

Russian Icon



THE YEARLY MENAION

(A SET OF 12 ICONS OF SAINTS, COMMEMORATED EVERY MONTH)

SECOND QUARTER – MIDDLE OF THE 19TH CENTURY. PALEKH.

All icons are painted with tempera on gesso and wood (predominantly on whole panels, with two thin support boards), absence of an incut centerpiece, possibly with an underlying layer of canvas.

The author's paintwork is in fairly good state – with slight losses and restored pieces (especially evident on the sides). There are also thin scratches, toned replacements of the gesso, and barely visible fragments of darkened olifa, which were evidently missed during restoration.

September Menaion	31 x 26 x 2 cm.
October Menaion	31 x 26 x 2 cm.
November Menaion	31 x 25,5 x 2,3 cm.
December Menaion	31,5 x 26,5 x 2,2 cm.
January Menaion	32 x 26 x 2,3 cm.
February Menaion	31,5 x 26 x 2,3 cm.
March Menaion	31,5 x 26,5 x 2,2 cm.
April Menaion	31,5 x 26,5 x 2,5 cm.
May Menaion	31,5 x 26 x 2,3 cm.
June Menaion	31,5 x 26,5 x 2,2 cm.
July Menaion	31 x 26,5 x 2,3 cm.
August Menaion	31 x 26 x 2 cm.

The yearly Menaion is a complex of 12 icons, representing the saints and major Church Feasts in order of their commemoration, from September to August. This particular set is unique since it is both – complete (which is a rarity) and is of excellent preservation.

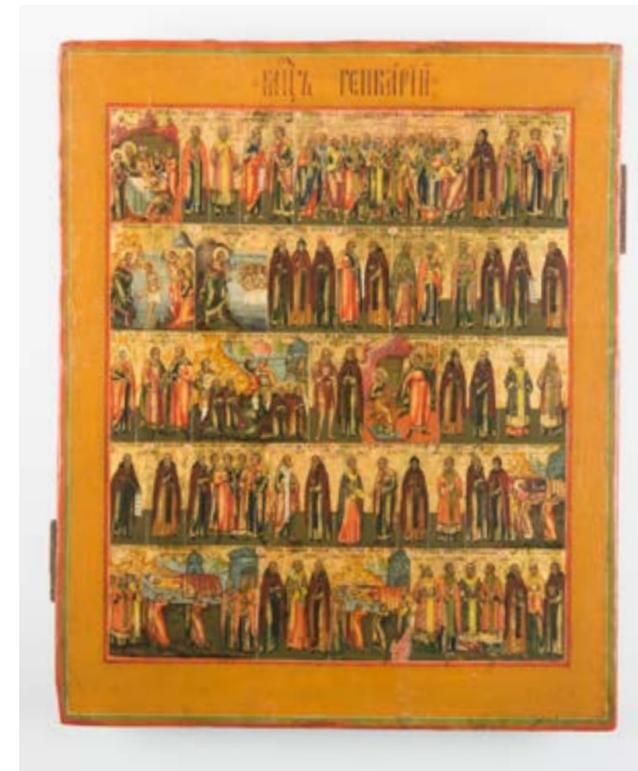
The Menaion Icons (literally – “monthly icons”) became widespread in Russia in the second half of the 16th century, following the composition of the Great Menaion text, composed under the supervision of Metropolitan Macarius of Moscow. Traditionally the Menaion icons are small and are usually used for veneration of the analoion, where they are placed in accordance with their respective month.

The main samples, used by artists painting the Menaion icons, were the illuminated Vitas with commentaries. From the 18th century onwards etchings become the predominant sample for iconographers, following the 1722 edition of Menaion etchings, devised by the artist Gregory Tepchegorskii.

The images of the saints and feasts are separated into five successive rows (each of equal size), separated by thin white lines. The saints are depicted full-height, in relaxed, natural poses, usually facing each other (the frontal poses are almost absent). The decorative flair of the imagery is enforced by the golden background and the white medallions with the lettered symbols of the days.

The iconography of the given Menaion complex is noteworthy for its expanded number of saints and the detailed composition of the Feast scenes. Some scenes, such as the Adoration of the Magi and the Nativity of St. John the Baptist, are found only in 19th century icons. Among other examples, unique for the 19th century is the fact that St. George’s Day (April 23rd) is depicted as the Miracle of St. George and the Dragon, and the December Menaion includes the Massacre of the Infants at Bethlehem. Judging by the selection of rather rare saints and the character of the compositions, the illustrated Menaion was to be used among the Old Believers.

The character of the artwork - the subtle color-pallet enriched by the golden background of the centerpiece, the introduction of active yellow and green pigments, the rather rigged gold assist on the vestments – indicates that the icons were painted in the second quarter or middle of the 19th century, in the recognizable style of Palekh artists. This is evident in the “miniature” painting, with highly-descriptive depictions, the brilliance in composition, the architectural richness with its color-schemes and white ornamentation, lights on the mountainsides, the overall nostalgic loyalty to the old iconographic tradition; all of these elements were beloved and perfected by Palekh masters. The excellent preservation and exquisite artwork make it a piece worthy of the highest value for both – museums and private collectors.



September Menaion | 31 x 26 x 2 cm.



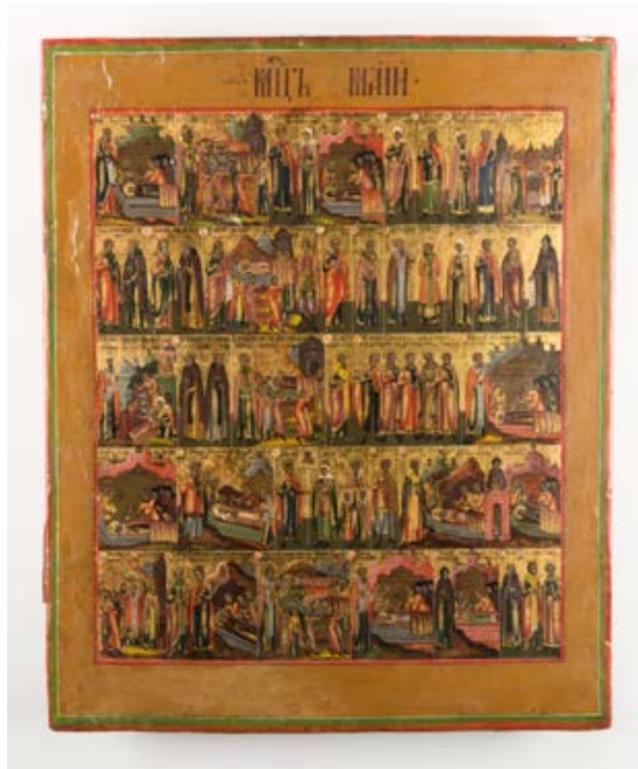
October Menaion | 31 x 26 x 2 cm.



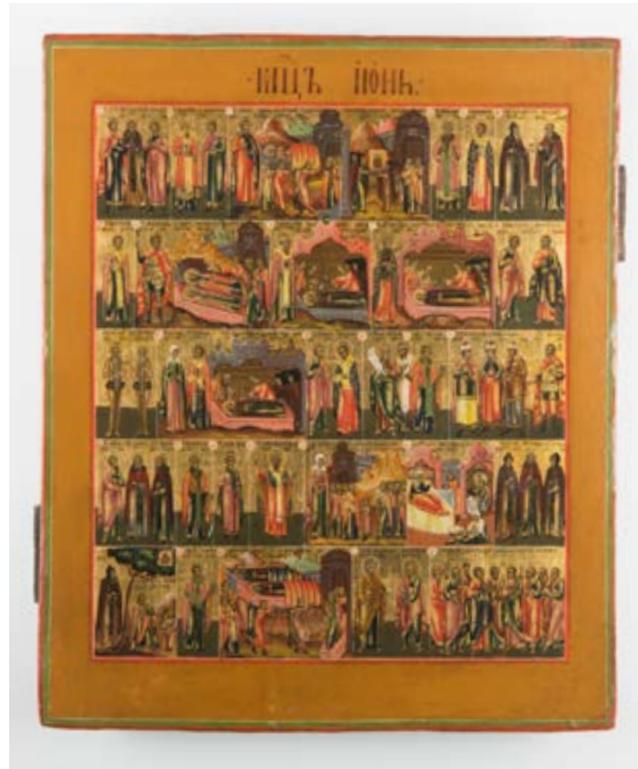
November Menaion | 31 x 25,5 x 2,3 cm.



December Menaion | 31,5 x 26,5 x 2,2 cm.



January Menaion | 32 x 26 x 2,3 cm.



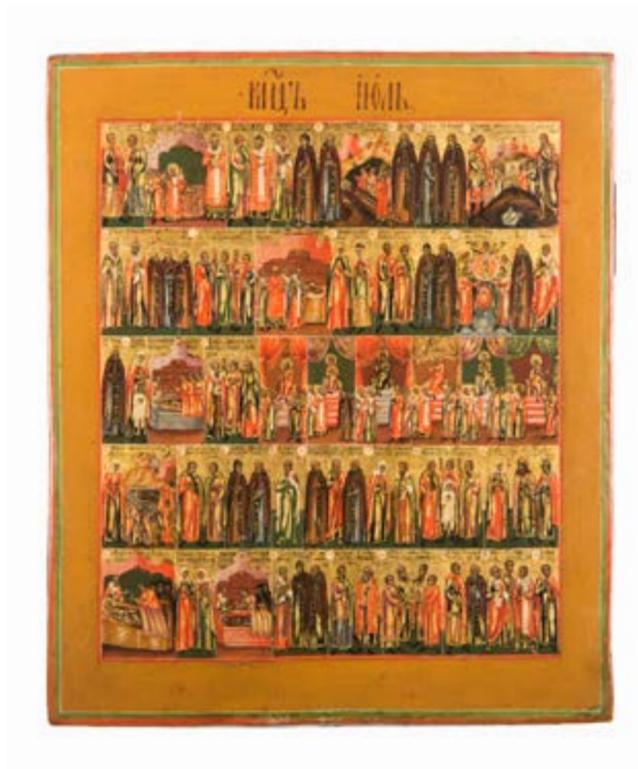
February Menaion | 31,5 x 26 x 2,3 cm.



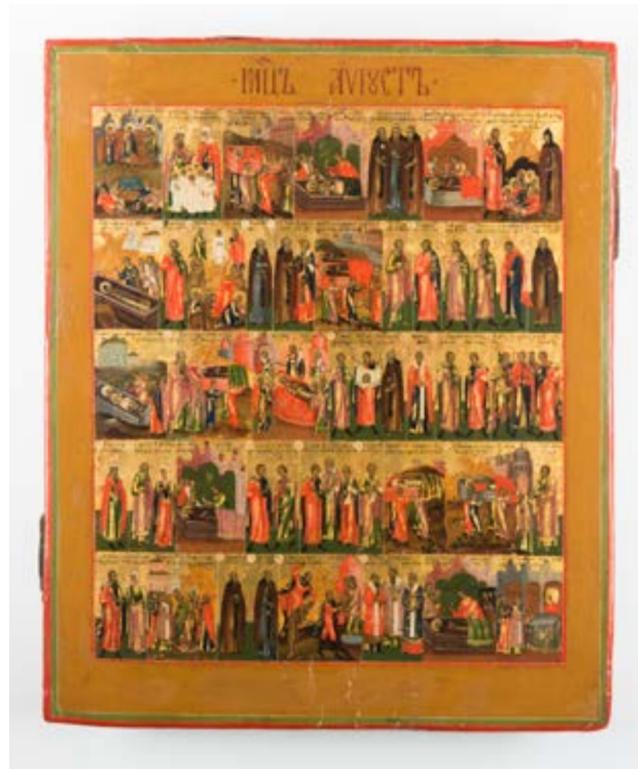
May Menaion | 31,5 x 26 x 2,3 cm.



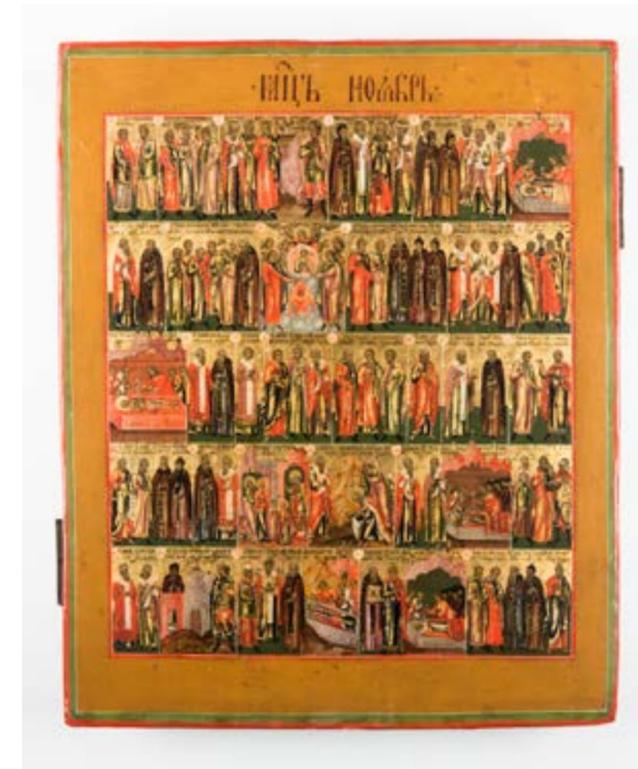
June Menaion | 31,5 x 26,5 x 2,2 cm.



