, p. 256.

the Virgin has a special delicacy. This Russian style icon was probably painted in Transylvania because the characteristics of simplicity -almost stylization- and this type of delicacy of the face are more specific to the iconography of this province.[443]

135. Another icon of St Spyridon as a Bishop, tempera on wood, 87x63 cm; beginning of the twentieth century - the same description as that of icon no 117 is valid here (the iconographer used the same Academic style, position of character, colour of vestments, etc).[444] The difference is that this icon is painted on a panel on a vertical plane and its background is black.

Fig. 136. A fragment of a fresco with a saint, which I mentioned in the beginning of the chapter, seventeenth century, 95x55 cm, has an explanatory text saying: "The taking out [*decaparea*] and restoration of this fresco was done by the [icon] painter Ion D. Taflair in May 1958." It seems that the original painting was made in the seventeenth century in the Transylvanian style. The wall from where this fragment was taken was initially decorated in fresco, but was re-painted later in oil, which is much less resistant (hence the damaged image). This is a good (though very unfortunate) illustration of a damaged sample from the national cultural heritage.[445]

Fig. 137. Christ's role in the Salvation of the world. A narrative icon with a didactic purpose. Tempera on canvas in frame (or print in frame), 200x110 cm, nineteenth century. Because of the difficult conditions of my field-work, some elements are missing from the icon. However, it is sufficiently visible to allow an analysis. The style of painting is early nineteenth century Romanian, probably 1810.

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[442] Saint John Koukouzeles was a Church music composer and singer who lived in the thirteenth or beginning of the fourteenth century. *Oxford Dictionary of Byzantium,* vol. 2, p. 1155.

[443] Drăguț, Florea, Grigorescu, et al., *Romanian Painting*, 1977, pp. 123 f.

[444] *Gheorghe Tăttărescu (1818-1894)*, Alcor, 1995, p. 8.

[445] Weitzmann et al., *The Icon*; Drăguț, Florea, Grigorescu, et al., *Romanian Painting*, 1977, chapters 1-2.

As a didactic icon, the main theme is Christ's role in the salvation of the world. On the upper band, from left to right there are depicted as follows: the Great *Deesis* (Christ flanked by the Apostles); Elijah carried in a chariot to Heaven; a martyrdom scene (St Peter's?); St Stephen (the Deacon)'s martyrdom (stoning); Christ being whipped. The second upper band (lower row) contains a part of the Last Judgement scene; in the band below it there are depicted the Old Testament prophets, and underneath it, Christ's Deposition from the Cross, below which is the Placing of Christ in the tomb. The large image is that of Christ the *Pantokrator*. The sceptre and the orb are of Western influence. Christ is surrounded by scenes from his life and by the Old Testament prophets. The scenes are as follows (from left to right): the Raising of Lazarus; the Entry into Jerusalem, the Last Supper, and the Agony in the Gethsemane Garden (the latter is a common theme in the West). Below Christ the Hierarchs Basil the Great, John Chrysostom, and Gregory of Nazianzus are depicted.[446]

Fig. 138. Elevation of the Holy Cross by the Holy Empress Helena, depicted with Emperor Constantine. The icon is 74x47 cm, and painted in tempera on wood; it might be a donation from the first donors of the monastery during last quarter of the sixteenth century, or first quarter of the seventeenth century.[447] This is a heavily damaged icon, but Christ blessing with both hands from the clouds above is still visible. The scene is common in both Catholic and Orthodox iconography now. The emperor wears the Byzantine crown. The event depicted in this icon is considered as one of the main twelve feasts of the Orthodox Church.

It is obvious for anyone who sees them that, with the exception of the fresco representing the Holy Archangel Michael crushing the ape, which has a certain

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[446] Tănăsescu, Popescu, and Panaite, *Gheorghe M. Tăttărescu (1818-1894)*, pp. 13, 42.

[447] Popa, *Mânăstirea Plumbuita*, p. 36.

freshness, the frescoes and icons painted in the nineteenth and the first half of the twentieth century in *Plumbuita* Monastery are made in either a Western Mannerist *Renaissance* style, or in an Eastern Mannerist style of Byzantine lineage. This supports the argument of the thesis that a crisis was manifest at the time in icon and wall-painting in Romania. The icons sculpted by Archimandrite Nicolai Simion Tatu are difficult to qualify, but in any case, a novelty within the Romanian iconographic landscape.

Among the other art objects worthy of mention, even though they are not icons, is a beautifully sculpted crucifix worked in filigree technique with a Greek inscription saying: "This very holy cross was decorated through the money of the famous boyar, the great Porter [of the prince Nicolae Mavrocordat], Grigore Grigo, 1724".[448] There is also another crucifix from 1923. Within the monastery there are also many other small crosses, a chalice, and a paten, a small silver votive light of Brâncovan style, which now lies in one of the store rooms of the monastery (Fig. 139).

In this store room there are also four silver votive lights from the nineteenth century (which have been used in the altar). There is also a portrait of Matei Basarab, painted on wood, 57x70 cm in size, and a wooden carving of the country's seal showing the two-headed Eagle, 28x41 cm.

The monastery has also some very valuable books. Among them there is a Greek Gospel dating from the time when Greek monks lived in *Plumbuita*, which was printed in Venice in 1811. It is bound in gold and silver, with small beautifully enamelled icons on the cover. There is also a *Triodion* from 1746, another *Triodion* from 1861 with silver on the corners, a *Pentecostarion* from 1854, and another Gospel in Greek dating from 1815. The latter has silver covers with the Resurrection icon on the back

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[448] Sachelarescu, *Din istoria Bucureştilor*, p. 141.

cover. Today all of these books are infested with insects. and in a poor state. If the museum does not be re-open, they will tragically be lost for ever. There are also other old and precious books: a *Cazania* [Book of Teaching] from 1872, an Old Testament from 1855 in Cyrillic script, a New Testament from 1856, and a *Proloage* book [The Book of the Departed]. It seems logical to suppose that in the monastery there use to be more other artistic objects received as donations from benefactors, but, as one can see, only a few have survived.

At *Plumbuita* there are also important workshops of the Romanian Patriarchate. They process metals, produce candle, incense, fonts and basins for blessing the holy water. do sculpture, carving, and carpentry work. The inscription placed above St John's Church's door in 1958 on the occasion of the re-consecration of the church says:

> This holy monastery called Plumbuita with the feast day 'The Birth of St John the Baptist' began to be built from the foundation by the Voievode of Wallachia Petru cel Tânăr (1559-1568). It was finished and decorated by the Voievod Alexandru the Second (1568-1577), his wife Ecaterina and their son Voievode Mihnea (1577-1583; 1585-1591). After being in ruins [for a while], it was renewed in 1647 by the pious Voievod Matei Basarab who built the church again, the bell tower, the surrounding wall, the cells, and the princiary palace. [Because] in time the church collapsed again, another restoration began in 1933 continuing to 1948 through the efforts of His Beatitude Patriarch Justinian and at the expense of the Metropolitan Church, the Biblical Institute and [by the] contribution of the priests in Bucharest. Here the icon and wall-painting and sculpture workshops were established; [also] the bell and chandelier foundry, and other workshops. With God's help the works were finished in May 1958, on the occasion of the commemoration of ten years from the election of His Beatitude Patriarch Justinian.[449]

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[449] The inscription above St John Church's door, *Plumbuita* Monastery, 1958.

Today the students from the Department of Icon and Mural Painting of the Faculty of Theology in Bucharest have their icon-painting lessons at the monastery (Fig. 140). This is an interesting combination of the monastery's traditional workshop rooms and the academic teaching of icon-painting.

In conclusion of this chapter, one can say that, with the exception of the Theology Faculty's icon-painting workshop which gives a specificity to *Plumbuita*, this is a typical Romanian monastery possessing, as many others, a mixture of icons and frescoes from many historical periods. In *Plumbuita* most of the frescoes have a fourteenth century Byzantine-like appearance. This is the case with St Constantine and Helena fresco in *naos*, painted in 1568-1577, and with the saints from the apses, Mercurios, Nestor, Dimitrios, and the unidentified others. This appearance is given by the solemn attitude of the holy persons depicted, and also by their crowns (clearly of a Byzantine model) and vestments. This Byzantine character is not specific only to the oldest frescoes in St John Church (as those representing Sts Constantine and Helena are). The newest frescoes are painted in the same style. For example, the fresco with St John from the *pronaos*, painted in 1956-1958, or the *Pantokrator* in the dome painted in 1834, show a resemblance with Byzantine frescoes of fourteenth century. But the situation of the body of icons in *Plumbuita* Monastery is different. Many of these icons show a Western influence in both style of painting and motifs represented. With the exception of some icons painted clearly in a traditional Romanian style the rest are a mixture of either Eastern copies (most of them), or Russian reproductions. Representative for the Romanian type is the icon of Saint Nicholas in Fig. 125 (in spite of the Greek lettering common in Romanian iconography), and the icon in Fig. 114 which represents St John the Baptist with a donor scene (1817; the main motif which this icon depicts -St John as an angel- is very rare represented in iconography, however it is not specifically Romanian). The painter is known and he is certainly a Romanian,

Mihai. What the documents say about him show that he was close to the Church (he was both a Church singer and an iconographer), and it might be the reason for why he was more traditionalistic. As mentioned above, the rest of the icons in *Plumbuita* are a mixture of manneristis copies of mostly Italian, Russian or even Northern European reproductions. Coronation of the Virgin and the Annunciation (ca. 1870-1920) are such examples of copies of bad reproduction of Italian painting. Also the large depiction of the Crucifixion with the two thieves (the end of the nineteenth century or the beginning of the twentieth century) has nothing of an Orthodox icon. The characters look theatrical and the painter plays with the light to achieve an almost three-dimensional effect (while a typical icon is usually painted bi-dimensionally). The icons which show a traditional Russian influence are, for example, that of Jesus (ca. 1800), and two icons of the Mother of God - that of the *Hodegetria type* (ca. 1800) and that of *Kazan* type (nineteenth century) -, and also the icon of St Spyridon covered in metal (from the eighteenth century).

The iconographic body of *Plumbuita* Monastery reflects the changes which took place in the phenomenon of icon-painting in Romania in the last 440 years, but in a very unsystematic manner. What is to be retained for the purpose of this dissertation is that the students in icon-painting who practice here today are exposed both to a variety of styles and to the theology of the icon.

CHAPTER 6

Interviews with iconographers

To what extent do the modern iconographers still keep the canonical rules traditionally supposed to be kept in their work and life? Did the Communist ideology and social practices of the regime in power in Romania between 1947 and 1989 impinge on the Church-art language, and on the work of the iconographers? These are the questions which this chapter endevours to answer. This chapter continues especially some ideas from chapters 2 and 4, and attempts to determine to what extent the requirements of icon-painting are fulfilled today, and whether the Tradition is being maintained in all aspects of this occupation.