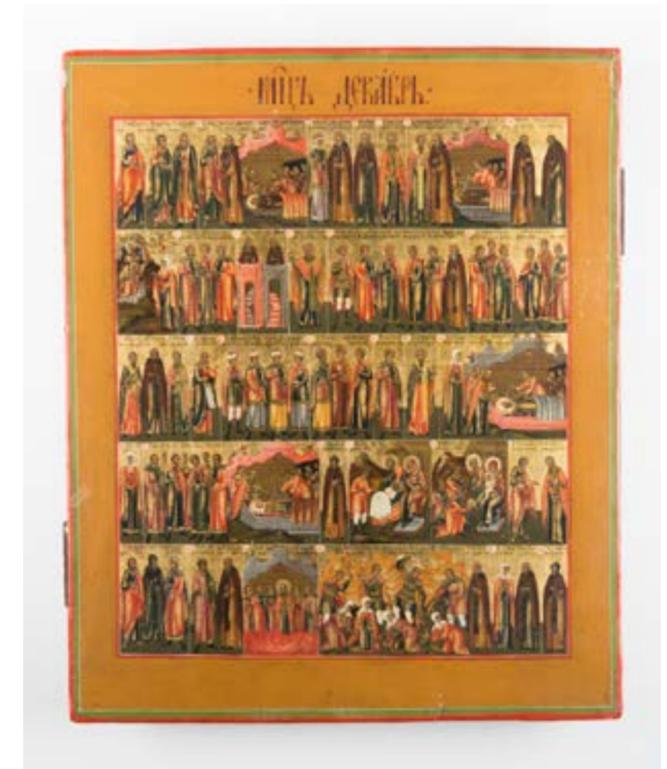
March Menaion | 31,5 x 26,5 x 2,2 cm.



April Menaion | 31,5 x 26,5 x 2,5 cm.



July Menaion | 31 x 26,5 x 2,3 cm.



August Menaion | 31 x 26 x 2 cm.

THE RESURRECTION –

THE HARROWING OF HADES WITH THE “PRAISE TO MOTHER OF GOD” AND THE CHURCH FEASTS IN 16 BORDER SCENES

Icons depicting the major Feast cycle of the Liturgical year were known among artists of the Russian Empire as *polnitsy* (basically “full” or “full-cycle” icons). Such complex compositions allowed an artists to bring together different New Testament scenes on a single panel, which made these icons incredibly popular among all Russian social classes. Palekh artists were especially fond of this iconographic scheme, and their work is always recognizable due to the intricacy of the “miniature” painting-style.

Following the dominant tradition, the centerpiece bears the detailed iconographic depiction of the Resurrection. Scenes of the “Rising from the Tomb” and “The Harrowing of Hades” are depicted along a single vertical line, and are compositionally bound together by the diagonal procession of the Pious marching into Heaven. This composition is surrounded by scenes that came before or followed the Resurrection. The top left corner bears the image of the Incredulity of Thomas and the Apostle Peter at the Empty Tomb; in the lower right corner – the Revelation of Christ to the Apostles on the Sea of Galilee.

The Resurrection centerpiece is surrounded by sixteen border scenes, bearing quite traditional depictions of major Church Feasts. It begins with the Nativity of the Mother of God, which begins the yearly liturgical cycle of Feasts, ending with the Elevation of the Holy Cross. The introduction of the Old Testament Trinity into the upper row of the composition – which breaks the calendar sequence of the liturgical year – is typical for the iconographic scheme developed in Palekh. The theological significance of the Trinity’s introduction is obvious: it is seen as the symbol of God’s plan of His self-sacrifice and

the salvation of mankind, the reunification of the three hypostases of the Holy Trinity following the Resurrection of Christ, the coming of Man into the Kingdom of Heaven.

The scenes of the Raising of Lazarus and the Beheading of John the Baptist are also highly symbolic. John the Baptist was the first person to announce the sacred meaning of Christ’s incarnation and the mystery of the world’s salvation through the Messiah, while the Raising of Lazarus can be seen as both the sign of Christ’s Resurrection and the promise of Salvation for Mankind.

The given icon is one of the first-class masterpieces, painted by Palekh iconographers in the end of the 18th century – a time, when artists of this settlement mainly worked on highly-expensive commissioned works of art. The work of Palekh’s artists reflects their orientation on Stroganov heritage. This is especially evident in the elongated body-proportions with their small, round heads and elegant limbs; the yearning for iconographic narratives, which originated in the Russian tradition in the first half of the 17th century, and was brought to its finest stage with the refined miniature painting and complex, detailed imagery of Palekh. The ease and craftsmanship of the artist, the masterful execution of the architecture with its vivid ornamentation, the multicolored, almost ethereal mountains are brilliantly combined with the contemplative softness of the painting style, which is an indicative trait of late 18th century Palekh iconography. This assessment is supported by a large number of analogies found in various public and private collections. The exclusive, precious beauty of the artwork is enforced by a rich, gilded cinnabar frame – another decorative motif, beloved by Palekh’s artists.



END OF THE 18TH CENTURY. PALEKH

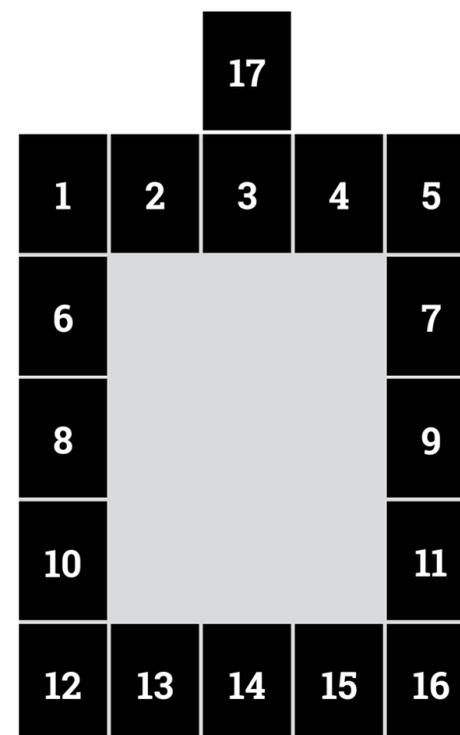
Wood (three panels), two incut support boards, absence of an incut centerpiece, an underlying layer of canvas is probable, gesso, tempera.

The author's paintwork is very well preserved.

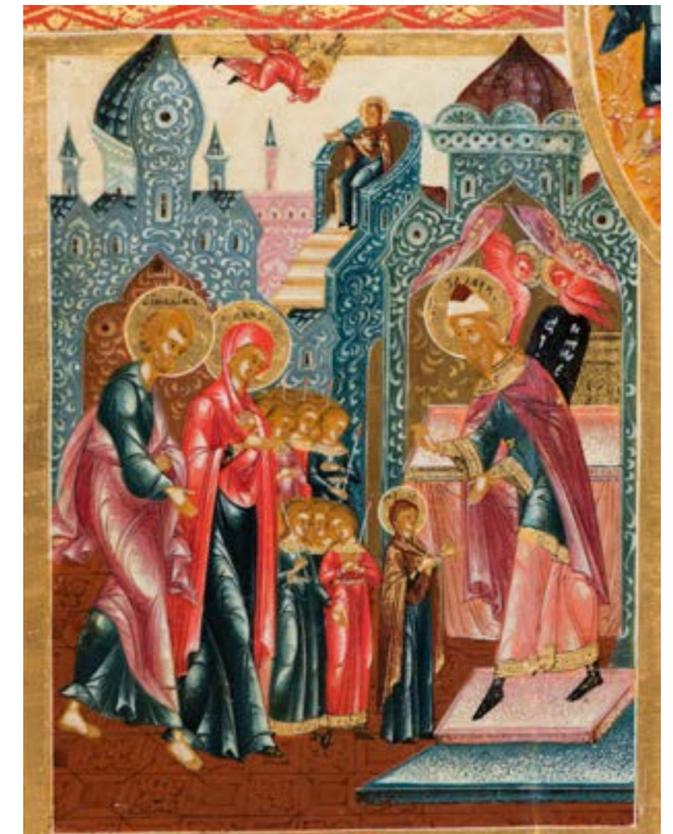
 Size: 71 x 55 x 2,8 cm.

Diagram of the border scenes:

1. The Nativity of the Mother of God;
2. The Entrance of the Mother of God into the Temple;
3. The Old Testament Trinity;
4. The Annunciation;
5. The Nativity of Christ;
6. Candlemas (The Meeting of Christ in the Temple);
7. The Theophany (The Baptism of Christ);
8. The Transfiguration;
9. The Entrance into Jerusalem;
10. The Raising of Lazarus;
11. The Ascension;
12. Pentecost;
13. The Dormition of the Mother of God;
14. The Beheading of John the Baptist;
15. The Pokrov (Feast of the Protective Veil of the Mother of God);
16. The Elevation of the Holy Cross;
17. The Praise to the Mother of God.



1. The Nativity of the Mother of God.



2. The Entrance of the Mother of God into the Temple.



3. The Old Testament Trinity



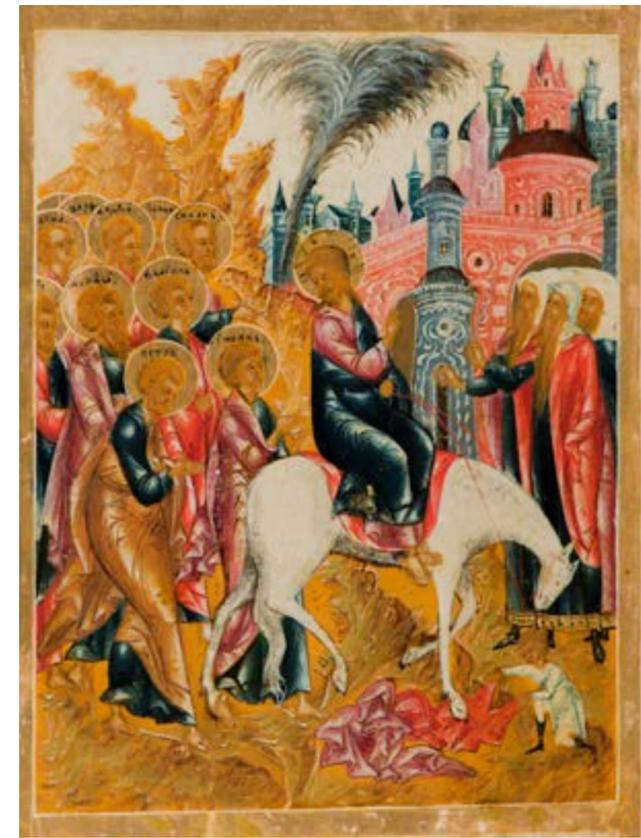
4. The Annunciation



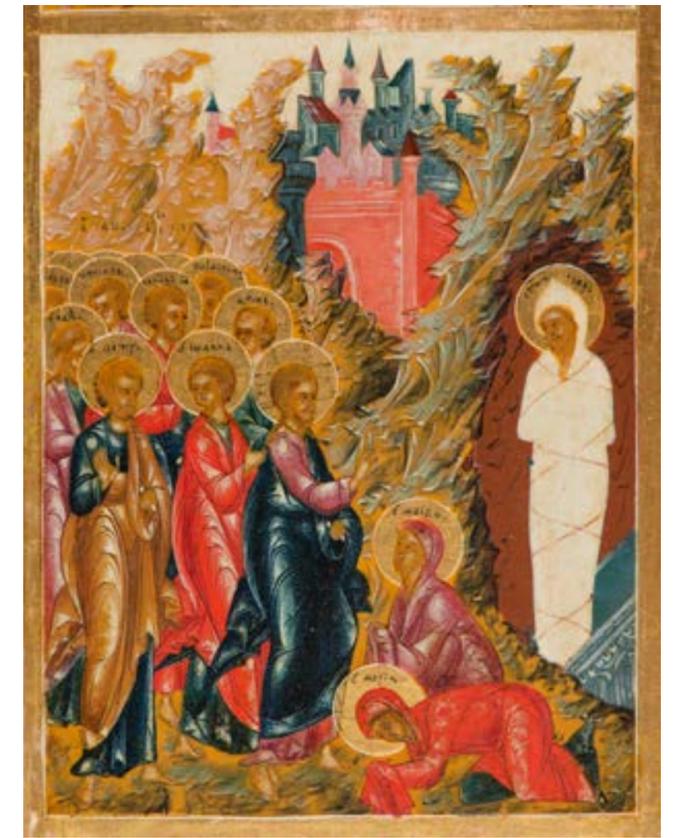
5. The Nativity of Christ.



6. Candlemas (The Meeting of Christ in the Temple).



9. The Entrance into Jerusalem.



10. The Raising of Lazarus.



7. The Theophany (The Baptism of Christ).



8. The Transfiguration.



11. The Ascension.



12. Pentecost.



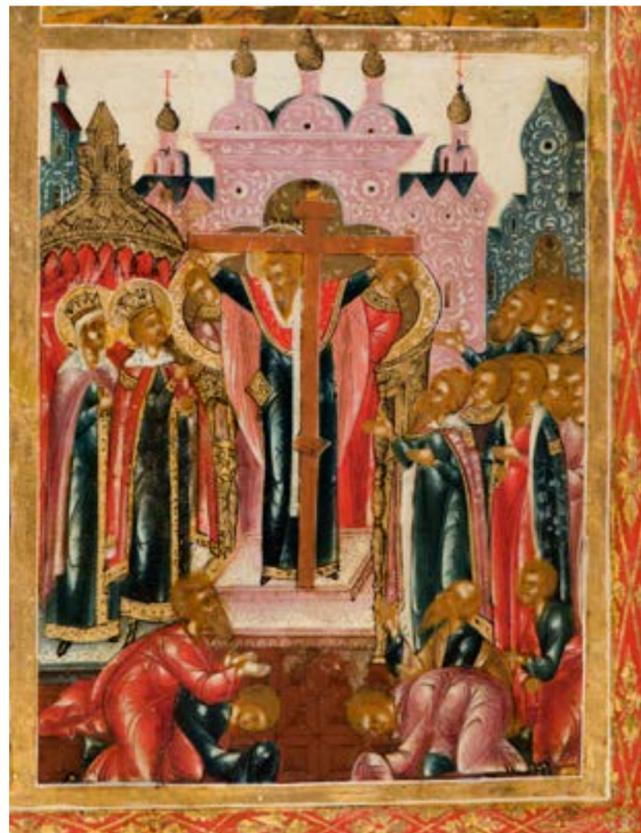
13. The Dormition of the Mother of God.