As shown in the previous chapters, historically, iconographers were trained within monasteries or in villages around them, using traditional techniques and materials (mineral colours). But gradually, after the sixteenth century, and especially after the mid-nineteenth century, as shown in the second chapter, iconographers accepted Western influences in their style of painting, which led to the endorsement of new techniques (as, for example, *al secco* for mural paining), and also new materials (such as oil, and colours based on chemical substances) in their work. That was not only the case with Tăttărescu and his followers, but also with other later iconographers, for example, Anastase Demian[450] who studied in Paris between 1919-1925 as a pupil of Maurice Denis (Sister Joanna Reitlinger's *Maestro* at 'Ateliers des artes sacrées', as mentioned in the first chapter). His style was a mixture of Byzantine, Western, and

folk elements, and he kept a *Renaissance* touch in his work in spite of the Decisions of the Synod of 1889. As a Professor of Decorative Art at the *Şcoala de arte frumoase* [School of Decorative Arts] in Cluj (1925-1930), in other schools in Timişoara (1942-1945), and at the Institute of Decorative Arts "Ioan Andreescu" in Cluj (1950-1955), as well as through his work as an icon and fresco painter, he was influential in his time. His activity as an iconographer began with the painting of the Royal Chapel in the *Balcic* Palace of the Romanian Queen Maria, on the Black Sea's shore (in 1930). Among his other works are the frescoes in the Orthodox Cathedral in Cluj (1931-1933; Fig. 141). He has drawings published in the cultural magazine *Gândirea* ['The Thinking'] for ten years, starting in December 1921, and he illustrated Lucian Blaga's poetry translation book *Din lirica universală* [Selections of international poetry].[451] But certain changes had to follow from the middle of the twentieth century were iconographers were trained in Communist Romania.

A dictatorial regime such as that of the Communists' interferes with all areas of social life, including spirituality, or - one might argue - especially spirituality. The intervention is done by force (at particularly moments), as well as by persuasion. People who live in such a society are immersed in its ideology and have almost no chance of escaping it.

In such a society it is interesting to see how the Orthodox Church painters survived and, even more, how were they able to create work which constituted the object of religious belief, since religion was among the domains of social life which the

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[450] Anastase Demian was born on May 25, 1899 and died on 5 September 1977 in Baia Mare. Information from the commemorative article written by Negoiță Lăptoiu in "Adevărul de Cluj" ["Cluj's Truth"] journal, September 1977.

[451] Lucian Blaga (1895-1961) was a Romanian poet and philosopher. His book *Din lirica universală* [Selections of international poetry] was published by the Editura de Stat pentru Literatură şi Artă [The Publishing House for Literature and Art], Bucharest, 1957. Information from the commemorative article written by Lăptoiu in "Adevărul de Cluj"

authorities specifically tried to destroy in Communist countries. However, at the time of the Communist government in Romania, this was not a priority. In spite of the fact that some monasteries were closed, and some churches destroyed or moved to another place, especially when they were situated in area under 'systematization' process, in Romania the destruction of religious buildings was not a general phenomen. Moreover, some churches were built and painted in that time, by contrast with what happened in the Soviet Union. In Romania the situation of icon-painting could have been much worse that it actually was, if one takes into consideration the political echo in Romania of the much worse situation in the USSR described below. Despite the Communist political directives the local Church's leaders managed to maintain a certain freedom from the official policy for the Romanian Church.

On 26 October 1932 during a secret meeting of writers held in Maksim Gorki's flat, Stalin declared that the writer has to become "an engineer of the human soul."[452] Andrei Zhdanov, Secretary of the Communist Party (Stalin's future son in law), explained what he meant by that: "Firstly, we must know life in order to be able to depict it truthfully - not scholastically, lifelessly or merely as 'objective reality'; we must depict reality in its revolutionary development."[453] Even though no specific style was prescribed, the writer - and there were implications in his words for the artist in general - was asked to break with the "Romanticism" and "Utopianism" of the past and to undergo an ideological transformation under State Socialism, in order to be in harmony with the ideals and aims of the Party. In 1928 when the 'Cultural Revolution'

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[452] Joseph Stalin as quoted in David Elliot, "Engineers of the Human Soul. Painting of the Stalin Period," in Matthew Cullerne Bown, David Elliot, *Soviet Socialist Realist Painting 1930's-1960's*, Oxford, The Museum of Modern Art, 1992, p. 5.

[453] Andrei Zhdanov as quoted in Elliot, *Soviet Socialist Realist Painting*.

began, it became clear that this meant an end to cultural pluralism. As David Elliot shows,

> ...artists were now encouraged to think along the same lines, to submit their work for criticism by their fellows and to make amendments should it be found wanted by the authorities. Above all, their work had to be politically correct. If they transgressed, or were suspected of doing so, or were discovered to have deviated at some time in the past, they became outcasts, shunned by former friends and associates. As Stalin's Terror gained momentum they, along with many other sectors of society, became increasingly vulnerable to summary arrest, incarceration and execution. In spite of its incontrovertible observance by the majority of artists working throughout the USSR, the doctrine of Socialist Realism had no visible means of conceptual support other than a blind belief in the justness of every action of the Communist Party and, in particular, in the increasingly irrational and dictatorial judgement of Joseph Stalin, its General Secretary."[454]

A short time later, in many countries under Soviet influence, an echo of what happened in the USSR was heard. Similar 'directives' and actions were initiated. In Romania, for example, during a meeting with artists on 10 February 1971, Nicolae Ceauşescu made a speech in which he said: "We believe that the duty of the writers and the artists is to contribute actively to the creation of the new man, to the creation of the Socialist consciousness, to the development of Socialist humanism."[455] (It is important to emphasise here that, in a dictatorial regime, when the leader says "we believe" that something is to happen it implies a strong obligation or an order). Some artists and theoreticians of art began to work on the fulfilment of this, and distorted the history of art itself, as did Mircea Deac, author of the book *Umanismul revoluţionar în arta plastică românească* [The Revolutionary Humanism in the Romanian Visual Arts],

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[454] Elliot, *Soviet Socialist Realist Painting*, p. 6.

[455] Nicolae Ceauşescu quoted in Mircea Deac, *Umanismul revoluţionar în arta plastică românească*, Editura Sport-Turism, Bucharest, 1984, motto.

who even chose the above quotation from Ceauşescu's speech as the introductory text (*motto*) for his book. Deac affirms that,

> In the evolution of the Romanian fine arts there are essential moments of convergence and interaction between aesthetic values and political and social events, which impose on art a strong militant character, in which the basic element is revolutionary humanism.[456]

Such a position is historically untenable, since Romanian art, as art everywhere else, was free before these political 'commandments' and encompassed a great diversity of subjects and works realised in various styles. Nevertheless, it needs to be kept in mind that throughout human history, in any place and time, art had always been used as a means of propaganda in one way or another. Here is probably the right place to mention the similarity between the situation in Romania or any other country under Communism and that of the Nazi regimes in Europe during the Second World War. But, as shown in the previous chapters, Romania had a historical and conceptual support for its own art, and not all people and artists obeyed the official political directives. These directives issued by the Communist authorities regarded art in general, and not specifically religious art. The Romanian Orthodox Church found ways of preventing a too close interference in its life - including Church decoration. One of these ways was indicated by the Romanian priest Dumitru Stăniloae. He speaks about the resistance of Eastern Christianity to the attack of the Communist 'satanology' which could have had as one of its purposes the destruction of Church art. He believes

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[456] Deac, *Umanismul revoluţionar*, p. 9.

that one of the ways of manifesting this resistance against Communism was through hesychasm.[457]

Another way to prevent impediments in its functions was the Church policy towards the government described below, and which has as one of the consequences the fact that during Communism the worsening of iconographers' life conditions did not happen to the extent to which one would have expected. This 'escape' was possible on the one hand because of the specificity of this profession to have less direct connection to the political sphere, and on the other hand, due to the 'diplomatic' policy practiced by the leaders of the Romanian Orthodox Church. Especially towards the end of the century the situation of icon-painting was secured by the activities of some authorities who worked in the Church, and also of the Patriarchs of the Church [Nicodim Munteanu (1939-1948), Justinian Marina (1948-1977), Justin Moisescu (1977-1986). and the present Patriarch, Teoctist Arpaşu (since 1986)], who conducted a policy of negotiation with the political power. They made concessions which led, for example, to the destruction of some churches, as will be shown below, and the closing of some monasteries (such as *Cheia*, Prahova Valley). But, in return they managed to preserve the Church as an institution. This will become clear from the information contained within the bibliography, but especially from the interviews which I conducted with iconographers who worked in the twentieth century during the Communist regime, and after that. Firstly, it is necessary to go into some details of the situation of Church art in general in twentieth century Romania, and in particular under that regime.

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[457] Hesychasm is a way of life involving ascesis on many levels (speech, movement, etc.); it is a mode of taking distance from the world. Hesychasts are people who practice hesychasm, usually monks, but not exclusively. For a detailed account on the topic see Kallistos Ware, "Silence in Prayer: The Meaning of Hesychia," *The Inner Kingdom*, Collected Works, vol. 1, St. Vladimir Seminar Press, New York, 2000, pp. 89-110.

i) Church art between 1918 and 1990

After 1918, when Transylvania was re-united with the 'Old Romania' (formed in 1859 when Wallachia and Moldova were unified under the Prince Alexandru Ioan Cuza), new churches were built throughout the country, but especially in the cities of Transylvania and Banat. Among them there were the Episcopal Cathedrals in Alba Iulia, Cluj and Timişoara (which, from 1974 became the Metropolitan Cathedral), then churches in Cluj (St Nicholas), Satu Mare, Baia Mare, Huedin, Turda, Câmpia Turzii, Târgu Mureş, Gheorghieni, Miercurea Ciuc, Mediaş, Sighişoara, Blaj, Orăştie, Hunedoara, Arad, Reşita, Jimbolia, Anina, Timişoara (in the *Mehala* and *Josefin* areas of the city). In the rest of Romania the following churches were built: *Madona Dudu* in Craiova, St Silvestru and St Dumitru-Colentina in Bucharest, Sts. Apostles in Tg. Jiu, *Sfântul Gheorghe* [St George] in Buzău, *Sfânta Treime* [The Holy Trinity] in Brăila, a few churches in Galați, *Sf. Îngeri şi Sf. Împărați* [Sts. Angels and Sts. Emperors] Church in Constanța, *Precista* [The Virgin] in Piatra Neamț, Sfântul Nicolae [St Nicholas] in Pipirig-Neamț (the foundation of the Patriarch Nicodim], etc., as well as hundreds of other churches in villages across the country. These new churches were built either in the style of the churches from Stephen the Great's time (- in a cruciform shape – such as the Cathedral in Timişoara, the Church of The Virgin - *Precista* in Piatra Neamț), or in the Greek-Byzantine style (especially in Transylvania). Some of the new churches were also built in a Western fashion. The plans of these churches were conceived by renowned architects, such as Dumitru Ionescu-Berechet, from the Romanian Patriarchate (who made the plans of more than one hundred churches), George Cristinel (the Cathedral in Cluj, the churches in Orăştie, Blaj, etc.), Victor Ştefănescu (the

Cathedral in Alba Iulia), Ioan Traianescu (the Cathedral in Timişoara, the church in Turda), Victor Vlad, George Matei Cantacuzino, and others.