14. The Beheading of John the Baptist.



15. The Pokrov (Feast of the Protective Veil of the Mother of God).



16. The Elevation of the Holy Cross.



17. The Praise to the Mother of God.



THE RESURRECTION –

THE HARROWING OF HADES, WITH THE IMAGES OF THE EVANGELISTS, THE MONOGENES, THE PASSIONS OF CHRIST, AND THE CHURCH FEASTS IN 28 BORDER SCENES.



Icons with scenes of the Resurrection – the Harrowing of Hades and other Church Feasts, reflecting the major events of the liturgical year became widespread in the 19th century, predominantly being the work of Palekh artists, heavily influenced by 17th century traditions. The given icon is one of such.

The centerpiece bears the simplified iconographic scheme of the Resurrection, which appears in the 17th century. Scenes of the “Rising from the Tomb” and “The Harrowing of Hades” are depicted along a single vertical line, and are compositionally bound together by the diagonal procession of the Pious marching into Heaven. This composition is surrounded by scenes that came before or followed the Resurrection. The top left corner bears the image of the Incredulity of Thomas and the Apostle Peter at the Empty Tomb; on the right – the Revelation of Christ to the Apostles on the Sea of Galilee.

The centerpiece is surrounded by two cycles of border scenes. The inner cycle consists of twelve Passion scenes. The outer one is a Festive cycle, with fifteen scenes, starting with the Nativity of the Mother of God, which begins the liturgical year, and ending with the Elevation of the Holy Cross.

The icon is one of highly-recognizable examples of Palekh art; it clearly yearns towards the masterpieces of the late 18th-early 19th centuries, and is noteworthy for its high level of artistry. Among the characteristic traits of the given icon is the miniature painting with the most thorough execution of the faces and lesser details; the elegant proportions of the elongated figures, the brilliantly clear composition. Nevertheless, the overt complication of the details, the ‘polished up’ and seeming dryness of the painting and the vestment’s gold overlay all indicate that the icon was painted in a later period, more precisely – in the second quarter of the 19th century.

The precious oklad cover was made in 1846 in St. Petersburg by the silversmith Ignatii Fedorovich Chekalin (many of his works are known, ranging from 1825 to 1855). It is a wonderful example of the so-called Second Baroque style – a movement which won popularity and prominence in the second quarter of the 19th century.



**ICON: SECOND QUARTER OF THE 19TH CENTURY. PALEKH.
OKLAD COVER: 1846. ST. PETERSBURG. MASTER I.F. CHEKALIN**

Wood (three panels), two support boards (now lost), absence of incut centerpiece, underlying layer of canvas, tempera, gold. Oklad cover: silver, embossing, engraving, light etching.

Brands on the Oklad cover: St. Petersburg coat-of-arms (1818–1864); silver hallmark «84»; «Д.Т / 1846» – assayer’s brand (assayer Dmitii Ivanovich Tverskoy, 1832–1850); the lettering «[И].Ф.» in the rectangular shield is, most likely, the name brand of the silversmith Ignatii Fedorovich Chekalin (1825–1855).

The author’s paintwork is in fairly good condition. In some places there are small fragments of restoration toning over initial losses of gesso and original paint. Restoration is especially evident on the borders; the figures of the Evangelists Luke and Mathew have been thoroughly repainted.



Size: 45 x 37 x 2,8 cm.



The Resurrection – The Harrowing of Hades, with the images of the Evangelists, the Monogenes, the Passions of Christ, and the Church Feasts in 28 border scenes.

Diagram of the border scenes:

30			29		31
	1	2	3	4	5
	6	17	18	19	20
	8	21			22
		23			24
	10	25	26	27	28
	12	13	14	15	16
32					33

The Festive cycle:

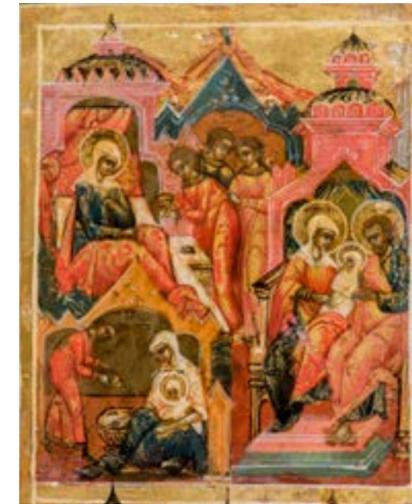
1. The Nativity of the Mother of God;
2. The Entrance of the Mother of God into the Temple;
3. The Old Testament Trinity;
4. The Annunciation;
5. The Nativity of Christ;
6. Candlemas (The Meeting of Christ in the Temple);
7. The Theophany (The Baptism of Christ);
8. The Entrance into Jerusalem;
9. The Transfiguration;
10. The Ascension of Christ;
11. The Dormition of the Mother of God;
12. The Raising of Lazarus;
13. The Beheading of John the Baptist;
14. The Fiery Ascent of the Prophet Elijah;
15. The Pokrov (Feast of the Protective Veil of the Mother of God);
16. The Elevation of the Holy Cross

Diagram of the border scenes:

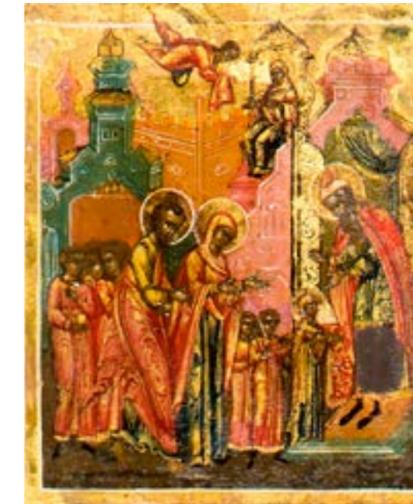
30			29		31
	1	2	3	4	5
	6	17	18	19	20
	8	21			22
		23			24
	10	25	26	27	28
	12	13	14	15	16
32					33

The Passion Cycle:

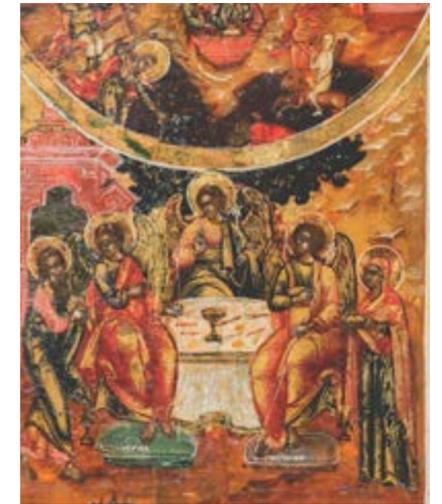
17. The Last Supper;
18. The Washing of the Feet;
19. The Prayer in Gethsemane;
20. The Betrayal of Judas;
21. The Bringing of Christ to Caiaphas;
22. The Bringing of Christ before Pilate;
23. The Flagellation of Christ;
24. The Crown of Thorns;
25. The Carrying of the Cross;
26. The Crucifixion;
27. The Taking Down from the Cross;
28. The Entombment of Christ.
29. The Monogenes (The Only Begotten Son);
30. The Evangelist John;
31. The Evangelist Matthew;
32. The Evangelist Mark;
33. The Evangelist Luke.



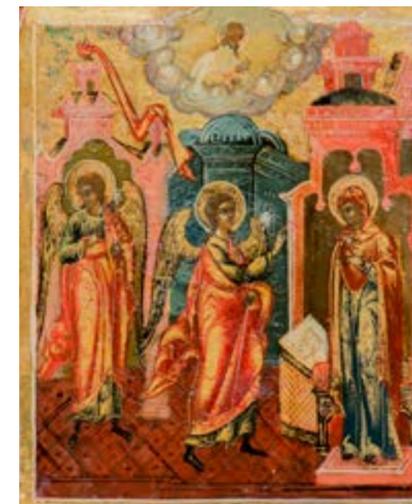
1. The Nativity of the Mother of God.



2. The Entrance of the Mother of God into the Temple.



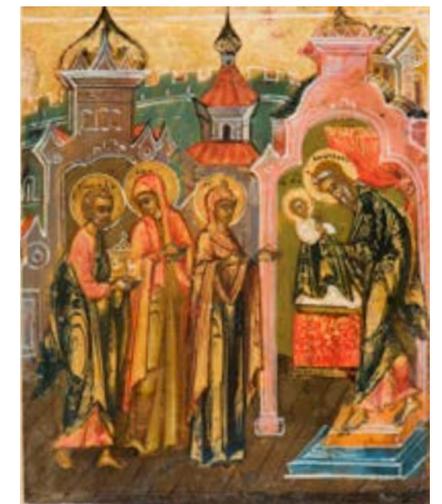
3. The Old Testament Trinity.



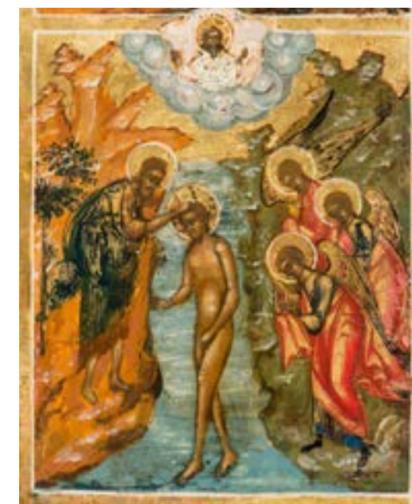
4. The Annunciation.



5. The Nativity of Christ.



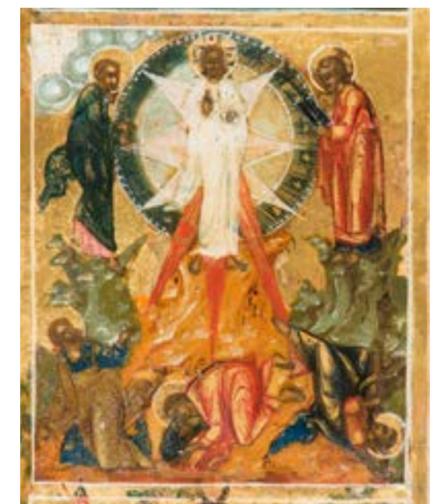
6. Candlemas (The Meeting of Christ in the Temple).



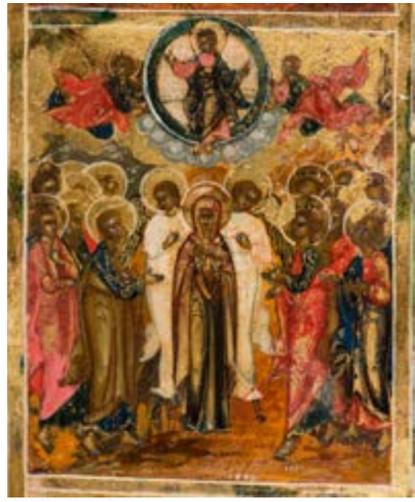
7. The Theophany (The Baptism of Christ).



8. The Entrance into Jerusalem.



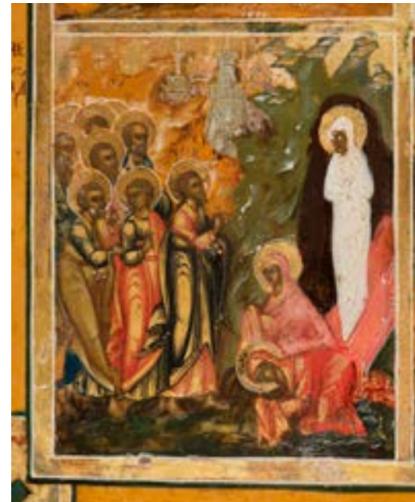
9. The Transfiguration.



10. The Ascension of Christ.



11. The Dormition of the Mother of God.



12. The Raising of Lazarus.



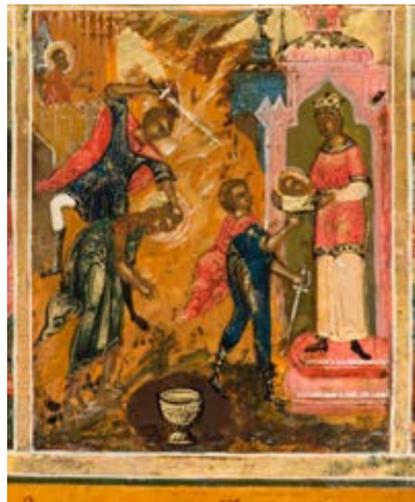
19. The Prayer in Gethsemane.



20. The Betrayal of Judas.



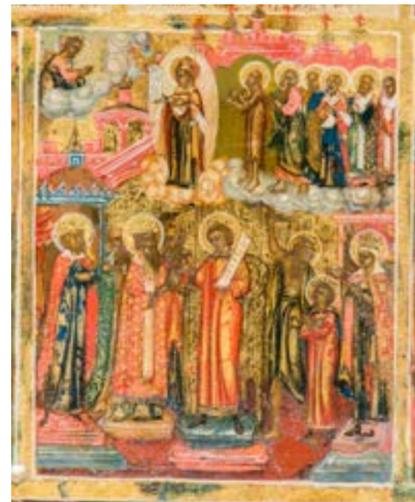
21. The Bringing of Christ to Caiaphas.



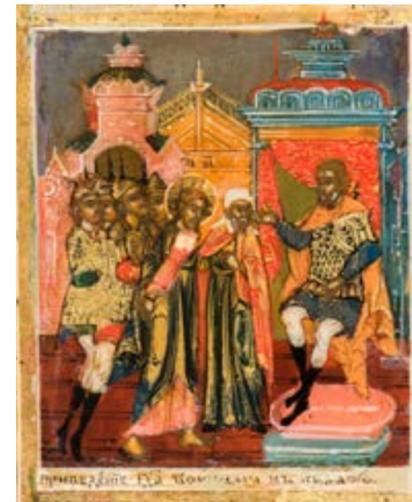
13. The Beheading of John the Baptist.



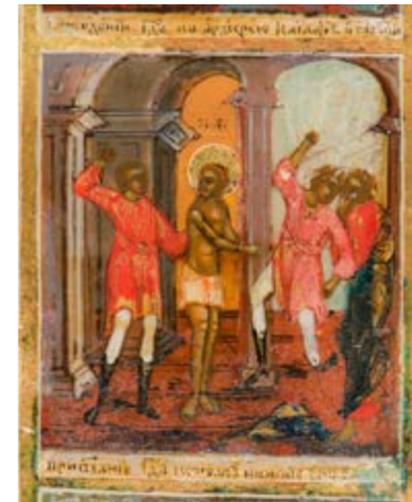
14. The Fiery Ascent of the Prophet Elijah.



15. The Pokrov (Feast of the Protective Veil of the Mother of God).



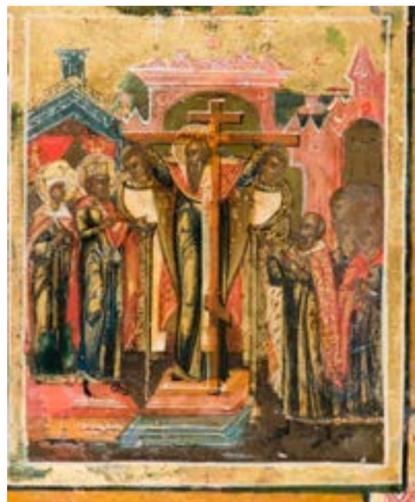
22. The Bringing of Christ before Pilate.



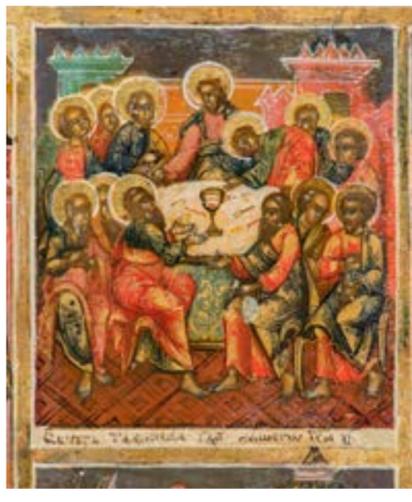
23. The Flagellation of Christ.



24. The Crown of Thorns.



16. The Elevation of the Holy Cross.



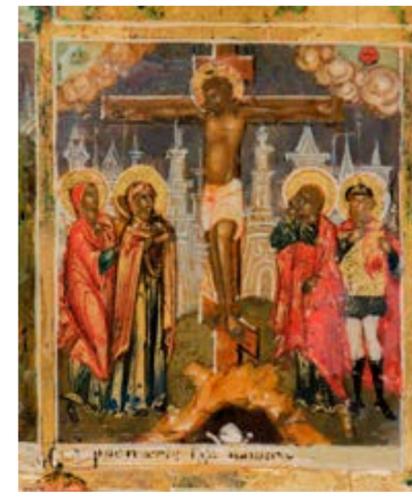
17. The Last Supper.



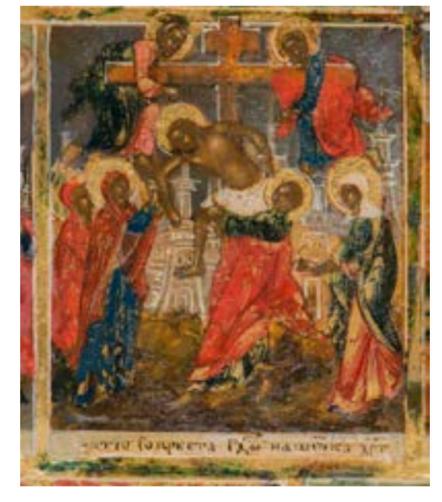
18. The Washing of the Feet.



25. The Carrying of the Cross.



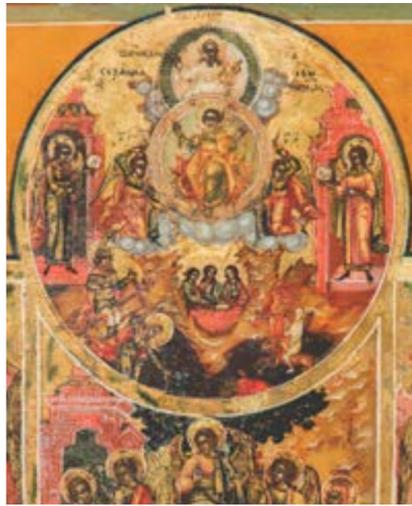
26. The Crucifixion.



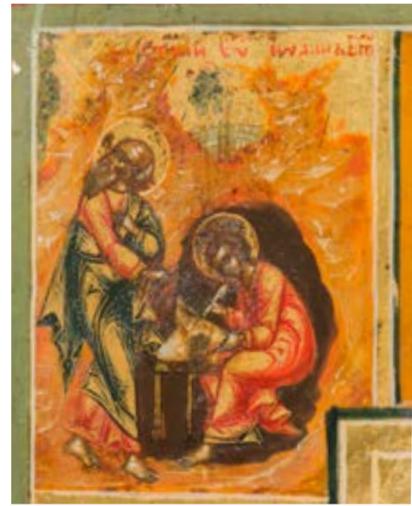
27. The Taking Down from the Cross.



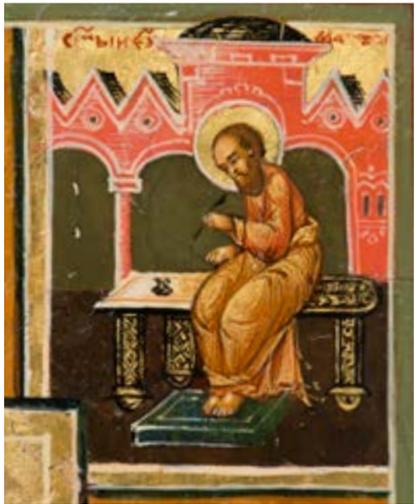
28. The Entombment of Christ.



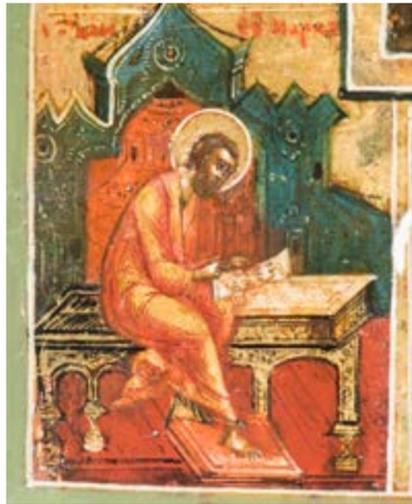
29. The Monogenes
(The Only Begotten Son).



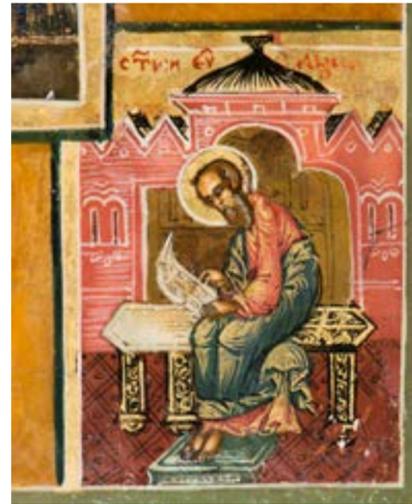
30. The Evangelist John.



31. The Evangelist Matthew.



32. The Evangelist Mark.



33. The Evangelist Luke.



Oklad cover: 1846. St. Petersburg. Master I.F. Chekalin



Size: 41,5 x 34 x 3 cm.

MIDDLE OF THE 19TH CENTURY. VETKA.

Wood (two panels), two incut support boards, absence of an incut centerpiece, an underlying layer of canvas is possible, gesso, tempera, gold.

The author's paintwork is fairly well preserved. Gilding on the edges and the background is partially chafed. Small fallouts of gesso and paintwork in some places.

SAINT ALEXIUS THE MAN OF GOD WITH 12 HAGIOGRAPHICAL SCENES

Saint Alexius – the Man of God († ок. 411) is rightly considered one of the most venerated saints of the Christian world. Alexius (the name of the saint is, in fact, preserved only in the later versions of his Vita) came from a rich and noble Roman family. On the eve of his marriage he left his home and went to Edessa, where he spent his life on the church porch – in prayer and fasting, humbly accepting alms from those that came to church (according to the oldest – Syrian – manuscript of his Vita). According to the Greek version, seventeen years later he came incognito to his parents' home, where he lived for another 17 years, enduring insults from his family's servants and slaves. Feeling the approach of death, St. Alexius wrote down his Vita and revealed his true origins. At the site of the saint's coffin – placed amidst the church – those suffering began to be cured; after this St. Alexius's relics were brought to St. Boniface Church on the Aventine Hill in Rome. Later on the relics were split: in 1414 the head of the saint was brought as a gift by the Byzantine Emperor Manuel II to the Greek Hagia Lavra in Calavrita, while the hand of Alexius was, according to a 17th century legend, stolen by a Russian merchant and brought to Novgorod's Saint Sophia Cathedral. The Feast of St. Alexius is celebrated on March 30th (March 17th according to the Julian calendar).

Icons of St. Alexius became widespread in Russia in the second half of the 17th century, since he was the patron saint of Tsar Alexei Mikhailovich Romanov. Hagiographical icons of this saint are quite rare and mainly appear in the Imperial period.

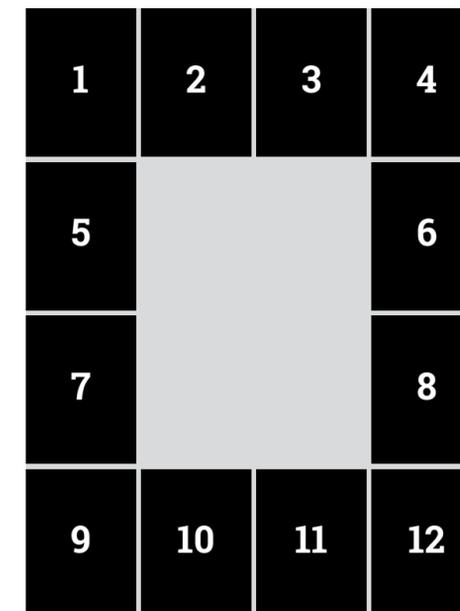
The published icon was painted in one of the major Old Believer iconographic centers, on the western borders of the Russian Empire – in Vetka (the territory of modern day Homel, Chernigov, Novozybkov and Klinets regions). This center formed in the late 17th century. Its cultural and economic blossoming is in many ways linked to the fact that it adjoined regions under the sway of the Polish Kingdom, which were much more tolerant to various religious movements. And it was here that the Old Believers – persecuted by the Tsar – could find a safe haven. Gradually Vetka became one of the main spiritual centers for the Old Believers, a place where iconography flourished. One of the main traits of the Vetka masters is the coloristic and ornamental richness of their compositions, the combination of red and crimson, floral green, blue and pink tones, as well as the thick gold background. Another characteristic trait of Old Believer icons is the amount and size of texts on the borders of the icons.





Saint Alexius the Man of God with 12 hagiographical scenes

Diagram of the border scenes:



1. The Nativity and Baptism of Saint Alexius;
2. The Education of Saint Alexius;
3. Saint Alexius gives his spouse the ring and belt;
4. Saint Alexius takes all gold from his house and hires a ship;
5. Saint Alexius comes to Edessa, where the Holy Mandylion was kept; dressed as a pauper, Saint Alexius asks for alms on the church porch;
6. Saint Alexius flees from Edessa on a ship;
7. Saint Alexius comes to his father's house;
8. Saint Alexius accepts food from the master's table, brought by the servants, and endures with humility from the slaves;
9. Saint Alexius writes down his Vita; Euphemianus, the father of St. Alexius tries to take the manuscript from his hands;
10. The Dormition of Saint Alexius;
11. The Translation of Relics of Saint Alexius;
12. Miracles from the Relics of St. Alexius.



Size: 40 x 33,5 x 3 cm.

CENTERPIECE:
AROUND THE
MIDDLE OF THE 17TH
CENTURY. VOLGA
REGION (POSSIBLY
YAROSLAVL).

BORDERS: 19TH
CENTURY ANTIQUE
RESTORATION.

Wood (one whole board), two incut support boards,
a shallow incut centerpiece, canvas not visible,
gesso, tempera.

The author's paintwork is in a satisfactory state,
partially chafed, there are also numerous small
fallouts of gesso and paint. The icon went through
'antique restoration' in the 19th century; paintwork
on the borders was completely restored, partially
afflicting the border scenes. The gold background,
halos of the saints and the gold graphics of the
vestments was also redone in this period.

THE CRUCIFIXION WITH THE PASSIONS OF CHRIST AND CHURCH FEASTS IN 16 BORDER SCENES

The Suffering and Death of the Lord Jesus is described in all four Gospels (Mathew. 27:33–38; Mark. 15:22–27; Luke. 23:33–43; John. 19:17–25), as well as in numerous apocryphal sources. The iconography of the Crucifixion scene in the centerpiece is traditional, shortened version of the scene, known from the 14th century; it includes only a small number of those present. The composition includes, besides the Crucified Jesus, the Mother of God – in the dark-red maphorion, Mary Magdalene – in the bright, cinnabar robes, the lamenting John the Theologian, and Longinus the Centurion. The scene unravels before the walls of Jerusalem – executed in a rather symbolic way and crowned with two towers. The Cross is placed on a mountain, below which we see a cave, where lies the skull of Adam; according to Church tradition, Adam was buried on Golgotha, and the Blood of Christ touched his skull, washing the Original sin and therefore allowing mankind to enter Eternal Life. The symbolic depictions of the Sun and Moon surrounding the cross are directly linked with the Gospel narrative, according to which at the moment of Christ's death the Sun went dark and the Veil in the Temple was torn in two (Luke 23, 44-45). "They bound Christ – the Sun, yet He broke the eternal bonds, and brought light to the dark places, and defeated the devil. The Sun came under the Earth, and darkness covered the Jews" ("The Word..." of St. Epiphanius of Cyprus). The scenes that surround the centerpiece bear the detailed description of the last days of Christ and of His burial. Yet the iconographic scheme brings its theological complexity, starting the narrative with the Raising of Lazarus, which is seen as a crucial forerunning event of the Resurrection and of God's Salvation of Mankind.