The walls of almost all of these churches were decorated with paintings either in fresco or in the tempera technique[458] by the most famous iconographers of that time who, in general, continued the tradition of Byzantine iconography in their style of painting. Some important names of these painters are as follows: Costin Petrescu (the Cathedral in Alba Iulia, the following churches in Bucharest: Mihai Vodă, St Silvestru, Sfântul Dumitru – Colentina, etc.), Dimitrie Belizarie (the Cathedral of the Romanian Patriarchate, the main church of *Căldăruşani* Monastery, 'Mitropolia' - The Metropolitan Church - in Târgovişte, *St Vineri-Hereasca* in Bucharest, other churches in Turda, Mediaş, Orăştie, Miercurea Ciuc, etc.), Anastasie Demian mentioned above (the cathedrals in Timişoara and Caransebeş, partially that in Cluj, churches in Sighişoara, etc.), Dumitru Norocea (*Madona Dudu* in Craiova, the subsidiary chapel of Curtea de Argeş Monasty), Ştefan Constantinescu (*Bunavestire* [Annunciation] - Lacul Tei in Bucharest, Hunedoara - city centre, and other churches in Ialomița County), Iulian Toader (over 30 churches in Arad area), and many others.

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[458] Tempera is a technique of painting in which a mixture of a pigment + adhesive paste diluted in water are used; information from the students of Icon and Wall-painting Division of the Faculty of Theology in Bucharest and Iaşi, especially from Eliza-Valentina Petre.

ii) Icon-painting under the Communist regime

The major achievements after 1948 when the Patriarchs Justinian and Iustin were at the head of the Church in Romania was that, in spite of the establishment of the new (Communist) regime, some churches were restored from an architectural and aesthetic perspective, especially those which were already known and could attract tourists. In addition to the monasteries mentioned in the previous chapter, the Patriarchal Cathedral, and the churches *Domniţa Bălaşa* [Princess Bălaşa], *Curtea Veche* [The Old - Princiary - Court], *Colţea*, *Radu Vodă* (all of them in the Bucharest Archdiocese), The Metropolitan Cathedral in Iaşi, the church of Voroneţ Monastery, Sf. Trei Ierarhi in Iaşi, *Sf. Gheorghe* [St George] in *Hîrlău* (all in Iaşi Archdiocese), the church *Sf. Gheorghe* in Piteşti (in Craiova Archdiocese); The Episcopal Cathedral (in Buzău Diocese), the church *Precista* [the Virgin] in Galaţi (in the Archdiocese of Tomis and Lower Danube), etc., were all restaured. In Transylvania, Maramureş and Banat the wooden churches (Cuhea, Ieud, Plopiş, Surdeşti, etc.) were consolidated and restored, and also some of the stone churches in Hunedoara County (*Densuş* and *Streisângeorgiu).* At the same time, some museums and collections of church objects were opened in eparchial centres (for example, Cluj-Napoca and Oradea) around the Cathedral in Timişoara and in parishes as Sf. Nicolae [St Nicholas] in *Schei* (Braşov), and *Sibiel* (icons on glass).

In this context I will go to some detail in the case of the church of *Sfântul Spiridon cel Nou* [St Spiridon the New] in Bucharest, which is an impressive side chapel (actually a large church) - *Paraclis* – to the Romanian Patriarchate. As such, it has a special status in the sense that some very important religious services take place there. It was

restored in 1970 under Patriarch Justinian, as the following inscription from within the church (on the West wall, on the right side of the entrance) proves:

> In the name of the Father, of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen. In 1852-1855 when this church was renovated, its foundation was put on wooden beams supported by oak poles. In time they rotted, and it began to collapse in 1966. But, on His Holiness Patriarch Justinian's initiative and with the Archdiocese of Bucharest's funds further damage was prevented. On this occasion a big prop made of ferro-concrete was installed under the foundation, the cracks in the walls were filled, the archways and the vaults were reinforced, the marble floor was laid, the interior of the dome with the Pantokrator was rebuit with concrete and bricks, and the Holy Shrine was decorated on inside and outside, as one can see. 6 June 1970.[459]

In this process of returning to the Byzantine canons the most prominent roles were assumed by archaeologists, art historians, engineers and painters, in addition to people from the Church hierarchy mentioned above. These specialists were grouped around the Commission of Historical Monuments (*Comisii a Monumentelor Istorice*), founded in 1950.[460] The Painting School of the Romanian Patriarchate (*Şcoala de Pictură a Patriarhiei Române*), to my knowledge, the first of this nature in the world, was also very active in trying to restor Romanian Church painting to its true way. The school was founded under Patriarch Nicodim Munteanu (in 1947,) twentieth reorganized on a new basis and with new capabilities during the time of the Patriarch Justinian; it still functions under the same co-ordination of the Commission for Church Painting of the Romanian Patriarchate. Since 1950 the iconographers have worked under the aegis of this Commission, which selects, educates, and promotes the iconographers and Church craftsmen, and also supervises all new paintings, as well as the work of restoring and cleaning old ones. The commission provided many good certified iconographers,

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[459] My own notes from the summer of 2002.

[460] Păcurariu, *Istoria*, 2000, pp. 461-462.

whose work of painting new churches is co-ordinated and closely supervised. In restoration of churches which have been declared art monuments the commission works in close cooperation with the Directorate of National Cultural Heritage (*Direcția Patrimoniului Cultural Național*). Among the most prolific iconographers of this period are Gheorghe Popescu, Niculina Delavrancea, Nicolae Stoica, Archimandrite Sofian Boghiu, Gheorghe Vânătoru, Iosif Këber (an Austrian), Iosif Vasu, Mihail, Gavriil and Nicolae Moroşan, and the restorers Arutiun Avakian (an Armenian), Nicolae Sava, etc.[461] Păcurariu affirms that: "Through the iconographers who worked at the time, a return to the Byzantine, traditional style [of icon-painting] took place."[462] In the light of the present research this affirmation looks only partially true, but this movement was important because it foreshadowed one of the main tendencies which became manifest in icon-painting in the twentieth century.

Despite the social and political conditions, through the efforts of the people mentioned above, who argued with the authorities that the national heritage must be enriched and preserved, many churches were restored and new churches were built and painted (some of them real art monuments), for example: *Sf. Elefterie*, *Parcul Domeniilor* and *Militari* in Bucharest, St George (*Sf. Gheorghe*) in Tecuci, *Sf. Nicolae* (St Nicholas) in Sulina, *Sf. Nicolae* in Sibiu, those in Rădăuți, Târnăveni-Mureş, Ghelari-Hunedoara, Bogata Olteana-Braşov, *Sf. Gheorghe*-Covasna, Fratelia-Timişoara, Răcari-Dâmbovița, Sotinga-Dâmbovița, Feteşti-Ialomița, Ciocârlia-Constanța, Paşcani-Iaşi, Boroaia, Iaslovăț and Voroneț in Suceava County, Valea Drăganului-Cluj, Baia Sprie, Strâmtura, Ieud and Botiza in Maramureş County, Lucăceni-Satu Mare, the chapel and

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[461] Ibid., p. 462; Moroşan brothers (Mihail, Gavriil, and also Nicolae) painted the Greek Orthodox Church in Nazareth between 1976-1978 in which I attended the Liturgy on the day of the Elevation of the Holy Cross in September 2003. They also painted the Uniate Cathedral in Jerusalem. Archimadrite Sofian Boghiu died in September 2002, during the process of writing this thesis at the age of 90.

[462] Păcurariu, *Istoria*, 2000, p. 462.

the library of Rohia Monastery, a new church in Râmeț Monastery, etc. (See. for example, the most recent painting in the Episcopal Cathedral in Constanța between 1959-1965; Fig. 142).

The protection and preservation of many churches became a real struggle when the works of so-called 'sistematizare şi modernizare' (systematisation and modernisation) of the cities began. That was especially a problem in Bucharest where many churches were in the area of 'systematisation', and some of them were destroyed, such as *Sfânta Vineri* [St Paraskevi], and the Văcăreşti monastic complex (Fig. 143), when they were declared to be obstructing major construction works.[463] *Sf. Vineri* Church had to be demolished to make way for the boulevard which leads to the immense building of the so-called People's House or Palace [*Casa* or *Palatul Poporului*].[464]

Yet through the work of the same people certain churches in Bucharest were saved; the engineers and the architects managed to devise a method of moving the buildings (this is an innovative Romanian method of moving entire buidings, developed through the necessities of the time). Thus, the churches *Cuibul cu Barză* [The Stork's Nest], *Schitul Maicilor* [The Nun's Hermitage], Olari, *Sf. Ilie* [St. Elijah] - Rahova and Mihai Vodă, and the Synod administrative building in the precinct of *Antim* Monastery were moved around to allow the authorities' plans to unfold.

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[463] Lidia Anania, Cecilia Luminea, Livia Melinte et alt., *Bisericile osândite de Ceauşescu. Bucureşti 1977-1989* [The Churches Condemned by Ceauşescu. Bucharest 1977-1989], Editura Anastasia [Anastasia Publishing House], Bucharest, 1995; Dinu C. Giurescu, *The Razing of Romanian's Past* [International Preservation Report], World Monument Fund, New York & US/ICOMOS, Washington, D. C, 1989.

[464] It seems that the building of the People's House (Palace) is the second in the world, after the Pentagon in Washington. Anania, Luminea, Melinte et al., *Bisericile osândite de Ceauşescu*, p. 195.

Thus, the iconographers in that time continued to work. I will present below some of their thoughts about that period, but first I have to describe to a certain extent the broader context of their life and work before 1990.

In the realm of Church art the most important activity of the Commission for Church Painting was to reinforce the Synod Decisions of 1889 concerning the return to the Byzantine canons of icon-painting. This activity received further help from the Synod, which as "the highest Church authority, has the right to initiate, authorise, supervise and control from a dogmatic and an artistic point of view, the printing of the ritual books, the icons for the cult's needs, as well as the Church literary and artistic works, among them the painting of churches."[465] As such, it stipulated, through Decision no. 136 of May 1950, that the usual examination procedure for people who wanted to become iconographers, and which took place in front of an examination board from the School of Church-Painting, was only possible after the candidate had attended 'special courses'. During these courses, the candidates "will have practical tests under the control of the professors from the Church painting and sculpture School and Workshop affiliated to the Biblical and Orthodox Mission Institute from the Patriarchate Administration." And later "After 31 July 1950 any of the Church works will be given [for completion] only to the iconographers and craftsmen with a licence obtained in accordance with the present decision".[466] Since the general idea of the Patriarchate and School of Church painting was the return to what they still called Byzantine tradition, by the middle of twentieth century the Romanian iconographers obeyed the canonical

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[465] Decision no. 136 of May 1950, *Biserica Ortodoxă Română. Partea Oficială* (The Romanian Orthodox Church. The Official Section); Nos. 3 - 6, 1950 (March-June), p. 346; for the Romanian original of these excerpts see Appendix B.

[466] Ibid, pp. 346-347.

rules of Byzantine inspiration. As Păcurariu observed above, that was a period of returned to a style of painting of Byzantine character.

Today, in addition to the faculties of sculpture and decorative arts which already existed during the Communist era but with fewer students, there exist the faculties of Theology which have departments called either 'Icon-painting' (*Pictura de Icoană*; in Bucharest), 'Cultural Heritage' (*Patrimoniu Cultural*; in Cluj), or Restoration and Conservation' (*Restaurare-Conservare* in Iaşi). The latter refers to Church painting; in fact, the name of the department there was until recently the same as that in Bucharest: '*Pictura de icoană*'.[467]

[467] Information gathered from the three univeristies during my field-work when I visited all of them. In that period I was helped by Merişor Dominte, the lecturer in the Theology Faculty, and also by Marina Vraciu, lecturer in the Languages Department who mediated my visit in Iaşi (both of them work at the University of Iaşi).

iii) Icon-painting in Romania during Communism and today in the opinion of the iconographers themselves

I thought the most honest way to find out the manner in which the perception of the icon and mural painters has changed in the Romanian modern society would be to ask about it people who practice it themselves.