Художественные особенности памятника – миниатюрность письма, неяркий колорит, построенный на использовании разных оттенков охр, приглушенного коричневого и темно-зеленого в сочетании со звонкой киноварью и яркими белильными движками; мягкое вохрение личного по коричневому санкирю, с нежной поддурмянкой; разноцветные горки с мелкими лещадками – находят очень близкие аналогии среди произведений, исполненных около середины XVII века и позволяют связать его с работой поволжского мастера, возможно, выходца из Ярославля.

The artistic traits of the published icon, most notably its 'miniature' painting style, the subtle color-scheme (which combines various shades of ochre, brown and green combined with the bright cinnabar and white accents), the soft modeling of the faces over the brown sankir (with a touch of gentle sanguine), the colorful mountains with small lights – find very close analogies in 17th century Russian iconography and allow the icon to be attributed to the work of a Volga-region master, possibly hailing from Yaroslavl. The fact that the icon was held by the Old Believers is attested to the delicate restoration, executed in the 19th century by an unknown master. The Passion theme was especially popular with the Old Believers, who read detailed poetical and theological treatises on the suffering of Christ during Passion week, preferring them over the Gospel narratives.

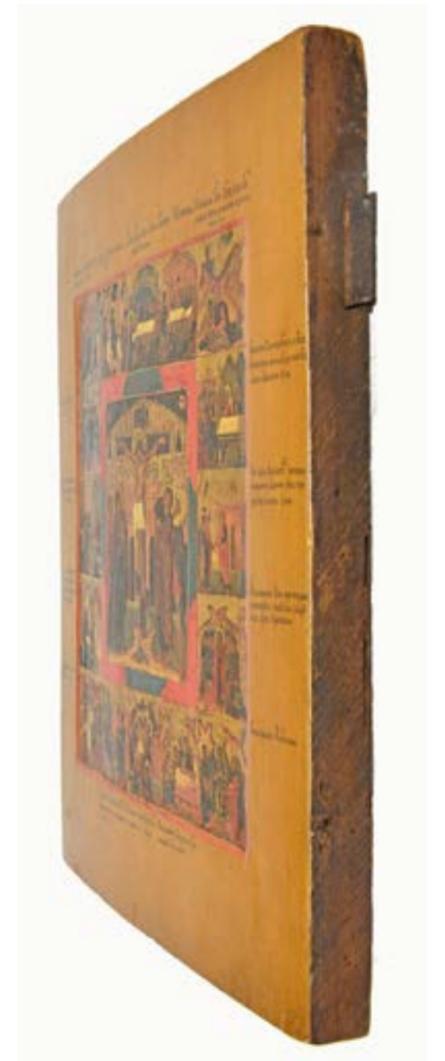
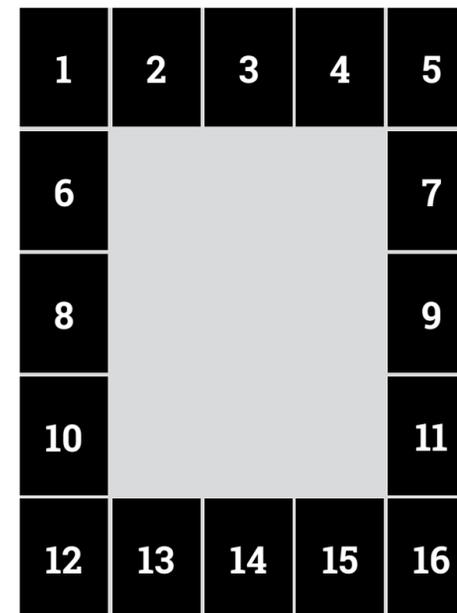




Diagram of the border scenes:



1. The Raising of Lazarus;
2. The Entrance into Jerusalem;
3. The Washing of the Feet;
4. The Last Supper;
5. The Prayer in the Garden of Gethsemane;
6. The Betrayal of Judas;
7. The Bringing of Christ before Caiaphas;
8. The Bringing of Christ before Pilate;
9. Judas receives the 30 pieces of silver;
10. Judas repents and returns the blood money;
11. The Mockery of Jesus;
12. The Carrying of the Christ;
13. Joseph asks Pilate for the body of Christ;
14. The Taking Down of Jesus from the Cross;
15. The Entombment of Christ;
16. The Resurrection – The Harrowing of Hades.

The Crucifixion with the Passions of Christ and Church Feasts in 16 border scenes



Size: 35 x 30,5 x 2,8 cm.

FIRST THIRD OF THE 19TH CENTURY (1820-1830-S). PALEKH

Wood (three panels), two incut profiled support boards, absence of an incut centerpiece, underlying layer of canvas not visible, gesso, tempera, gold. The author's paintwork is in a very good state. Slight chafing of the paint layer. The background also bears marks from the pinning, which held the devotional crown in place.

The back of the icon panel bears an inscription, written in ink. Over the topmost support board: Серебра въ ризѣ вѣсу 89 зо 1 че / Сканная Сери[ка] вѣсу 15 зо / Камней французскихъ стр[] – 28мъ камней / 12 надписей Е[] эмалевыхъ – 12ть надписей / 1 евангеліе эмалевое – 1 евангеліе. Between the support boards: припись и плечики / платья на Святомъ Харлампіи Сканное / золоченье вѣсу неболе 90 зо / чиканку рококо лутчію. Under the lower support board: 19й 71го

THE MARTYR CHARALAMBOS OF MAGNESIA WITH 10 HAGIOGRAPHICAL SCENES AND THE ROYAL DEESIS

According to the Slavonic tradition, Saint Charalambos was the bishop of the Greek city of Magnesia in Asia Minor; it was here that he was martyred in the reign of Emperor Septimius Severus in the year 202. Having openly professed the Christian Faith (border scene 1), he was brought to the Governor Lucian, who condemned Charalambos to be tortured by iron claws (border scene 2). Seeing the strength and humility with which the Saint endured the suffering, the Roman warriors embraced the Faith in Christ. On seeing this, the Governor Lucian spat in anger at Charalambos face, but at that moment a miracle happened: the Governor's head turned backwards. Horrified, Lucian begged the Saint for forgiveness and soon was healed (border scene 3). News of these events reached the Emperor Septimius Severus, who ordered Charalambos to be brought before him at Antioch. The warriors dragged the Saint by a rope tied to his beard; seeing this brutally, a horse turned to them and, with a human voice, accused them of cruelty (border scene 5). At the same time, the Devil, under the guise of a Scythian king, came to Septimius Severus, and raised false accusations against Charalambos (border scene 6). Believing Satan, the Roman Emperor order for extreme torture of the Saint, but he remained untouched (border scene 7). Many miraculous events and healing happened at the prayers of the Saint, and many people embraced the Christian faith, including the Emperor's daughter Galina. One of the Emperor's courtiers, Crispus, persuades Septimius that Charalambos is a sorcerer, not a Christian, after which both began to mock God; but – to the terror of everyone around – they were taken by an unseen force unto the sky (border scene 4). Returning back to the ground by the prayers of Charalambos, the Emperor and his courtier immediately renew the torture of the Saint. Trying to aid the Saint, the princess Galina crushes the heathen idols in the temple, which enrages Septimius even more; the Emperor now renounces his daughter (border scene 8). Septimius Severus decides to give the Saint to be mocked by a certain widow. But when Charalambos was brought to her house, he turned one of the pillars into a tree – and the widow immediately embraced the Faith in Christ, and bent her knees before the martyr (border scene 9). Then the Emperor chose a last measure and ordered for the saint to be beheaded. Charalambos fervently prayed before his execution – and the Lord with His angels came from the skies to personally take the martyr's soul to Heaven.

The iconography of the given piece, as well as the selection of the border scenes, is typical for the Imperial era. According to iconographer's manuals, Saint Charalambos was to be depicted as an elder in liturgical vestments (a green sticharion, red phelonion and an omophorion), with a Gospel in his left hand, with his right hand in a two-finger sing of the cross blessing gesture. In the Byzantine tradition depictions of Saint Charalambos were known in ancient times, but were always quite rare. In the Russian tradition, the saint's depictions become widespread in the Imperial period, predominantly among the Old Believers, since Saint Charalambos was seen as the protector from unexpected death and death without penance – and this was especially central for Old Believers, who were constantly under severe persecution from the state. In Russian folk tradition Saint Charalambos is seen as the healer from ailments, the protector of livestock and crops, the saint who could improve

the wealth of a family and free it from hunger. His Feast is celebrated on February 23rd (February 10th according to the Old Calendar).

Stylistic traits of the given piece allow us to establish its origins in the iconographic workshops of the Vladimir region, which retained the traditional painting-style and the orientation on 17th century Russian art. The intricate execution of the faces, the solid graphic baseline, the reduced color-scheme (built ochres, pinkish-reds, lilacs and greens), the colorful, ornamented buildings and featherlike mountains give the icon a highly festive character. The icon finds close analogies among other works of Palekh iconographers of the first third of the 19th century.

The inscription on the reverse of the icon panel is of special interest; it provides detailed information on the now lost oklad cover (traits of its presence can be seen on the ribs and around the halo of Saint Charalambos). It was probably made in the middle of the 19th century, since the phrase «чиканку рококо лутчію» (misspelled Russian for "best rococo embossing") attests

to the fact that the silversmith was looking towards baroque art, which was popular during the "historicism" movement of the 1840-1850's.

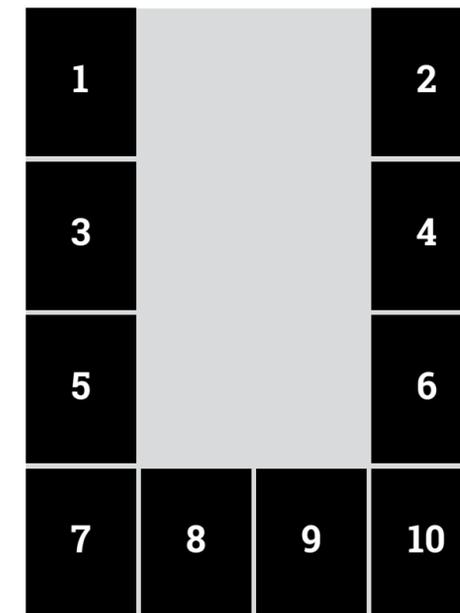
According to the inscription, a lavish embossed oklad cover was decorated with 28 French-cut gems and 12 enamel inscribed medallions. The figure of Saint Charalambos was covered with gilded filigree vestments. Such an oklad cover bears witness to the fact that this particular icon was held in the highest possible reverence and veneration.





The Martyr Charalambos of Magnesia with 10 hagiographical scenes and the Royal Deesis

Diagram of the border scenes:



1. Saint Charalambos preaches the Christian faith;
2. Two servants torture Saint Charalambos with iron claws;
3. The Hegemon of Magnesia Lucian falls down before the feet of the Saint and begs for his forgiveness;
4. The Emperor and his courtiers are taken up into the air by a windstorm;
5. A Horse speaks with a human voice;
6. The Devil, under the guise of an Old Man, comes to the Emperor and falsely accuses St. Charalambos;
7. The enraged Emperor orders the burning of the Saint;
8. The enraged Emperor leaves his daughter to Charalambos;
9. The enraged Emperor gives Charalambos to be mocked by a widow, but she venerates the Saint;
10. The Dormition of Saint Charalambos.



Size: 36 x 31 x 2,5 cm

END OF THE 19TH CENTURY. ICON-PAINTING VILLAGES OF THE VLADIMIR REGION

Wood (three panels), two incut support boards (now lost), absence of an incut centerpiece, underlying layer of canvas not visible, gesso, tempera, gold. The author's paintwork is in a very good condition. Slight chafing and in places – punctuated restoration tonings.

The reverse of the panel bears an ink inscription in nine lines: Въ благословеніе Досточтимой Игумене- / нии, Серафимо-Понетаевскаго Монастыря, / Нектаріѣ; въ знаменательный день воз- / веденія Ея въ санъ Игуменіи, 9 января, / 1894 года, бывшаго въ Крестовой, Свя- / тителя Митрофана, Воронежскаго / Чудотворца, церкви, что при Нижне- / городскомъ Архіерейскомъ домѣ. / Недостойный Архимандритъ Феодосій.

«In Blessing to the Reverend Abbess Nectaria of St. Seraphim Ponetaevskii Monastery; given in the memorable day of her ascension to the rank of Abbess on January 9th 1894 in the Holy Cross/ Saint Mitrophanes of Voronezh Church near the Nizhny Novgorod Archbishop's Residence. The unworthy Archimandrite Theodosius”



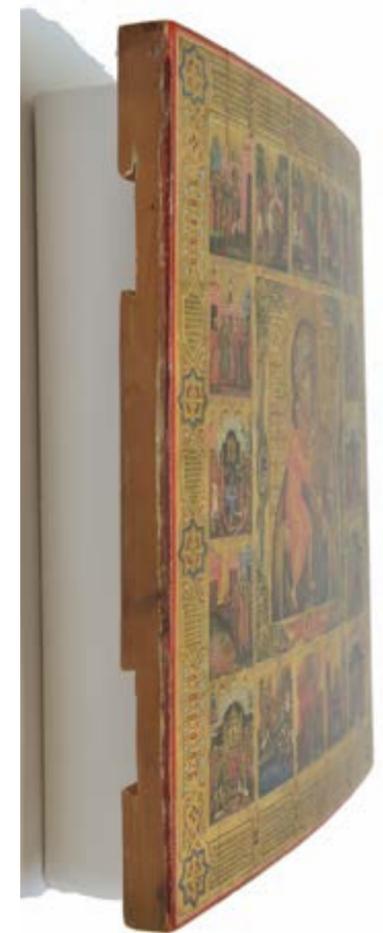
THE FEODOROVSKAYA ICON OF THE MOTHER OF GOD, WITH THE LEGEND OF THE ICON IN 16 BORDER SCENES

The icon belongs to the Byzantine iconographic type known as “Eleusa” (“The Merciful”), which depicts the Holy Virgin leaning towards Christ, who lovingly yearns to His Mother – cheek to cheek, and hugging Her neck. But unlike other “Eleusa” icons, this particular type has Christ’s left foot shown naked up to the knee – as a sign of His future Passions and Suffering on the Cross. This composition is taken from a venerated medieval Marian image, known as the Feodorovskaya Icon of the Mother of God (its Feasts are celebrated on March 14th, August 15th and 16th by the Julian calendar). According to legend, this icon was painted by St. Luke himself. In the 12th century it was given as a gift by Prince Andrei Bogolubsky to the people of Gorodets, from which it disappeared after the Tatar (Mongol) conquest. The icon then made its miraculous appearance in Kostroma, with people bearing witness to the fact, that it was brought by a certain warrior, who closely resembled Saint Theodore Stratilates. This legend naturally gave the icon its current name (Feodorovskaya). The icon appeared on August 16th 1239 during Prince Vasiliy’s hunting trip; the Prince saw the icon standing in a pine tree. After being retrieved through fervent prayer, the icon was brought to Kostroma, to the Church of St. Theodore Stratilates. In 1260 the icon saved Prince Vasiliy and his army from the Tatars in the Battle of the Holy Lake.