In order to do this I used a questionnaire with eighteen items, asking nineteen experienced iconographers and eight students in icon and wall-painting to answer them and to make additional comments. When the questionnaire was distributed, in summer 2002, the respondents were living in Bucharest, Iaşi, and a few in Cluj (the most important academic and cultural centres of the country), and also Buzău. They originally came from many places in the country, but the iconographers' place of origin is not important in this context since they receive commissions to work all over the country, and travel throughout the country to carry them out.

Before presenting the conclusions of using such a methodology, I should introduce some more data regarding what was traditionally expected from iconographers. In the Middle Ages only a few of them - those 'especially chosen by God', in addition to their skills which developed through artistic training, were considered as having a vocation for icon-painting, i.e. as possessing the necessary theological culture and spiritual strength to satisfy the requirements expected of such an artist.

Throughout the history of the Christian Orthodox Church, many of the iconographers have been glorified as saints, and, therefore, they have their own *troparia* in the Church religious service. Such is the case with Andrei Rublev (ca. 1365-1430), the renowned Russian painter, who appears in some illuminated

manuscripts with a halo. His feast is observed on 4 July. By the beginning of the sixteenth century he was called a saint (in *Stoglav*'s documents). Among other icon painters who are recognized as saints today are: Saint Pimen of Zographou or Sophia (d. 1620), Saint Iorest of Transylvania (d. 1657), Saint Joseph of Constantinople (d. 1819).[468] Maria Skobtsova (1891-1945) who, among other remarkable achievements in her life, painted and embroidered icons was recently canonized by the Russian Orthodox Church (16 January 2004) (She is especially glorified by the Russian Orthodox Archdiocese in France belonging to the Ecumenical Patriarchate). Even though the reason for her canonization is the fact that she was a martyr (she reportedly took the place of another prisoner, a mother with children, to go to the gas chamber in the Nazi camp of Ravensbrück), it is worthy mentioning her in this context since she produced icons. She made a tapestry of David the Psalmist which is similar to the Bayeux tapestry, a watercolour copy of the icon of The Holy Trinity by Rublev, and a series of tapestry-icons.[469] Mother Maria does not stand alone; although their names are not widely known, there have been other women with special achievements in

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[468] Fr. Steven Bigham, *Heroes of the Icon*, Oakwood Publications, Torrance, 1998, chapter 3.

[469] Fr. Sergei Hackel, *One, of great price: the Life of Mother Maria Skobtsova,* Darton, Longman & Todd, London, 1965. Also Sister Thekla (ed.) mentions Mother Skobtsova in her book, *Mother Maria. Her life in letters.* Darton, Longman & Todd, London, 1979. Sister Thekla's book, while focusing on the life of Mother Maria Gysi, mentions her friendship with Mother Skobtsova and the fact that Mother Skobtsova attended Mother Gysi' Orthodox baptism in Paris in 1937 (pp. xviii, xxii). Maria Skobtsova emigrated from Russia to France after the Bolshevik Revolution. She was imprisoned because she helped Jews and was sent to Ravensbrück. During her lifetime she was involved in politics (she was a mayor of Anapa, on the Black Sea), and in artistic life. Among other works, she painted (and embroidered) an icon representing an Archangel (facing p. 3 in the book) for the chapel of St Philip at Lourmel and embroidered other icons - one of them is now in private ownership at the Monastery of St John the Baptist, Tolleshunt Knights, Essex, England (shown to me by Archimandrite Simeon in February 2001).

church painting, such as Sister Joanna Reitlinger (1898-1988) whose paintings I mentioned in the first chapter (Fig. 4).[470]

An iconographer must have simultaneously both a traditionalist and a modern mind. This is because, for any Orthodox Christian, "In our times, as of old, not only does the icon continue to be painted according to the Canon, but the consciousness of its content and significance is again awakening; for now, as before, it corresponds to a definite concrete reality, a definite living experience, which is at all times alive in the Church."[471] What follows is the result of an analysis of this point of view using Romania as a specific example. I was interested in changes which have taken place in icon-painting during the twentieth century up to the present, with a special focus on this phenomenon during the Communist period. My particular interest before beginning this research was to find out if the political pressure manifested in social life at that time – which included censorship in art- was felt within their profession by the icon and mural painters. My field-work in Romania, including interviews with iconographers, has shown that interference by the political authority on this level (i.e. the details of the icon-painting profession) did not exist. This is, at least, what my research is able to show - based as it was on a questionnaire with iconographers who lived and worked during Communism and were able to witness that period. I have also asked for an opinion (based on the same questions asked of iconographers who worked under Communism) from iconographers who did not work during the dictatorial regime (being too young), but worked in the subsequent period, and still paint churches

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[470] As shown in footnote 109, some of Sister Joanna Reitlinger's paintings – made on perishable material - used to be in the Chapel of St Basil's House in London, then in Hove, and now they are in the Monastery of the Holy Trinity, Crawley Down, West Sussex. Information from Father Brian CSWG, the Abbot of the Community, from Archimandrite Simeon, and from Father Stephen Platt of the Fellowship of St Alban and St Sergius in Oxford, see Fig. 4 in Appendix D.

[471] Ouspensky and Lossky, *The Meaning of Icons*, p. 48. As shown in the first chapter through the example of David Jones, even in the West some artists still keep similar principles in their art.

and icons in present-day Romania, as the country undergoes a period of political transition following the collapse of Communism.

I have interviewed nineteen experienced iconographers, and eight students in icon-painting who do practical work in the field in parallel to their theoretical studies. Of the answers received from the nineteen iconographers, five come from persons who worked under Communism (and are still working today, except for Archimandrite Sofian Boghiu who died recently).

Asking students to reply to my questionnaire would be relevant for my research in the sense that they are able to compare how icon-painting is taught today in universities with what happened in this field in Romania during the last century since they have studied the History of Icon-painting (they thus have a point of comparison). All of them are enrolled within the faculty of Theology (with specialised departments in icon-painting), either in Bucharest or in Iaşi.

The questionnaire follows below in both English and Romanian. It has four sections focussing on personal, social, cultural, and 'economic' information. In spite of the fact that it may be considered personal, I have included the question of age at the end of the series, rather than within the first group, because people are not always happy to state their age. To place it at the beginning of the questionnaire may have hindered the continuation of the interview. For the same reason, I requested a slightly less specific 'age-range'. The main purpose was to find out whether or not they had worked in the Communist period in general; to know the age of any of them in detail would not have had scientific relevance for my thesis.

Questionnaire

I am a Romanian student writing a doctoral thesis at the University of Oxford. My thesis intends to describe the changes which took place in the style of icon-painting in Romania during the twentieth century. I would very much appreciate it if you could assist my research by answering the following questions:[472]

A. [Personal information]

1) When and why did you decide to become an iconographer?

2) Where did you train for that?

3) In how many churches have you worked so far? Please try to give at least an approximate number and specify a few examples of these churches.

4) In which professional category (on which professional level) are you at the moment?

5) During your training were you taught to observe certain moral and spiritual rules in your personal life when starting your work in a church or during that (such as, for example, praying and fasting)?

6) If yes, have you managed to keep them? Are you still keeping them today?

7) In your work are you following the *Hermineia* or any other books for icon painters?

B. [Politico - social information]

8) During the Communist regime were there any non-canonical requirements from you in painting icons or churches in general?

9) If so, did you distinguish different periods of this interference: some with a stronger pressure to obey these requirements, and some with less pressure?

10) Which would be these periods in your opinion? Can you connect them with particular political events in the history of Romania?

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[472] The Romanian original is in Appendix B.

11) If not, how would you explain that the icon painters managed to escape any 'political' influence in their work?

C. [Cultural information]

12 a) Are you familiar with Medieval or *Renaissance* religious art? 12 b) Are you familiar with modern or contemporary religious art?

13) Do you go to museums? Do you go to exhibitions of contemporary secular art?

D. ['Economic' information]

14) What technique and materials you use in your work?

15) Do you think that there is a difference in terms of spiritual message conveyed by an icon between the one which is made with traditional materials and one made with modern materials?

16) If so, what do you think is the reason or nature of this difference?

17) Is your age between: 18-25
25-35
35- 45
over 45?

Here is a short introduction of the iconographers (further information is available in the tables in Appendix F).

i) The iconographers with experience

1. Petru Achițenie – professional iconographer who worked in Romania and abroad; he is also a secular painter; he was born in 1929.[473] (Figs. 144-145 with himself at work in a church, and the advertisement for the exhibition which he had in Bucharest in the summer of 2002).

2. Archimandrite Sofian Boghiu – St. Antim Monastery, Bucharest; 90 years old at the time of answering the questionnaire; he died in September 2002, about one month after answering it.

3. Fr. Petre Braşoveanu, an iconographer and priest at the Episcopal (Diocesan) Cathedral in Buzău.

4. Bogdan Cojocea - a teaching assistant, at the Art Academy -*Academia de Arte*- "George Enescu", Faculty of Plastic and Decorative Arts and Design, in Iaşi of which graduate he is); he has also some (if limited) experience in painting churches.

5. Sister Oana Donose – a novice in Galata Monastery in Iaşi; a graduate of the same institution as Cojocea. The illustration of her icons have been introduced in chapter 4 (Fig. 93 a, b).

6. Gabriela Drânceanu – iconographer in Iaşi.

7. Sabin Drânceanu – iconographer in Iaşi.

8. Liliana Enache – iconographer in Buzău (Fig. 146; her work in *Biserica Sfântul Andrei* – St. Andrew Church- in Buzău).

9. Nichita Fedot– iconographer in Bucharest; graduate of the Theology Faculty ('Icon-painting' Division).

10. Stelian Onică, - iconographer and lecturer at the University of Decorative Arts, Iaşi. Fig. 147 a, b, c, d, e, f, g, h).

11. Elena Sălăjan – is actually a qualified painting restorer in Iaşi, but also paints churches with her husband, Ion Sălăjan).

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[473] In addition to the information which I have obtained directly fom him, there is also some information about him in Drăguț and Grigorescu, *History of Romanian Art. An outline*, p. 215.

12. Ion Sălăjan – iconographer in Iaşi; a graduate of the Theology Faculty ('Icon-painting' Division).

13. Cristina Serendan, iconographer and teaching assistant at the University of Decorative Arts, Bucharest.

14. Gabriel Sibiescu, Archdeacon of the Episcopal Cathedral in Buzău (Fig. 147).

15. Maria Magdalena Şerban– iconographer in Bucharest (Fig. 148).

16. Vasile Tudor, a self-taught and free-lance iconographer.

17. Marius Tudoran – iconographer in Iaşi.

18. Pompei Ungureanu – iconographer in Iaşi.

19. Adela Zafiu – iconographer in Bucharest.

ii) The students in icon and mural painting

1. Daniel Ciofu – student in Iaşi.

2. Gabriel Ciofu – student in Iaşi.

3. Dragoş Dricu – student in Bucharest (Fig. 150 a, b).

4. Alina-Georgiana Dumitrescu – student in Bucharest.

5. Nicu Nicolaiciuc – student in Iaşi.

6. Valentina-Eliza Petre – student in Bucharest; now she is a graduate, (Fig. 151).

7. Mirela Timofte – student in Iaşi.

8. Constantin Ureche – student in Iaşi.

The answers received from the iconographers are as follows:

(See also the two tables in Appendix F).