The icon became increasingly venerated in the 17th century, since it was before this particular image that the Russian people prayed and implored Mikhail Fedorovich Romanov to accept the throne in 1613. Since that time the wonder-working Marian image became the official patronal icon of the Romanov Dynasty and became venerated throughout Russia. From the middle of the 17th century the official Legend of the Icon was written down, and icons – bearing the legend’s narrative – made their appearance. The given piece finds its closest analogy in a similar icon, painted in the first half of the 19th century and now kept in the State History of Religion Museum in St. Petersburg: not only is the composition of the centerpiece and border scenes identical, but also the centerpiece’s frame – with the depictions of the Cherubim and the Seraphim, as well as the Symbols of the Evangelists, brought out in the ornamented angles.

The detailed execution of the many-figured composition, the traditionalist manner of painting, the rather dry treatment of the vestments with their lavish gold hatching, the subtle color scheme – all these traits allow us to consider this Feodorovskaya icon of the Mother of God to be the work of Vladimir provincial iconographers of the late 19th century.

From the inscription on the reverse we know that the icon was given as a gift to the Reverend Nectaria on the



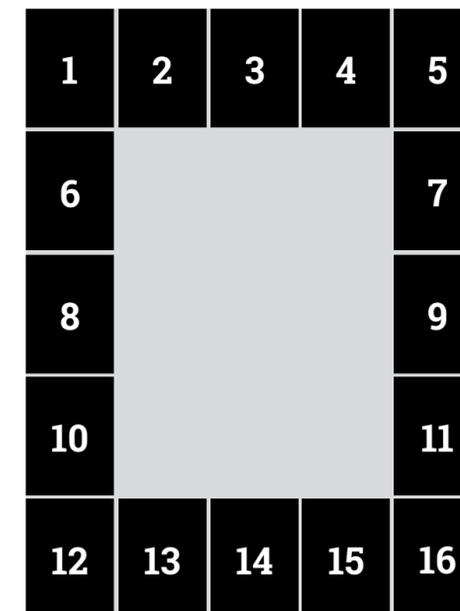
day when she became Abbess of St. Seraphim Ponetaevskii Monastery (on January 9th 1894). Nectaria was the successor to the first Abbess – Mother Eupraxenia, who founded the monastery in 1869 in the village of Ponetaevka in the Nizhny Novgorod region. This monastery was well known for its arts and crafts; it produced numerous icons – on wood and canvas, as well as miniature-on-enamel works of art. In 1885 a miracle appeared from one of the “Mother of God of the Sign” icons, painted by one of the sister-nuns; since that time, this particular icon was known as the Seraphimo-Ponetaevskaya Icon of the Mother of God. The published Feodorovskaya icon was given to Abbess Nectaria by the Archimandrite Theodosius (Sobolev), who at that time was the Father-confessor to the monks of the Totems Holy Savior Sumorin Monastery. In 2003 Archimandrite Theodosius was canonized as a new-martyr for Christ; he was brutally murdered in 1918 in the Arkhangelsk region.

The icon has the highest value – as a historic and museum piece, and is undoubtedly of great interest to private and state collections.



The Feodorovskaya Icon of the Mother of God, with the Legend of the Icon in 16 border scenes

Diagram of the border scenes:



1. Saint Theodore Stratilates brings the icon to Kostroma;
2. The Appearance of the Icon in a tree to Prince Vasiliy Kvashnya of Kostroma during his hunting trip;
3. Prince Vasiliy tries to take the icon, yet it remains untouched;
4. The Prince's prayer before the icon;
5. A Sacred Procession comes from Kostroma to the tree;
6. The Icon is brought to Kostroma;
7. The Icon is placed in Church of Saint Theodore Stratilates;
8. Prayer before the Icon in the church and miraculous healings of the faithful;
9. The inhabitants of Gorodets recognize the icon as one of their own;
10. The First Fire in the Church. The Icon remains unharmed by the flames;
11. Prince Vasiliy builds a new Church for the Icon and decorates it with a precious oklad cover;
12. The Prince prays before the Icon, asking the Mother of God to protect his city from the Tatars;
13. The Icon is brought to the battlefield. The Tatars are blinded by the Divine Light issuing from the Icon;
14. The Second Fire in the Church. The Icon is miraculously taken up into the sky and is saved from the flames;
15. Prince Ivan and the people of Kostroma pray before the Icon, so that it never leaves their city without aid and protection;
16. Prince Ivan builds the stone Dormition Cathedral with the side-chapel of Saint Theodore Stratilates to house the Icon.



Size: 36 x 31 x 3 cm.

SECOND QUARTER OF THE 19TH CENTURY. PALEKH

Wood (one whole panel), two incut support planks, absence of an incut centerpiece, underlying layer of canvas not visible, gesso, tempera.

The author's paintwork is very well preserved. Small fallouts of gesso on the borders, slight chafing of the paint, few fragments of darkened varnish (olifa) that were missed at restoration.

THE RESURRECTION – THE HARROWING OF HADES WITH CHURCH FEASTS IN 12 BORDER SCENES

Icons depicting the major Feast cycle of the Liturgical year were known as polnitsy (basically “full” or “full-cycle” icons), and were among the beloved themes of Palekh iconographers. Such small icons were usually commissioned for homes and private prayer-corners.

The Resurrection – The Harrowing of Hades scene is compositionally split into two rows with two centers. The top row is occupied by the scene of the Rising from the Tomb – an iconography formed directly under Western influence, with an angel in white robes sitting on the stone in the right, and the scene of “Peter at the Empty Tomb” on the left. The lower row bears the traditional scene of the Harrowing of Hades; Christ is depicted in the shining mandorla, stepping over the fallen gates of Hell; to the left we see Adam, rising from his tomb and being held by Christ. Eve is depicted in a similar fashion to the right of Jesus, wearing a red maphorion and backed by a pious woman; behind Adam stands John the Baptist, with the kings, prophets and pious men of the Old Testament. Other iconographic details, sometimes found in the Resurrection, are absent from this piece.

Despite the fact that the given icon instantly evokes the highly-recognizable style of the Vladimir village of Palekh – one of the greatest icon-painting centers of the Russian Empire – it bears a unique and atypical iconographic scheme: the composition of the centerpiece differs from other known examples, while the order of Feasts in the border scenes does not follow the liturgical calendar. Unlike other Palekh icons, this one has the border scene with the Old Testament Trinity (a Feast celebrated 50 days after Pascha) not in the topmost center, which would be typical, but in the lower left, following the Ascension (celebrated 40 days after Pascha). The Transfiguration (celebrated on August 19th) is also taken out of the linear Gospel narrative and placed in accordance with the Church calendar, directly before the Dormition of the Mother of God (August 28th). Nevertheless, known Palekh icons in various state and private collections attest to the fact that such simplified iconographic deviations were widespread.

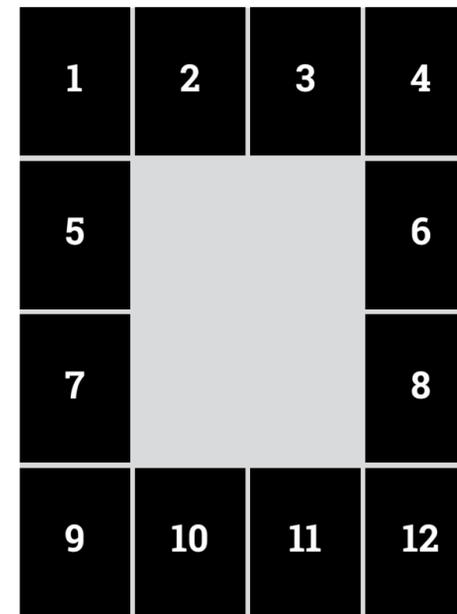
Palekh – which underwent its formation as one of the largest iconographic centers of the Empire in the second half of the 18th century – uniquely combined the strict adherence to the canon and tradition with fervent appreciation of later-day Yaroslavl and Stroganov art. The love for Yaroslavl and Stroganov traditions is especially evident in the bright color pallet and miniature details of Palekh icons. While the detailed execution of the faces, vestments, crystal-like mountains covered with extravagant vegetation reflects the golden age of Palekh art – the rich, yet slightly subdued color pallet (with numerous shades of brown and dark-green), the deformation of body proportions, enlargement of the figures, which occupy almost the entire space of the centerpiece and border-scenes, the lack of a clear composition all indicate that the published icon was painted in the second quarter or middle of the 19th century.





The Resurrection – The Harrowing of Hades with Church Feasts in 12 border scenes

Diagram of the border scenes:



1. The Nativity of the Mother of God;
2. The Entrance of the Mother of God into the Temple;
3. The Annunciation;
4. The Nativity of Christ;
5. Candlemas (The Meeting of Christ in the Temple);
6. Theophany (The Baptism of Christ);
7. The Entrance into Jerusalem;
8. The Ascension;
9. The Old Testament Trinity;
10. The Transfiguration;
11. The Dormition of the Mother of God;
12. The Elevation of the Holy Cross.



Size: 36 x 31 x 2,8 cm.

SECOND QUARTER OF THE 19TH CENTURY. PALEKH.

Wood (one whole panel), two incut profiled support boards, smooth incut centerpiece, underlying layer of canvas not visible, gesso, tempera, gold.

The author's paintwork is in an overall good state. Slight chafing of the paint layer present.

THE RESURRECTION – THE HARROWING OF HADES, WITH SELECTED SAINTS AND FEASTS

Icons with complex iconographic schemes, which included the main Church Feasts, Old Testament Prophets, Holy Fathers, Russian Church Hierarchs, Venerated Icons of the Mother of God and a large number of selected saints reflect the Imperial-era principle, according to which a privately commissioned icon was supposed to reflect – in one form or another – the iconostasis principle. The Resurrection belongs to the more complex variation, which combines the scenes of the Rising from the Tomb with the Harrowing of Hades (placed one over another along a vertical axis), with added images of angelic powers breaking the gates of Hell and chaining Satan, as well as the depiction of the Procession of the Pious to the Kingdom of Heaven. In the upper left corner of the centerpiece we see Saint Peter the Empty Tomb: in the lower right – the Revelation of Christ to the Apostles at the Sea of Galilee.

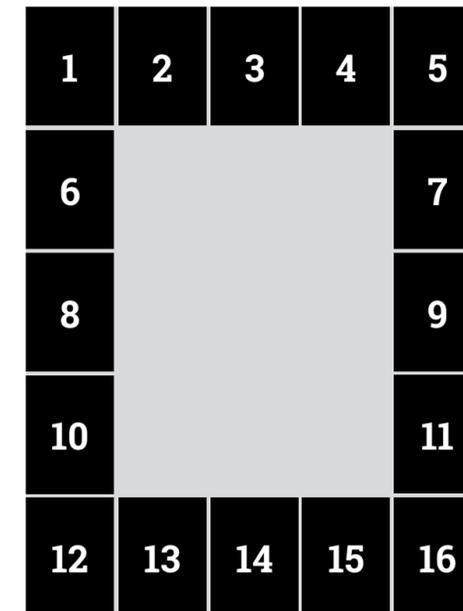
The complex iconographic program of the given icon reveals several themes, which probably have direct relation to the personal life of the commissioner. The selected scenes are amongst the most popular in Palekh: the center of the topmost row is traditionally occupied by the Old Testament Trinity, while the lower row bears the depictions of the Fiery Ascent of the Prophet Elias and the Elevation of the Holy Cross – two of Palekh's churches were consecrated in honor of these feasts. The border scenes are most likely occupied by the patronal saints of the commissioner (Saint Michael Malein, the Martyrs Claudia and Barbara), and the image of the Guardian Angel, who, according to Church tradition, is assigned to a person at birth, and faithfully accompanies him or her until death, when he brings the soul to Heaven. Also we see a series of venerated Marian icons and saints, which were seen as helpers in various trials and tribulations. In the upper row we find the depiction of Saint Nicholas of Myra – one of the most venerated saints of the Christian world. In folk tradition, the springtime feast of this saint (celebrated on May 9th) was closely tied to the start of the agricultural year, the rebirth of nature and the grazing season. Folk tales also juxtapose the "merciful" Saint Nicholas with the "formidable" Prophet Elias (border scene 12), who was seen as lord of thunder and rain, and a saint, whose terrible wrath would fall on the sinful. The figure of Saint John the Forerunner reminds us of the mystery of Baptism. At the same time, some of the depicted saints may also reflect the theme of death. John the Baptist proclaimed "baptism in repentance for the forgiveness of sins" (Mark 1:4; Luke 3:3), saint Nicholas and the Archangel Michael (who stand side by side) were seen as the guides of souls into Heaven, while Saint Barbara was venerated as the one who protected the faithful against sudden death without repentance. The Marian icon of the Unburnt Bush was considered the protector from fire, while the prayer before the Feodorov Icon of the Mother of God was supposed to bring ease at childbirth (that is why the icon is depicted directly over the images of the women patron saints). The saints Gurius, Samon and Aviv, portrayed in the lower row, were venerated as the patrons of marriage and peaceful life between the husband and wife.