Question no 1 (why they chose this profession) was necessary in order to ascertain whether their choice was a "vocational" one (felt as a strong calling), or whether it was made for pragmatic reasons, by chance, or for both vocational and pragmatic reasons. This is important because, in the case of political oppression, people who chose out of a sense of vocation, might have had to resist pressure more firmly than iconographers who chose for pragmatic reasons or simply by chance.

Out of the 19: a) seventeenth (sixteen painters and one student) replied that they chose icon-painting out of a sense of a vocation or divine calling (these are: Archimandrite Sofian, Fr. Braşoveanu, iconographers Enache, Onică, I. Sălăjan, E. Sălăjan , Cojocea and Vasile Ţudor; b) one iconographer chose for pragmatic reasons (Achiţenie); c) one iconographer and three students chose to do icon-painting both for vocational and pragmatic reasons (Serendan, D. Ciofu, Dumitrescu, and Petre); d) two students made this choice by chance (Dricu and Nicolaiciuc).

a) In the first category - that of vocation - (some of) the answers were of the following types: "[I have chosen to become an iconographer] because I wanted to understand the deep spiritual message of the icon and especially because of a mysterious urge of my soul to find the Lord's face, the authentic image of Jesus,"[474] or "I have decided to do that in order to be able to study the complexity of the issues which arise in this field. The religious (i.e. icon)-painting seems to be one of the most complex and difficult sides and orientations within the icon-painting phenomenon."[475]

b) The second category of people who have chosen the profession of iconographer for pragmatic reasons includes answers such as the following: "I studied theology at the

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The Romanian content of footnotes 474-475 is in Appendix E.

Theological Seminar in Piatra Neamț; I did not have a good singing voice but. I had a talent for painting instead."[476]

c) For both vocational and pragmatic reasons: two painters (Achițenie and Serendan). and one student (Petre). Their answers are as follows: "[I have taken the decision to become an iconographer] gradually, because I liked it and also because this is at the moment the best way of making a living from art (because of the high demand of icons)"[477] or "Six years after finishing a secondary school with a theoretical orientation, I felt that I wanted to do something connected with art. I therefore began to prepare by taking tutorials in drawing and painting. I found out from a friend about this department (of Church-Painting], I had an exam, and I was admitted."[478] And, the other answers: (1) "I finished at an art-oriented secondary school, and I had to decide where to continue my studies. The department of Church-Painting within the Faculty of Theology seemed the best choice to fulfil my aspirations."[479] (2) "Following the advice of some friends, in 1999 I decided to study at the Faculty of Theology in Iaşi, the Department of Cultural Heritage, because I had and I still have an inclination towards icon-painting."[480] One student (G. Ciofu) did not state why he chose to study icon-painting, but only the year when he began.

Of course, as is to be expected, these types of choices are not made for a single reason, but rather a mixture of motivations.

d) Two students of icon-painting answered that they chose this occupation by chance. The answers I received are as follows: "After I finished [compulsory] military service

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The Romanian content of footnotes 476-480 is in Appendix E.

a friend of mine who was studying at that time in the [Cultural] Heritage Department [within the Faculty of Theology] in Cluj advised me to study it too because he saw in me an inclination towards icon-painting."[481] The other answer is: "[I decided to become an iconographer] during my secondary-school years when a teacher advised me to follow this path, and in time I have discovered that this is my vocation."[482] (Perhaps the explanation given in this answer may be categorized as a vocational choice since the teacher saw a special talent in that person.)

2) This is what the answers to the **second question** have revealed:

Ten of the nineteen of the iconographers qualified through the Commission of Religious Painting set up by the Romanian Patriarchate (Achițenie, Braşoveanu, Enache, Onică, I. Sălăjan); one (Archimandrite Sofian) received hid qualification from the School of Belles Artes before the respective Commission came into being, and as a monk with talent he was allowed by the Church authorities to paint; one iconographer is self-taught and two chose to stay in the Academia (Cojocea, Serendan), and therefore, only practised icon-painting in a church for a limited period of time – just to gain enough experience to help them teach the theoretical side of icon-painting. They are young enough to be able to practise more or to gain further qualifications if they should decide to do so. However, the women iconographers in this case currently paint icons for private commissions. E. Sălăjan is a special case: she was trained in a faculty of fine arts as a restorer of secular painting, but because her husband is an iconographer with a license from the Commission of Religious Painting, she works with him in icon-painting for which he is her Master; therefore she is exposed to the

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The Romanian content of footnotes 481-482 is in Appendix E.

regulations issued by the Commission of Religious Painting. One important regulation is that women cannot paints murals in the sanctuary of a consecrated church.

The students have not yet received a license from the Commission; even though they have some practical experience in church and icon-painting, it is based on their training in the faculty (and, in some cases also in secondary-school). In any case, they work under the supervision of their professors or of other iconographers with greater experience and/or a license. An important notice: the students have, as far as I was able to find out, only Romanian teachers, therefore, their ttaining has a very local character.

I raised this question because I was interested to know if the iconographers' training was given mainly in a religious environment (a monastery or educational system organised by the Romanian Patriarchate through the Commission of Religious Painting) which, in this context, means icon and mural [Orthodox/'Byzantine'] painting, or in a mainly secular one (the school of fine arts).

I say 'mainly' because neither of the two 'orientations' (disciplines) is 'pure': on the one hand, some of the iconographers also work in secular art, and on the other hand, even the iconographers who have been trained in a school of (secular) fine arts are exposed to religious training through the compulsory practical training under a Master. This aspect may disappear in time: if the Master will not keep the traditional moral rules, his/her students are unlikely to do so).

Information about the iconographers' training will help in understanding their answers to other questions coming later in the questionnaire. I assumed, for example, that an iconographer trained in a monastery would be more inclined to paint in a traditional manner, avoiding Western and any other influences, and to keep the rules of prayer and fasting more strictly than the iconographers trained through the Patriarchate's educational system or within the Faculty of Theology. I assumed furthermore that his/her stance on the importance of the materials used in painting icons would be

different, depending on the type of education each iconographer had undergone; the answers which I received to this question, correlated with the answers to other subsequent questions, have proved that my assumption was correct.

The answers to **question no 3** (on the approximate number of churches painted) give a measure of the painter's professional experience, i.e. the practice and experience in adhering to Byzantine (traditional) canons. I hoped to find out about their exposure to different styles of painting and whether iconographers had themselves practised more than one style, or used more than one technique, and also if they used one or many types of painting materials. It may be interesting in the future to see the development of at least some of these painters. I also wanted to know if they had worked in a wide geographical area. The iconographers' answers indicated that they work throughout the country, regardless of the area from which they came. This is important because it can show that when changes in any aspect of icon-painting (styles, materials, techniques) took place, they were propagated throughout the whole country. (Sometimes they also worked in foreign countries with Orthodox believers and churches, such as Syria and Lebanon - as did Archimandrite Sofian Boghiu, Moroşanu brothers, and Petru Achițenie and his son.[483]) This reminds us of the ancient practice of Masters travelling for work, like Constantinos - the Greek who came to Wallachia in the eighteenth century, or Master Stephanos of Aila who worked in St Catherine Monastery on Mount Sinai. In particular, I was interested to see if the decisions of the Synod in 1889 and the requirements of the Commission of Painting of the Romanian Patriarchate have been

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[483] I met by chance Father Elie Khalife, a visiting student in Oxford during the academic year 2002-2003. He is an Orthodox Christian monk in St George Monastery (Deir el Harf), Metn, Lebanon where Archimandrite Boghiu painted the frescos between 1971and 1972. He told me that those frescos had been distroyed by the Syrian army in 1979. The monks invited Archimandrite Sofian Boghiu to paint again frescoes in that monastery, but his age and frail health did not permit that. Instead he sent to Lebanon one of his apprentices, a monk Constantine whose beautiful frescos now decorate the walls of St George Monastery. Father Elie's e-mail address is: orthmonkelie@hotmail.com.

complied with uniformly across the country. The conclusion was that they have only partially been implimented throughout Romania, because painting icons and frescoes in a Western manner, and in oil, still happens in some places – interestingly enough, often by the same painters who paint in the Byzantine style. This happens because people who commission a work (lay people or even priests without training in icon-painting) sometimes ask to have the church or the icons painted according to their own (uneducated) taste.

The reason behind **question no 4** (about the stage they have reached professionally) was to find out if the painters had been authorized by the Commission of Religious Painting, as a guarantee that they were aware of this Commission's guidelines for returning to the traditional style of painting (based loosely, as it is today, on Byzantine canons). Students were also asked to answer the question, since, through their Masters who usually have the aforementioned licence, they should know about the Patriarchate's regulations.

The answers to **questions 5-6-7** account for the extent to which the [Byzantine] tradition has been kept in icon-painting. It is worth mentioning Archimandrite Sofian's opinion on the iconographer maintaining some ascetic rules [answer to question 5]: "Yes! It is extremely important to take these rules (of fasting and prayer) seriously because the iconographer does not paint alone, but guided by God's Spirit. God works at his image through the iconographer's hand. This co-operation with God makes fasting and prayer absolutely necessary."[484] As a monk, Archimandrite Sofian insists on the iconographer's bodily discipline. Tudoran affirms that "Church painting is a mode of being. It includes all of what is in question 5, but also other things", and a part

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The Romanian content of footnote 484 is in Appendix E.

of his answer to question 6 is "I make an effort to stray as little as possible."[485] Şerban says "In the beginning [of working as an iconographer] I kept them less, but in time I have realized that all these moral and spiritual rules fulfil an icon. I try to keep them."[486] Interestingly, some students are strict also. For example, Petre and Timofte: the later affirms: "I try as much as possible to keep them. Perhaps I have not always managed to keep them and I regret it."[487] Dumitrescu answers to question 5 as follows: "There are things which are important for a person who is a believer, especially me or us as Orthodox [Christian], even more in our capacity as makers of religious objects; you cannot live [in the above-mentioned capacity] without these things (faith, fasting, prayer) which we have learnt and observed throughout our life, not only from a specific Master". And in answer to questions 6 she continues: "...these are things which belong to your inner experience, and icon-painting is well rooted in the painter's faith without which he/she cannot work, or better, without which certainly the results (the icons) would not have been remarkable (in the discreet sense in which a believer considers them as remarkable)".[488] Ureche answers that he keeps them "approximately" (*aproximativ*), and D. Ciofu that he keeps them sometimes. Archdeacon Sibiescu emphasises that an iconographer needs more than a mere bodily discipline. He affirms "Of course, the first urge of any Master is that of helping the apprentices to understand the role and the spiritual value of mural painting and icons. The apprentice is advised in the beginning of his/her profession to work according to models. Then he is taught that, as the book is for educated people, so is the icon for the

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The Romanian content of footnotes 485-488 is in Appendix E.

illiterate. *In order to draw the Holy Spirit upon them, humility and prayer are necessary*. We have in Dionysius of Fourna's *Hermineia* examples of prayers."[489]

In spite of the awkwardness of phrasing, the idea of Pope Gregory the First on the role of painting in the church is very clearly re-expressed here, even though Orthodox iconographers do not usually consider it as one of the reasons for images in the church. In addition, nowadays illiterate people are almost non-existent in Romania (at least according to official statistics); however, Archdeacon Sibiescu uses the present tense in his explanation. His answer to question 6 comes as a materialization of these ideas: "...before beginning a fresh painting in fresco technique, I apply a layer of fresco in the form of a cross on the surface on which I intend to work, and say a prayer through which I, as a servant of the Church and of God, ask for blessing in order to be able to finish properly the decoration of that holy place."[490]

The attitude of persons at the peak of their career is different (see, for example, Ion and Elena Sălăjan, or Stelian Onică). The Sălăjans respond that, in spite of the fact that during their apprenticeship they were told about the importance of keeping some ascetic rules, they do not keep them. Onică is more explicit (5): "Of course, the period of apprenticeship included a spiritual, moral and theological preparation [in addition to the artistic training]. The courses in theology were taught by the Rev Prof. Galeriu."[491]

The Romanian content of footnotes 489-490 is in Appendix E; in footnote 489 my emphasis.

[491] The Romanian content of footnot 491 is also in Appendix E. Fr Constantin Galeriu was a renowned theologian in Romania, celebrated especially for his sermons in his church, *Sfântul Silvestru* [St Silvestru], in other churches, and on the radio. He was also a Professor at the Faculty of Theology (teaching Catechetics and Homiletics), Bucharest. He died in August 2003.

And, (6) "These rules cannot be kept except in a monastery. In a normal church, where parishioners do not always understand the icon-painting phenomenon, it is difficult to create an ideal spiritual micro-climate."[492]

From **question 7**, I wanted to find out if the *Hermineia* and other traditional icon-painting manuals are still used today when, in general, other chemical-based materials are used for painting, as opposed to natural mineral-based pigments which have been mostly abandoned. Most of the iconographers answered that they still use the *Hermineia* and other old manuals (they did not name any of these books, but I know from book stores and libraries that these 'other' manuals, although written some time ago have been re-edited in recent years, for instance, the iconographer's manual written by the nun (*Monahia*) Iuliania,[493] which is used in addition to the translation of the Dionysius of Fourna's Manual –*Hermineia*-). Here are two of the answers to question no 7: "I have always carried out my work according to a *Hermineia*, and now, in addition to it, according to other writings on icon-painting, and also according to a few manuscripts of some renowned iconographers."[494] And, "In general, the *Hermineas* are the books which guide me. The albums of church art, the photographs of the works of other iconographers, cuttings of patterns from different reviews and church publications, etc, delight me. They are inspirations which have helped me to improve my personal style which does not want to go astray from the canons of the Byzantine *Hermineia*."[495] "Yes! This is what I have always done. The Byzantine icon is not painted according to the iconographer's imagination, but is based primarily on

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The Romanian content of footnote 492 is in Appendix E.

[493] Monahia Iuliania (Maria Nicolaevna Socolova), *Truda Iconarului* [The Iconographer's Toil], Sophia Publishing House, Bucharest, 2001. Evdochia Savga, trans. [from Russian], The original Russian, *Trud Ikonopista*, Sviato-Troitkaia Serghieva Lavra [Monastery], 1995.

The Romanian content of footnotes 494-495 is in Appendix E.

historical reality. Jesus was a historical presence, and so were the saints. 'What we saw with our own eyes, this is what we witness,' say the Evangelists. This authentic image of the Saviour, of the Mother of God, and of the saints was transmitted through Holy Tradition – and we find it the *Hermineia* of the Byzantine painting, or in other manuals."[496]

'Historical reality transmitted by Holy Tradition' corresponds to the prototype. In my opinion this is what Ouspensky calls the "divine reality" which the iconographer is able to see in order to depict it, which reaches him either through Holy Scriptures, or through Holy Tradition. Therefore, Ouspensky and Archimandrite Sofian speak about the same reality, which is the object of the iconographer's work. Onică affirms that, "The *Hermineias*, as well as the Master's writings have always represented the guide for an iconographer."[497] Dumitrescu says: "Of course, the *Hermineia* is for the icon/church-painter what the Gospel is for the Holy Liturgy. The iconographer's freedom of expression will never be limited by the *Hermineia* which is as a mother (*sic!*) who guides you on the right path, but does not enforce on you a step-by-step procedure. A sure recipe for success does not exist. The way was shown to you -"keep straight on this way"-, but everything depends on the experience and the personality of each iconographer."[498]

The old manuals are still very much in use. I was interested to see how their use adds more weight to the implementation of the decisions of the Synod from 1889 and the requirements of the Commission of Religious Painting. I concluded that the fact that most churches and icons still look Byzantine is largely due to the use of these old painting books.

The Romanian content of footnotes 496-498 is in Appendix E; in footnote 496 his emphasis.

Question nos. 8-9-10-11 refer to politico-social information. They were especially necessary to check my working hypotheses expressed at the beginning of the chapter. The answers clearly show that the iconographers, at least in a direct or explicit way, were not affected in their work. Nobody intervened and no law was issued to interfere with the technical side of their profession. This is the testimony of an iconographer who is 70 years old (therefore, one who lived and worked throughout the Communist era): "There was no [political] pressure regarding the canonical aspect of church-painting: there was, however, a general pressure in social life."[499] In his answer to question no. 10, he points out that there were three periods of Communism connected with political events in the life of the country: 1944-1948 (culminating in King Michael being forced to leave the country at gunpoint), 1948-1965 (1965 saw the death of Gheorghe Gheorghiu-Dej, the General Secretary of the Romanian Communist Party for most of the period when Stalin was in power in Russia and exerted a baleful influence on Romanian political life), and finally 1965-1989, when Nicolae Ceauşescu was the General Secretary of the Romanian Communist Party, including the period from 1982 when he also became the 'President for life'of Romania. Tudoran replies to question 8: "Not directly, but indirectly, by 'waves'."[500] To question number 9 he answers that "After the famous Thesis [political documents regarding the revolution in culture] of 1972 people who did not 'align themselves' politically had very few chances of promotion. The repressive system was becoming more and more subtle."[501] And regarding certain phases in political pressure he considers that "Until 1972 there was a certain freedom; then the cult of personality was established. The political

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The Romanian content of footnotes 499-501 is in Appendix E.

[domain] gained primacy, [and also] hypocrisy, lying, and stupidity as a system. 'The political' challenged 'the sacred'.[502] On the contrary, Archdeacon Sibiescu affirms: "It is curious that people say that the Communist regime wanted to interfere, in one way or another, with the requirements of our profession. I am not aware of any such thing, perhaps because I am a member of the clergy, and [also] because the area of my painting work was only in the Episcopal diocese of Buzău (*sic*)".[503] It seems that he was not confident enough to express what he really thinks (I had an experience with one of the lecturers in the Icon-painting Department at the University of Bucharest who refused to answer the questionnaire). In the case of Archdeacon Gabriel Sibiescu my impression is strengthened by his respons to the next question: After recognising that "At that time the Communist pressure was everywhere" he adds: "Because I was so busy with my two occupations (deacon and iconographer) I did not have time to distinguish different stages of pressure within that period".[504] There is still a certain uneasiness of people (especially of the older generation, i.e. above 50 years of age) to talk about that period Romanian history.

Certainly during the Communist regime there were fewer iconographers who underwent training than they are now, and also fewer centres where they were trained. In 1959 by a "State Decree" (*Decret de Stat*) many monasteries and hermitages were closed, the monks and nuns expelled from them by force and sent either to their families, or to different obligatory work places run by the state. In the same year the two seminaries for nuns opened in 1949 by the Patriarche Justinian at the monasteries of *Agapia* (Moldova) and *Hurezi* (Wallachia] were closed.[505] Some churches were

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The Romanian content of footnotes 502-504 is in Appendix E.

[505] Păcurariu, *Istoria*, 2000, p. 448.

destroyed, supposedly for pragmatic reasons - when they obstructed some major construction works – in total about 20 churches were demolished in Bucharest in the ninth decade of the twentieth century, some of them artistic or historical monuments, as mentioned above.

This restricted the number of iconographers, since few people had the chance to become professionals in that field. But, paradoxically, on the other hand, the schools of fine arts assumed the task of teaching icon-painting throughout the Communist regime. All three main universities in the country (Bucharest, Iaşi, and Cluj) had departments where mural and icon-painting were taught. Now the activity has extended because mural and icon-painting are taught both within the faculties of decorative arts, and within the faculties of Theology (they opened their own departments after 1990, centered on fresco and icon-painting, but also on mosaic making, etc.), and new centers opened as, for example, within the universities in Oradea and Craiova.

Clearly, at a 'merely human' level, iconographers were affected during Communism. But in their art there do not appear to have been changes because of the political situation. Or, at least, it is difficult to prove it by sociological-historical research. (It would be interesting to approach this topic also from the point of view of Social Psychology). It is only common sense to affirm this, since any person is immersed in a society's ideology and cannot escape unaffected; this is even more so in a dictatorial society. Under Communism there was almost no possibility of escaping the ideology. I say "almost" because it seems that the iconographers managed to do so, in the same way that some representatives of the intellectual and cultural *elite* managed. In a kind of general conclusion on that period a student says: "I did not experience personally that period, but I think that there are enough examples to prove that nobody can stop

you from loving art and especially from your way towards God, in spite of many and strong temptations and obstacles."[506]

Let us turn to answers to question no. 11, on how it was possible to escape political interference in the technical and canonical aspects of icon-painting. Tudoran considers that "Actually they did not escape. The clients benefactors/patrons, the priests, the parishes – depending on their degree of culture - brought a certain 'state of affairs' within the icon/church painting phenomenon. The epoch of 'replacing materials' was and still is terrible."[507] On the other hand, others think that "The canonical aspect of the church/icon-painting was, probably, an insignificant detail for the Communist authorities." They intervened in the Church's life (destroying or moving churches) only when the churches were an obstacle to the fulfilment of their plans (usually for major construction works)."[508] Fr Braşoveanu supposes that "Perhaps this detail did not interest them."[509] Similarly, Archimandrite Sofian explains the situation in these terms: "I think the Communist regime was not especially preoccupied with these canons of Byzantine painting. Or perhaps they were not aware of them. Their preoccupation was to destroy faith in general."[510] Archdeacon Sibiescu explains that "Some time after the establishing of the democratic regime we found out why we [the iconographers] were ignored. That happened because [during Communism] all the problems which belonged to the Church's life, at both the administrative and the pastoral level, were taken care of by the Orthodox Church herself [not by the

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The Romanian content of footnotes 506-507 is in Appendix E.