The Resurrection – The Harrowing of Hades, with selected Saints and Feasts

Diagram of the border scenes:



1. John the Baptist – the Angel of the Desert;
2. The Archangel Gabriel;
3. The Old Testament Trinity;
4. The Archangel Michael;
5. Saint Nicholas the Archbishop of Myra;
6. The Mother of God – The Unburnt Bush;
7. The Feodorov Icon of the Mother of God;
8. Saint Michael Malein;
9. Saint Claudia the Martyr;
10. The Guardian Angel;
11. Saint Barbara the Martyr;
12. The Fiery Ascent of the Prophet Elias;
13. Saint Sergius of Radonezh;
14. The Elevation of the Holy Cross;
15. Saint Macarius of Unzha and Zheltovodsk;
16. The Martyrs Samon, Gurius and Aviv.



Size: 36 x 30,5 x 2,1 cm.

END OF THE 18TH CENTURY. YAROSLAVL

Wood (one whole panel), two incut profiled support boards, absence of an incut centerpiece, underlying layer of canvas not visible, gesso, tempera, gold.

The author's paintwork is in a very good state. Slight chafing and fallouts of paint.

The reverse of the panel bares several pencil inscriptions. Over the upper support board (in two lines): «Освящена 1го Апреля 1915го года / палеховскомъ Крестовоздвиженск. Храме» (Blessed April 1st 1915/in Palekh's Elevation of the Holy Cross Church). Under the upper support board (in the same handwriting): «Сей Образъ куп. 1915 года Марта 19го дня въ Москве» (This icon bought on March 19th 1915 in Moscow). Below, in the center of the panel: «семья Сусловыхъ» (The Suslov Family).



THE RESURRECTION – THE HARROWING OF HADES, WITH CHURCH FEASTS AND THE HOLY TRINITY IN 16 BORDER SCENES

Despite the fact that all Gospels tell of the Resurrection of Christ (Matthew. 28:1–20; Mark. 16:1–18; Luke. 24:1–49; John. 20:1–29), neither actually describes the event itself; it remains shrouded in mystery. Nevertheless, already in the Middle Ages Russian iconographers embraced the 'Rising from the Tomb' scene, which was taken from Western European etchings. It depicts Christ – Risen from the Dead and Rising over a tomb, whose lid is held by an Angel, while the frightened Roman warriors try to cover themselves with their shields, blinded by the radiant light. This version of the Resurrection won its greatest popularity in the Imperial period, with various Western European etchings serving as samples. In the centerpiece of the given icon the Savior is depicted frontally, with arms spread bearing a standard, and wearing a tunic and a broad himation; this differs from the majority of "The Rising" scenes, where Christ is usually half naked.

The iconography of the border scenes also bears strong Western orientation, reworked in a traditionalist fashion. A unique iconographic trait is found "The Dormition of the Mother of God": in the scene of "The Miracle of Athonius" we see a figure of an elderly man with his hands covered, meanwhile, the Angel with the sword is entirely omitted. Since Imperial-period iconographers were often blindly dependent on the samples, it is quite possible that here we don't see some special idea; rather, the artist was inattentive, and made two depictions of Athonius, instead of one.

The masterful, exquisite artwork clearly indicates that this piece is one of the great examples of Yaroslavl iconography. The hand of an unknown but first-class Yaroslavl iconographer is felt in a number of traits: the calligraphic precision of the graphic work, the compositional scheme, the selection of various foreshortenings, the extravagance of the paintwork, the brilliance of the narrative and the extreme decorative spirit of the piece.

The white-toned faces with the bright rouge, the overall powerful and bright color scheme of the icon (which includes blues, greens, reds and crimson rose tones) is typical for a series of known late 18th century icons, and find analogies among the detailed compositions devised by Climent Mokrousov and Theodore Krasheninnikov.

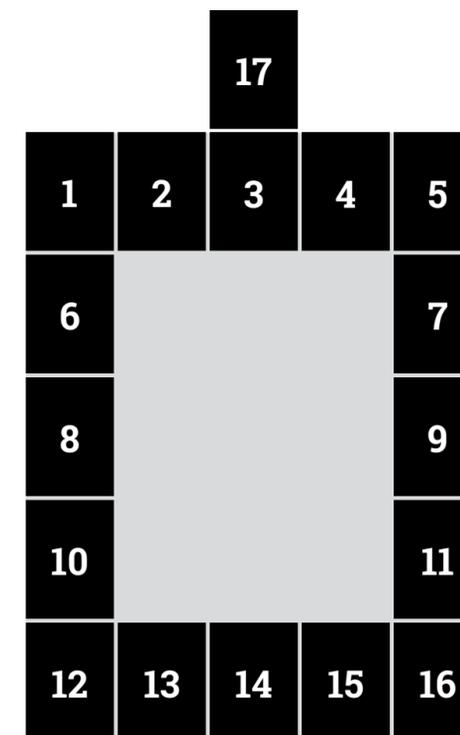
The provenance of this icon is linked with Moscow, where the piece was bought a century after its completion, in 1915 (as stated in the inscription). It was blessed in the oldest church of Palekh – the Elevation of the Holy Cross. The owners, as indicated, were the Suslov family. Now, several iconographers in Palekh bore this name. It could have been Pavel Ivanovich Suslov (1877-1939), the portrait-master iconographer, working in the well-known Sofonov workshop. Or Vasiliy Vasilievich Suslov, an academic; his father – Vasiliy Nikanorovich held an iconographic workshop in Moscow in the 19th century. It is possible that the bright-toned, virtuoso painting style – so favored by Palekh's artists – drew attention of the iconographers, who valued such historic pieces and brought together icon collections of their own.





The Resurrection – The Harrowing of Hades, with Church Feasts and the Holy Trinity in 16 border scenes

Diagram of the border scenes:



1. The Nativity of the Mother of God;
2. The Entrance of the Mother of God into the Temple;
3. The Old Testament Trinity;
4. The Annunciation;
5. The Nativity of Christ;
6. Candlemas (The Meeting of Christ in the Temple);
7. The Theophany (The Baptism of Christ);
8. The Entrance into Jerusalem;
9. The Transfiguration;
10. The Ascension;
11. The Dormition of the Mother of God;
12. The Raising of Lazarus;
13. The Beheading of John the Baptist;
14. The Crucifixion;
15. The Fiery Ascent of the Prophet Elias;
16. The Elevation of the Holy Cross;
17. The New Testament Trinity (The Enthronement).



Size: 36 x 30,5 x 2,3 cm.

AROUND THE MIDDLE OF THE 19TH CENTURY. PALEKH

Wood (two panels), two incut profiled support boards, a shallow incut centerpiece, underlying layer of gesso not visible, gesso, tempera.

Author's paintwork is in an overall good state. Slight chafing.

THE RESURRECTION – THE HARROWING OF HADES WITH THE CHURCH FEASTS, THE HOLY MANDYLION AND SELECTED SAINTS IN 16 BORDER SCENES

Since ancient times, the Resurrection of Christ was among the most popular subjects in Christian Art. The Synodal Period left many examples of such icons; one of the more common variations is the highly developed, complex composition which includes many additional scenes to the Resurrection. The upper part of the composition bears the Resurrection image, in this case it is the "Rising from the Tomb" variation: Christ rises from his Tomb, dressed in shining robes, while the guard remains fast asleep. The Angels march from the site of the Tomb to the pits of Hell, where we see the Archangel Michael, smiting down Satan. Another thematic center is the Harrowing of Hades scene, where we see Christ leading Adam and Eve, along with all those saved from the Pit of Hell to the Gate of the Kingdom of Heaven. The Resurrection narrative is traditionally supplemented by other scenes: in the topmost left corner – the Apostle Peter at the Empty Tomb, and the Angel, who appeared to the myrrh-bearing women; in the lower right – the Revelation of Christ to the Apostles on the Sea of Galilee.

The border scenes bear the depictions of the Twelve Great and Minor Feasts of the Church. The selection of the scenes indicates close ties to Palekh: in the upper tier we see the traditional depiction of the Old Testament Trinity, in the lower tier – the Fiery Ascent of the Prophet Elias and the Elevation of the Holy Cross, feasts in honor of which two of Palekh's churches were consecrated. The icon is supplemented by the images of the commissioner's heavenly patrons, which form a family's pantheon: Saint John of Rylsk (?), Saint Niketas of Kostroma, Saint Alexius – the Man of God, Saint Eudokia, Saint Anna, Saint Agrippina the Martyr. Quite a rare element for these icons is the Holy Mandylion, placed in the topmost tier. It might possibly indicate that the commissioner belonged to the Priestless strain of Old Believers, who decorated painted or carved Crucifixions with the Holy Mandylion.

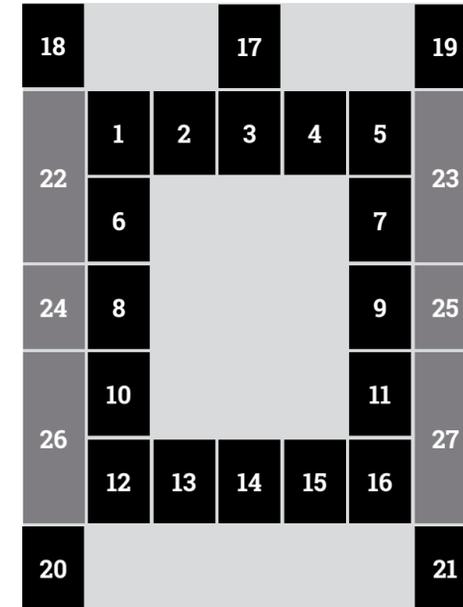
Stylistic traits of the icon – the balanced proportions, the elongated, delicate figures, the strong graphic work, with the recognizable orientation on Old Russian Art, the emphasized silhouettes, the gold hatching, the enamel-like paint, attest to the fact it was painted in the middle of the 19th century by a master, who is closely linked to the Palekh tradition.





The Resurrection – The Harrowing of Hades with the Church Feasts, the Holy Mandylion and selected saints in 16 border scenes

Diagram of the border scenes:



1. The Nativity of the Mother of God;
2. The Entrance of the Mother of God into the Temple;
3. The Old Testament Trinity;
4. The Annunciation;
5. The Nativity of Christ;
6. Candlemas (The Meeting of Christ in the Temple);
7. The Theophany (The Baptism of Christ)
8. The Entrance into Jerusalem;
9. The Transfiguration;
10. The Ascension;
11. The Dormition of the Mother of God;
12. The Raising of Lazarus;
13. The Beheading of John the Baptist;
14. The Fiery Ascent of the Prophet Elias;
15. The Pokrov (Feast of the Protective veil of the Mother of God);
16. The Elevation of the Holy Cross;
17. The Holy Mandylion;
18. The Evangelist John the Theologian;
19. The Evangelist Matthew;
20. The Evangelist Mark;
21. The Evangelist Luke;
22. Saint John of Rylsk(?);
23. Saint Niketas of Kostroma;
24. Saint Alexius the Man of God;
25. Saint Eudokia;
26. Saint Anna;
27. Saint Agrippina.



 Size: 36 x 30,5 x 2,8 cm

SECOND HALF OF THE 19TH CENTURY. PALEKH

Wood (three panels), channels from two incut support boards (now lost), absence of an incut centerpiece, the underlying layer of canvas not visible, gesso, tempera, gold.

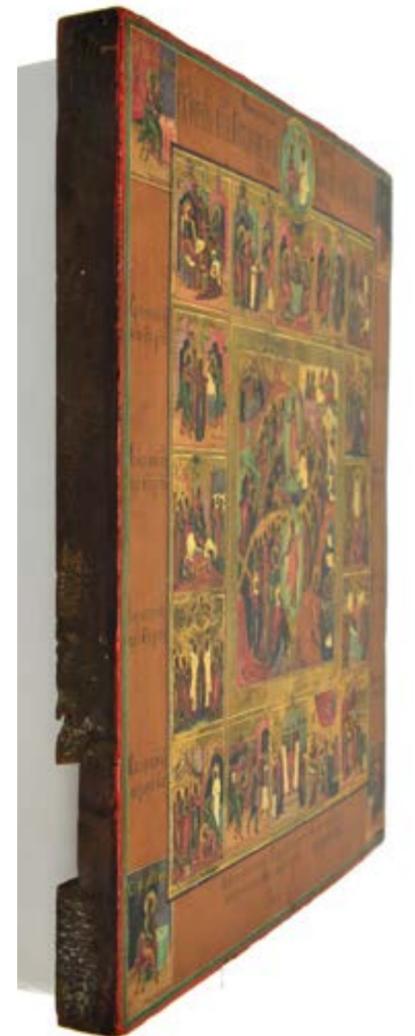
The author's paintwork is in overall good condition. Slight chafing and small fallouts of the paint layer.

The reverse of the panel bears a stamp mark:
Private/ property/ A.G.

THE RESURRECTION – THE HARROWING OF HADES, WITH CHURCH FEASTS, THE HOLY TRINITY AND THE FOUR EVANGELISTS IN 16 BORDER SCENES

The theme of the Resurrection of Christ is amongst the most popular subjects in religious art. Small-sized icons, similar to the given one, were usually placed on the analoion during Church services or kept at home for private prayer. According to the established tradition, the centerpiece is dedicated to a detailed version of the Resurrection – the Harrowing of Hades, surrounded by sixteen border scenes, bearing the depictions of the main Church Feasts (that is why these icons were known as “polnitsy” or “full cycle icons”). The many-tiered composition traditionally includes the Rising from the Tomb. The described variation of the Resurrection was shaped in 16th century Russia, under the influence of Western European etchings and the translation of the apocryphal Gospel of Nicodemus, which was included into The Great Almanac of Metropolitan Macarius. By the middle of the 17th century the iconographic form became more complex and enriched by new events, which followed the Resurrection and predated the Ascension of Christ. The Rising from the Tomb scene takes its place in the upper part of the composition, and the Harrowing of Hades is depicted directly below, the composition is built on two centers, placed along a single axis. This iconographic variation was shaped in Moscow, but was especially popular in the Volga Region (in Yaroslavl and Kostroma). In the second half of the 18th century it was taken up by Palekh iconographers – and ever since then it occupies the center of polnitsy icons. The exterior frame of 16 border scenes traditionally contains depictions of Church Feasts, starting with the Nativity of the Mother of God, which begins the yearly liturgical cycle. In the lower part this frame contains four additional scenes, typical for such icons and introduced by Palekh iconographers in the early 19th century: the Beheading of John the Baptist, the Elevation of the Holy Cross, the Fiery Ascent of the Prophet Elias and the Pokrov of the Mother of God. The corners bear the depictions of the Four Evangelists: John the Theologian, Matthew, Mark and Luke.