[508] The Romanian content of footnote 508 is in Appendix E. The practice of physically moving the churches' buildings became widespread after 1977. See Anania, Luminea, Melinte et alt., *Bisericile osândite de Ceauşescu.*

The Romanian content of footnotes 509-510 is in Appendix E; in footnote 510, his emphasis.

government]. Regarding the iconographers, by internal regulations [i.e. the Decision of the Synod of the Romanian Orthodox Church of 1950 mentioned in chapter 2] the Commission of Church painting was established in order to organise the Church's activity in this domain. Thus the Orthodox Church took the responsibility for restoring and painting churches, and her interests were not supposed to be interfered with by the government's decisions. We carried on with our own affairs."[511] "Enache says simply: "The political officials did not come to the church."[512] Onică sees the issue from the opposite perspective: "The church or icon painters were not interested and are not interested even today in political phenomena in general."[513] Vasile Tudor is of the same opinion: "[Icon-painting and politics] are two different realms."[514] It was interesting to see that three of the students responded to question 11, even though they were only children during Communism.

Dumitrescu says: "In any case art and politics go on different paths, even though the belief in God should be common [for the representatives of both]. So [the iconographers] escaped by faith and hope; the good deed asked [by God] from them was probably exactly in order to fulfil their vocation, to use the talent they had been given [in spite of the political conditions]."[515] Nicolaiciuc affirms: "I consider that the icon is a witness of Orthodoxy, of the Gospel, through image, and its testimony will never cease, regardless of the times to come."[516] Timofte believes the same: "[The iconographers escaped through] faith in God and by their own wish."[517]

The Romanian content of footnotes 511-515 is in Appendix E.

'Cultural' information

Questions 12-13-14 (referring to their familiarity with art in general, and to visits to museums and exhibitions, etc.): I asked these questions in order to trace the artistic influences to which the interviewed iconographers had been exposed. I was not very rigorous with some of my questions (for example, question 14 asks if iconographers are interested in modern art, and also contemporary art, because I was only interested in general if they keep up with what happens within the artistic realm, and whether it influences their work. To know exactly to which type of art they are more exposed – either modern, or contemporary - would have been an irrelevant detail for my research). It seems that I was right in doing so, because their answers to these questions were of this type: (question 11) "I was interested and I am familiar with the religious art of the Middle ages and with the *Renaissance*, but I have not been able to study it thoroughly because of the high number of works which I had to make – some of them out of necessity, some of them out of dedication."[518] A similar answer came for question 12: "Modern and contemporary religious art are familiar to me to the extent of enabling me to cope in special circumstances: critical analysis which I do when I see new paintings in our diocese, reviews of the Church publications, when we exchange among ourselves photographs of our works, etc."[519]

I assumed that if an iconographer also undertakes secular art, especially abstract in nature, it would be reflected in his icons or frescoes, but it seems that this is not the case. For example, Achițenie's church work does not look very far from the Byzantine

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The Romanian content of footnotes 516-518 is in Appendix E

canons despite the fact that he is intensely active in secular art (see Achițenie's works. Fig.144).

To question 15 (regarding their techniques) some of the iconographers (such as Achițenie and Archimandrite Sofian) answered in brief saying that they simply use fresco or Byzantine techniques (Archimandrite Sofian: "Fresco technique for monumental painting [and] 'Byzantine technique' for icons".[520]) However, most of them went into details. For example, Cojocea responds "For the wall I use *al secco* technique,[521] and for the icon, the traditional technique of painting with a chalk powder mixed with an adhesive paste [made of animal] skin and bones; [I work] the background with egg yolk."[522] Also Braşoveanu uses the techniques of "fresco, tempera, oil," and materials of "lime, small bits of cotton, pigments, bee's wax mixed with oil, egg, vinegar."[523] Enache answered "oil, tempera, caseinate of Calcium,[524] and especially [for] *a fresco*, organic pigments."[525] Onică answers, "I use traditional techniques, and materials which have been tested by time."[526] E. Sălăjan: "Classical

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The Romanian content of footnotes 519-520 is in Appendix E.

[521] To work in *al secco* techique means to dry the wall using an adhesive based on Calcium casein (see footnote 524 below), and then to apply tempera. This adhesive is considered the most resistant in the Romanian school of icon and wall-painting. C. Săndulescu-Verna, *Materiale şi tehnica picturii* [Materials and Techniques of Painting], Editura Marineasa [Marineasa Publishing House], Timisoara, 2000, p. 49; I have also learned a lot of technical details from the discussion which I had with the young people studying to become iconographers, and with academics in Bucharest and Iaşi. Thus, I found out that tempera is a mixture of a pigment+adhesive paste diluted in water (the most used adhesive in tempera is yoke egg).

The Romanian content of footnotes 522-523 is in Appendix E.

[524] Casein (in Romanian *caseină*) – from the Latin *caseus* (cheese). For the purpose of painting in the past it was used fresh, but nowadays it can be found dried (as flakes) in supermarkets. It has the property of being insoluble in water+acids, but easily soluble in the presence of alkaline substances (for example, washing soda, ammonia, borax, etc.) at normal temperature [room temperature] having as a result alkali-albumin, a very strong adhesive which helps in wall-painting. When casein is mixed with lime the result is Calcium - casein which, when fresh, is soluble in cold water, but after drying it loses that property. Because of that it can be used in making corrections on the fresco paintings which are resistant to water. Săndulescu-Verna, *Materiale şi tehnica picturii,* pp. 48-49.

The Romanian content of footnotes 525-527 is in Appendix E.

technique and classical materials, and also modern technique and materials."[527] I. Sălăjan: "Traditional techniques: fresco (lime, bits of cotton, sand); painting on wood (wood, canvas, gelatin, 'dead'(slacken) gypsum [*ipsos*[528]], natural pigments, egg yoke, varnish."[529] V. Tudor: "Tempera, wood, pigments, egg yoke."[530] The students answered as follows: D. Ciofu "The techniques I use are *al secco*, *al fresco*, tempera, and the materials pigments, tempera and oil"[531]; G. Ciofu: "The techniques, methods and materials recommended in *Hermineias* are still valid. They have been modified in accordance with the time, but with the aim of achieving the same final result"[532]; Nicolaiciuc: "Usually I paint in egg tempera on wood, i.e. pigments with egg emulsion." On the wall, *al secco* or *al fresco*, as required"[533]; Petre: "Fresco technique,

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[528] Gypsum (*gips* in Romanian) - from the Greek *gypsos*, is a natural Sulphur salt ($SO_4Ca + 2H_2O$), a mineral which is found in sediment rocks and looks like white shining crystals. In order to be used in painting (and in some construction works in general) this natural gyp*s* is burnt; in this way it loses the two molecules of water that make it a crystal, and the gyp*s* becomes an amorphous powder. In that form it is called *ipsos*. If this power is heated at 300-800 C, 'dead' (slacken) *ipsos* (SO_2Ca) is obtained. This *ipsos* is perfect to be used for the background of icons because it does not react with the water (put in the water it floats on the surface). This quality prevents the icon's background from cracking later. Săndulescu-Verna, *Materiale şi tehnica picturii*, pp. 58-61.

The Romanian content of footnotes 529-532 is in Appendix E.

The Romanian content of footnotes 533-536 is in Appendix E.

537 Re-integration in the restoring process is the adding of colour in area where this is missing because of different reasons, especially the passing of time in improper conditions: either excesive humidity or heat, fire, etc. The colour is added either through the method of fine lines (*strategio*), or through the method of points ('*pointed*' method) in such a way to harmonise with the rest of the main surface of colour. Information from Dominte and the student Petre.

The Romanian content of footnote 538 is in Appendix E.

and regarding the icons, egg tempera emulsion on wood"[534]; Timofte: "the egg tempera technique and fresco; materials of as high a quality as possible (to the extent to which I can afford them). I avoid synthetic materials (acrylics)"[535]; Ureche: "tempera, oil, fresco."[536] Sibiescu gives a more general and complex answer: "For a new painting (*pictură din nou*) in churches 'fresco technique' is used the most not only because it is of Byzantine tradition, but also because it is recommended by the Commission of Church painting. However, there are also churches where the tempera or oil techniques are necessary. To restore the frescoes, re-integration (*reintegrarea*)[537] is made in tempera or casein, in accordance with the solutions agreed in documents (*devize*), and to restore a [work in] oil the re-integration is realised using varnish (bee's wax + turpentine + oil) as a 'glue', plus the usual colours from the oil tubes. I paint the icons exclusively in tempera (egg + vinegar + oil)."[538]

To question 16 (whether there exists any connection between the materials used for icon-painting, and the message conveyed by the icon) many of the young iconographers, and the students, but also some of the experienced iconographers, for example Achițenie, stated that the materials used in icon-painting do not influence in any way the spiritual meaning which an icon conveys. Onică, E. Sălăjan, Fr Braşoveanu, Cojocea, Ungureanu share the same opinion. Some of the students also affirm that there is no connection between the spiritual message of an icon or wall-painting and the materials used to make it: D. Ciofu, Dricu, Dumitrescu, and Ureche.

Ungureanu is quite explicit about it: "The spiritual message conveyed by an icon is not influenced by the materials used to make it."[539] Onică's answer is as follows: "The materials used must not directly influence the spiritual message. Both the traditional and modern materials have the same capacity to transmit this message on condition that a technique adequate to these materials is used, and also dependent on their use by an authentic painter."[540] E. Sălăjan's answer is as follows: "Regardless of the materials which are used, a work can convey a special spiritual message if it is well done."[541] From among the students, Dumitrescu explains: "Modern materials do not imply a modern vision and, therefore, the spiritual message has no reason to be different from that which has been transmitted for two thousand years. We do not adapt Christ to us, but we should adapt ourselves to his eternal actuality."[542]

However, some of the iconographers – one is a monk - answered that certainly there is a connection. They are Enache, I. Sălăjan ("Yes, categorically"- *Categoric, da*!), V. Tudor, Archdeacon Sibiescu. In addition to sharing his personal experience the Archdeacon comments: "If the Church, through her iconographers, exerted herself for so many centuries to elaborate artistic forms and compositions, we, people who live now, prefer and have the [moral] duty of preserving the characteristics of the traditional materials which give us the opportunity to create special iconographic images and chromatic harmonies. *The spiritual message which I intend to convey depends among other things on the material which I use.* I prefer traditional materials."[543] Also more than half of the students believe the same: G. Ciofu ("There

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The Romanian content of footnotes 539-542 is in Appendix E.

The Romanian content of footnotes 543-545 is in Appendix E.

are differences, even big differences"[544]), Nicolaiciuc, Petre, Timofte. It is somewhat surprising to discover that from this point of view the students are more conservative than the experienced iconographers.

Among the answers received implying that there is a connection between the materials used and the message (Question 17 – Fig. 152), there are the following (the first one, from Archimandrite Sofian, comes as no surprise): "The modern means [of painting] and the materials used in religious [i.e. icon, N.B] painting are emptied of any spiritual meaning. The traditional way of painting involves a true ritual for preparing every colour as well as preparing the wood (see Dionysius of Fourna's *Manual*). This is a similar way to that in which, for example, the bread for the Holy Communion [*prescurea*] is prepared. Everything is a sacrificial offering to God as a token of gratitude ("Thine own, of Thine own, we offer Thee ..."). Meanings and understandings which cannot be rendered by most of the materials used today, based on chemical substances that lack any spiritual association."[545] This reply is consistent with his other answers and confirms my assumption that a monk who works as an iconographer places great weight on canonical rules. Şerban says: "My opinion is that by working with traditional materials, the whole of nature participates in the making of an icon: egg, wood, bone gelatin, pigments, etc. In addition to that, the modern materials have not been tested over time and do not have the 'warmth' of the traditional materials. The icon is something noble and must be embodied in noble and lasting materials."[546] Sibiescu also answers along the same lines: "Modern materials do not have the same high quality as the traditional materials. [We do not trust them]

The Romanian content of footnotes 546-551 is in Appendix E.

perhaps because we do not know them very well, perhaps because we do not know for how long they will last, and also perhaps because many of them are spoiled (at least what is around here). But if we use them and they prove able to convey a certain message we might come to accept them in time."[547] In Enache's view, the differences between traditional and modern materials are that "The colours' reaction over time, their resistance, the influence of smoke, dust, and tars, etc."[548] I. Sălăjan says: "Because the modern materials cannot match in quality those of the old days, as a result they cannot convey the same spiritual message."[549] V. Tudor is of the opinion that in the case of modern materials "the chromatics [of the chemical pigments] are more violent, and artificial."[550] Tudoran replied by a single answer to both questions(16 – 17): "Yes, there is a difference – modern mechanical means such as computers and modern materials [in icon-painting] - shorten the period of execution, [but] the 'organic' integration of the content [of an icon] is more superficial. The tendency of the form towards the 'sacred' is disturbed by a preoccupation with the accuracy of execution and by a certain rudimentary spiritual didacticism."[551] Zafiu thinks that "Modern materials do not allow the preservation of the Byzantine style, and a modification of the style means also a modification of the message. The Theology of the icon has not been changed in time and thus the Tradition must also be kept in icon-painting."[552] Fedot's answer constitutes a summary of the view of the mature 'traditionalist party' among the respondents: "I was taught to respect the tradition, and

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The Romanian content of footnotes 552-557 is in Appendix E.

because of that it seems to me that icon-painting with traditional materials is a way of respecting it."[553]

Of the same opinion is the student Petre who affirms that the use of traditional materials results "in a deeper [inner] experience, whereas icons made with other [materials] have a dry lifeless feeling."[554] G. Ciofu, also young, replies: "For example, new pigments, which are artificially produced, are not compatible with the pigments used in the Middle Ages, and the old organic varnish is obviously superior to the artificial varnish used today."[555] Of the same persuasion, Timofte says: "Yes, there are. I think traditional materials are the most suitable for making icons and frescoes."[556] Nicolaiciuc (between 18 and 25) expresses his regret that: "...nowadays the old traditions which tested the talent/skills and feelings [in icon-painting], and the good materials are disappearing."[557] He continues by saying that those materials are replaced today with cheap ones, and traditional dedication in iconography is replaced by superficiality.

All these questions which I arbitrarily categorised as belonging to different domains (personal, socio-political, cultural, economic) are interrelated, and they give an account of the extent to which the artists' personalities and creativity were shaped by living in different contexts. The answers to the questionnaire confirm a statement made at the beginning of the thesis (Ouspensky's view): that there is space for creativity within the Tradition. This can be illustrated by the works of the icon- painting students in Bucharest (Fig. 152 a, b) and Iaşi (Fig. 153. a, b, c, d).

CHAPTER 7

Conclusions

This overview of icon and wall-painting in Romania in the modern and contemporary epochs shows that the changes in the style of icon-painting in Romania from the second half of the nineteenth century up to the present day are consistent with the previous patterns of change. Therefore, these latter changes were foreseeable to a great extent. They have kept the Church painting very much in line with Obolensky's view expressed in Chapter 2 of the thesis, that Romanian mural and icon-painting is a synthesis between elements peculiar to Byzantine Church painting in its more expressive stage (the Palaeologan phase) and elements specific to Western religious art, especially Italian. As Voinescu also points out, Romanian iconographers took elements from Byzantine Palaeologan Church art and mixed them with realistic elements from daily life and with 'lyrical' elements from popular art. This happened in the past from the sixteenth century on, as can be seen in the frescoes of *Plumbuita* from later historical periods, and is still happening today, for example, in *Nicula* Monastery. Almost every church has in its painting a unique combination of such elements and, therefore, each church differs to a greater or lesser extent from another, whilst still maintaining the principles of a common Tradition. There is no risk of monotony when visiting old and contemporary Romanian churches (as there is no such risk when visiting churches in Greece, Russia, and Georgia, for example).

Because of these numerous local innovations and contributions within the style of icon and wall-painting in different Orthodox countries, Ouspensky even advanced the idea that 'Byzantine' or 'in the Byzantine style' are improper terms to describe the painting of icons and murals in those countries. I believed he considered Romania to have been one of these countries, and I consider that his assertion is based on sufficient evidence to be regarded as important, and perhaps taken into consideration when conducting further research. My concession to what he says is to propose the term 'icon-painting of Byzantine character', especially in the context of opposing it to 'painting of *Renaissance* influence'. This is what the Synod of 1889 had also in view; the hierarchs who issued their Decree did not expect the Romanian iconographers of the nineteenth century to copy exactly the frescoes in *Streisângeorgiu* Church.

The specificity of the Romanian Church painting is not solely due to the inclusion of folk and realistic elements in icons and frescoes, but also to the fact that it involves another aspect: the interchangeability of elements which Demus considers typical of Byzantine iconography, has never been a characteristic of Romanian Church painting. (As shown in Chapter 1, Demus speaks about "representation of the human figure, which was divided into its component parts, parceled out, as it were, and put together like model figures, with the joints clearly articulated and the movements somewhat mechanized and overstressed. [Such] compositions can easily be taken to pieces, and every one of their parts may be substituted by another"; see footnote 30).

Additionally, Romanian icon-painting has a very strong national character. The icons, and especially frescoes in that country, even though not intended for this purpose by the iconographers themselves, (or, at least, not always intended), sometimes played, beside their educational 'function', an ideological one – to convey a political message. This characteristic, even though not unique to Romanian Church decoration, is a strong presence throughout the country. The evidence mentioned in the thesis: Plumbuita's

frescoes, where military saints crush the unbelievers, and the exterior frescoes of *Voroneț* and *Moldovița* monasteries, where the Turks and Tartars are depicted as going to Hell in the afterlife because, obviously, they are 'unbelievers', and because they have come to attack innocent people, illustrates and supports this idea. Furthermore, in the latter part of the Romanian Middle Ages (which occurred much later than in Western Europe, and therefore lasted until middle eighteenth century) the wall of the church became the milieu where the technique of portraiture had its beginning. The portraits of Spatharus Stroe from *Cozia* Monastery, those of Princess Chiajna from *Snagov*, or Ioan from *Polovragi*, and of Ştefan cel Mare, Petru Rareş and their families from *Bistrița* Monastery exemplify this development.

Gheorghe Tăttărescu's work represents an important moment in the evolution of icon and wall-painting in Romania because of the radical changes which he introduced to the manner of painting a church. Even though immediately after the Synod of the Romanian Orthodox Church of 1889, in churches painted by Tăttărescu and his 'school' frescoes were white-washed or removed, nowadays the influence of the neo-classicism reminiscent of the *Renaissance* is reaffirmed by the restoration of the churches painted by him and his apprentices. This process takes place parallel to the restoration and fresh painting of churches in the style of Byzantine lineage.

Romanian monasteries at present, as in the past, are still the place – though not the only place- where iconographers work. Some of these iconographers might have taken monastic vows, as in the case of the iconographers who paint in *Galata* Monastery (Sister Oana Donose), *Nicula* (the monk Ilarion Mureşan), *Brâncoveanu* Monastery - *Sâmbăta de Sus* (Ieronim Coldea), and *Antim* Monastery (Archimandrite Sophian Boghiu). Some of them have just been trained or are being trained now around the monastic settlements, as in the case of *Plumbuita* Monastery.

This latter monastery is representative of the multitude of styles of icon and mural painting existent in such settlements which have survived a troubled history, acting many times as fortresses and hospitals, as most of the old Romanian monasteries did. The icons which have been preserved from older times and those added to the monastery's heritage in later periods witness that icon-painting has been a steady activity in Romania

The iconographers who were a part of the present research are mostly of the opinion that twentieth century secular artistic movements do not seem to have influenced to a significant degree icon and wall-painting. Also, the political regime did not have a crucial impact on it. The agents of the Communist government were unable to intervene in the details and the quality of their work. Even more, it seems that, on the contrary, secular art, even that created by the representatives of so-called Socialist Realism, borrowed religious motifs from religious art. For example, such themes as 'sacrifice' or 'heroic motherhood' were very common. Even more so, in artistic works with heroic subject-matters such as 'the hero' or 'a sacrifice', the respective hero looks like a Jesus figure (as, for example, in the painting *Jertfa* [Sacrifice], Fig.154 a). Artistic works of that period portraying a mother and a child have a striking resemblance to the representation of the Mother of God holding Jesus as a child (Fig. 154 b). This process of secular art borrowing from religious art is still taking places at the moment in some cases. Three of the people involved in my present research are themselves in the position of 'operating' such borrowing since they paint equally icons/frescoes and secular works. Achițenie is one of them. Fig. 144b contains a photograph which shows the advertisement of his exhibition of both secular and religious works which took place in the summer of 2002 called *Altare, Luceferi și Epitafe* [Altars, Stars and Epitaphs]. Achițenie displayed at the entrance to the exhibition a photograph of himself taken when he was on a scaffold painting a church

(Fig. 144a). The other two iconographers and secular painters are Elena and Ion Sălăjan.

The result of my research was contrary to my initial assumption that the so-called 'militant art' (i. e. 'revolutionary' art practiced during Communism using the so-called 'Realist Socialism' style in painting) would have had a direct impact on icon and wall-painting in the Church. During my research I noticed that political interference did not occur in the details of the icon-painting profession, which was left in the care of the Church and of the Patriarchate. Moreover, in addition to this policy of non-interference, the state also allowed new churches to be built. However, there were notably fewer iconographers during this Communist period.

It is hoped that this thesis has managed to prove two important ideas. On the one hand, that the second half of the nineteenth century was the period of maximum deviation from the traditional Romanian style and, on the other hand, that the process following the Romanian Orthodox Church's Synod of 1889, in spite of the proclaimed return to a pure Byzantine style, actually involves the coexistence of at least two main styles of painting: Eastern/Mannerist of Byzantine lineage and Western/Mannerist of *Renaissance* influence. (Mannerist in this context would mean copying in a less artistic technique of either original or copies of works coming from Byzantium and the European *Renaissance* period). In addition to this, a combination of various elements can be seen even in the painting of the same building, sometimes to the point of *kitsch*. Among the churches where this situation is noticeable, besides the church of *Plumbuita* already discussed, are Biserica *Sfântul Stelian* [St Stylianos Church] in Bucharest (Fig. 156 a, b), and especially and unexpectedly perhaps, the Metropolitan Cathedral in Bucharest, the Patriarchal Headquarters (Fig. 155).

It appears that the existence of these two styles of icon and wall-painting will persist in the future, and the term 'icon' will probably be used for both an 'old

traditional' type of icon, and a 'new traditional' type of icon, especially if the new materials used in painting them gain a wider circulation. In conclusion, one might say that, in comparison to Greek and Church Russian art, Romanian iconography has its own specificity. Looking at the contemporary icons and frescoes in Appendix C one can identify them as being of Romanian origin.