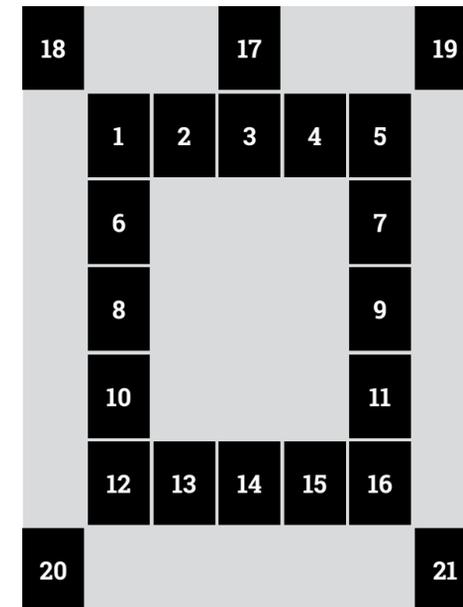
The production of miniature, complex compositions in the icon-painting villages of the Vladimir region in the middle of the 19th century becomes widespread. Such works of art are known for their graphics and their yearning for the Old Russian iconographic tradition, which was immensely popular among the Old Believers, but also quickly won recognition among the adherents of the official Church. The stylistic traits of the icon clearly indicate that it was painted in one of Palekh's workshops in the middle of the 19th century.





The Resurrection – The Harrowing of Hades, with Church Feasts, the Holy Trinity and the Four Evangelists in 16 border scenes

Diagram of the border scenes:



1. The Nativity of the Mother of God;
2. The Entrance of the Mother of God into the Temple;
3. The Old Testament Trinity;
4. The Annunciation;
5. The Nativity of Christ;
6. Candlemas (The Meeting of Christ in the Temple);
7. The Theophany (The Baptism of Christ);
8. The Entrance into Jerusalem;
9. The Transfiguration;
10. The Ascension;
11. The Dormition of the Mother of God;
12. The Raising of Lazarus;
13. The Beheading of John the Baptist;
14. The Elevation of the Holy Cross;
15. The Fiery Ascent of the Prophet Elias;
16. The Pokrov (Feast of the Protective Veil of the Mother of God);
17. The Holy Trinity (The Enthronement);
18. The Evangelist John the Theologian;
19. The Evangelist Matthew;
20. The Evangelist Mark;
21. The Evangelist Luke.



Size: 36 x 30 2,5 cm

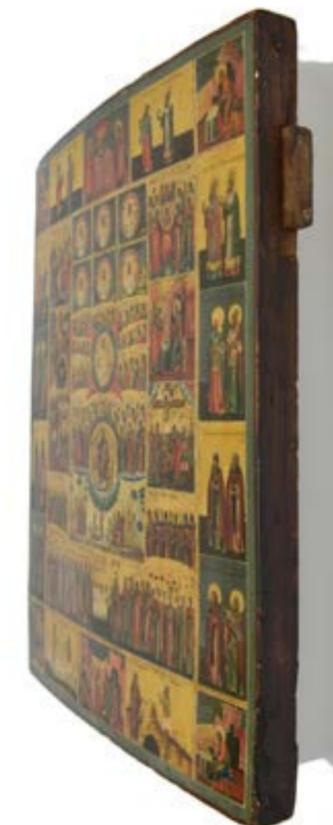
AROUND THE MIDDLE OF THE 19TH CENTURY. PALEKH

Wood (two panels), two incut profiled support boards, absence of an incut centerpiece, underlying layer of canvas not visible, gesso, tempera.

The author's paintwork is in good condition. Slight chafing of the paint layer on the borders.

The iconography of the Hexahemeron was formed under the influence of the Church Fathers (Basil of Caesarea, George of Pisidia, John – the Exarch of Bulgaria, etc.), who left treatises on the Biblical creation narrative, according to which God made the world in six days. The complex composition of the Hexahemeron icons traditionally includes the Etimasion (the Return of Christ on Judgement Day), the Deesis with Christ in Majesty or Christ Emmanuel, the Feasts of the six week days and the Sabbath of All Saints. Such icons made their appearance in the end of the 15th century, probably because of the eschatological awaiting of the end of the world: the year 1492 marked the end of the 7,000 year period, which symbolically coincided with the six days of creation and after which God "rested from all his work", while the eighth day was seen as the day of the Second and Great Coming of Christ. In the following period the Hexahemeron iconography becomes even more complicated, and in the late 18th-early 19th centuries it was drastically re-worked by the Palekh iconographer V.I. Kokhlov, who added the scenes of Creation and the figures of the saints on the borders, turning it into a clear iconographic scheme. Thus formed a clear composition, instantly recognizable due to its structure and color scheme, which allow us to consider such icons, widespread in the 19th century, to be the work of Palekh's iconographers, most notably of Kokhlov's workshop.

The centerpiece consists of several different scenes. The main axis is occupied by six Creation scenes (Genesis 1:3-31), God Sabaoth surrounded by the Angelic host, Christ the Judge, seated on a throne, with the Mother of God, John the Baptist and the Heavenly Powers in prayer before Him, the Tree of Life, with scenes of the Fall of Man and Exile of Adam and Eve from Paradise. Then follow the six Feasts, which, in accordance with the teachings of Saint Constantine-Cyril the Philosopher (9th century) were symbols of the six week days, with Saturday (or Sabbath) lacking one. Sunday symbolized the Harrowing of Hades; Monday – the Feast of the Archangels; Tuesday – the Beheading of John the Baptist; Wednesday – the Annunciation; Thursday – the Washing of the Feet; Friday – the Crucifixion. The seventh day – the Sabbath of All Saints – is represented in the lowest tier of the centerpiece.



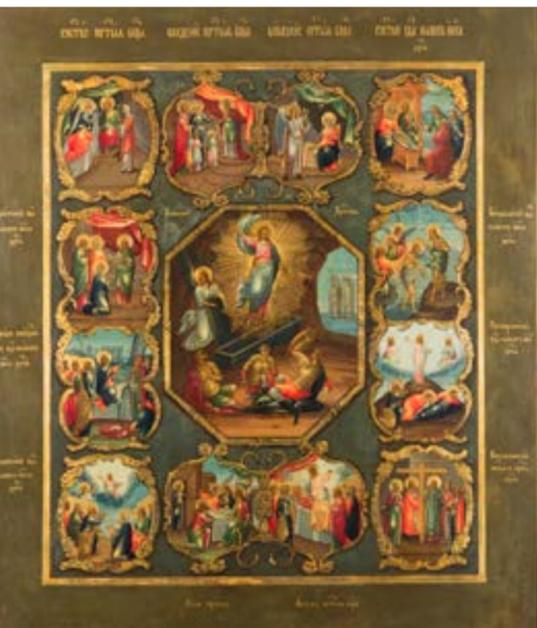
THE HEXAHEMERON



The Hexahemeron

The centerpiece is surrounded by border scenes, depicting the Evangelists, Church Fathers, Metropolitans, Monastic saints, the Blessed and the Fools-for-Christ. The introduction of such a troop of saints can be explained by the Russian desire to depict the most venerated saints following the strict hierarchical principle. The topmost tier is meant for the Ecumenical Church Fathers and Saints: Basil the Great, John Chrysostom, Gregory the Theologian and the Apostle James – the Brother of the Lord. The border scenes are occupied by pairs of Holy Bishops: Peter and Alexius, Jonah and Philip, the Metropolitans of Moscow, and the Rostov Archbishops – Ignatius and Isaiah, Leontius and Jacob. Then come the monastic saints – Zosima and Sabbatius of Solovetsk, Anthony and Theodosius of Pechersk, Varlaam of Khutynsk and Gregory Decapolites, Sergius of Radonezh and Niketas, the Archbishop of Novgorod. In the lower tier the scene of the murder of Saint Tsarevich Demetrius is flanked by the figures of the Blessed and the Fools-for-Christ: Basil and Maxim of Moscow (on the left), John the Big Hood and Isidore of Rostov (on the right).

The stylistic traits of the icon, most notably the desire to escape overt decorativeness, the draft-like treatment of the vestments, mountains and architecture, the silhouettes of the figures, the rather harsh gold-hatching, the active color juxtaposition of the greyish blues and bright yellows in the background – allow one to consider it to be a piece of work of mid-19th century iconographer, closely tied to the Palekh tradition.



Size: 36 x 30,5 x 2,5 cm.

SECOND QUARTER OF THE 19TH CENTURY. ST. PETERSBURG OR MOSCOW

Wood (three panels), two incut profiled support boards, absence of an incut centerpiece, underlying layer of gesso not visible, gesso, tempera, gold.

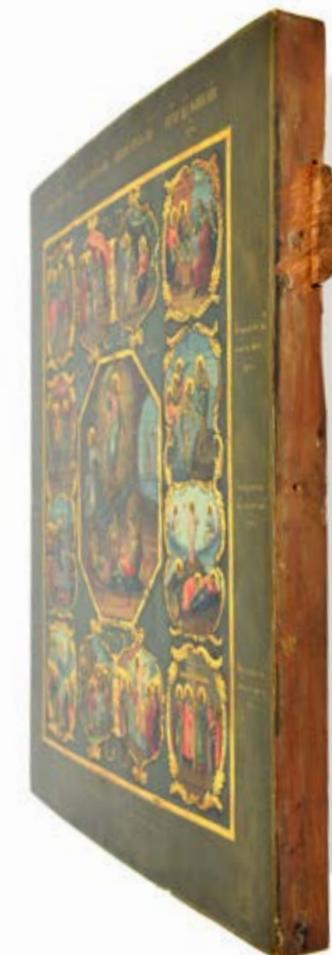
The author's paintwork is in very good state. In places there are small fallouts of the paint.

THE RESURRECTION – THE HARROWING OF HADES, WITH CHURCH FEASTS IN 12 BORDER SCENES

The Resurrection of Christ is among the most popular themes in Russian religious art. Icons of the Resurrection were often commissioned for churches, with small-sized images being placed on the analoion for veneration by the faithful during Sunday services; they could also be used for home worship. The popularity of such images – arrayed with border scenes of Feasts – is obvious: the composition encompassed the main events of the liturgical year, with its main Feast – Pascha (the Resurrection of Christ) in the centerpiece.

Despite the fact that all Gospels tell of the Resurrection of Christ (Matthew. 28:1–20; Mark. 16:1–18; Luke. 24:1–49; John. 20:1–29), neither actually describes the event itself; it remains shrouded in mystery. Nevertheless, already in the Middle Ages Russian iconographers embraced the 'Rising from the Tomb' scene, which was taken from Western European etchings. It depicts Christ – Risen from the Dead and Rising over a tomb, whose lid is held by an Angel, while the frightened Roman warriors try to cover themselves with their shields, blinded by the radiant light. This version of the Resurrection won its greatest popularity in the Imperial period, with various Western European etchings serving as samples, namely – the Piscator Bible, published by a Dutch engraver in the late 17th century; the latter was widely used as the main sample by Russian iconographers in the following century.

In the centerpiece of the given icon the Savior is depicted frontally, with arms spread bearing a standard, and wearing a tunic and a broad himation; this differs from the majority of "The Rising" scenes, where Christ is usually half naked. The triumphant character of this scene is echoed the spirit of the Imperial period, when the "Rising from the Tomb" actually displaces the traditional "Harrowing of Hades" depictions. The events take place in the dark cave, at whose entrance we see three Myrrh-bearing women, the closest disciples of Jesus who, in accordance with the Judaic tradition, came to wash the body of Christ with precious oils. The iconography of the border scenes also shows Western orientation, which was reworked in a traditionalist manner. In the Annunciation scene the Archangel Gabriel stands with lilies in his hand before the Mother of God, who is shown seated at a table; in the Nativity of Christ we clearly see the Adoration of the Magi; in the Candlemas scene the Prophetess Anna is unusually shown falling to the feet of Simeon. The interior scenes clearly reveal the artist's acquaintance with

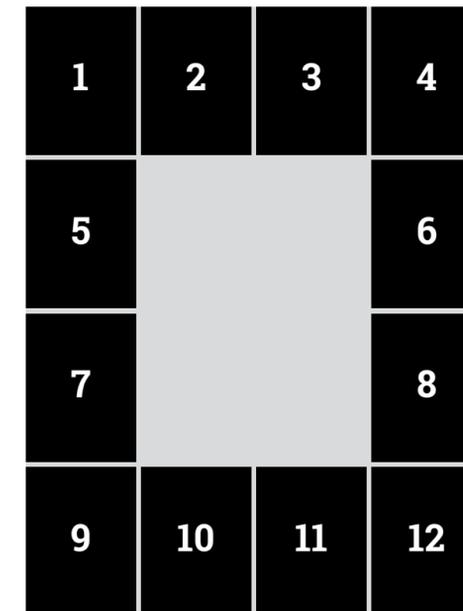


linear perspective. The compositions are framed by vivid cartouches – gold with black graphics – which imitate gilt baroque woodcarving. The precision and beauty of the 'miniature' painting style enforces the overall triumphal, festive character of this icon.

The artistic traits of the piece, namely its desire to follow Baroque forms, the intense and seemingly condensed color scheme, the execution of the vestments, the energetic and diverse poses of the characters, and at the same time – the draft-like painting style, the symmetry of the cartouches and the highly-ordered ornamentation – all reflect the "Second Baroque" style – a retrospective movement, popular in the second quarter of the 19th century. The overall mastery of the piece indicates that it was painted in either Moscow or St. Petersburg.



Diagram of the border scenes:



1. The Nativity of the Mother of God;
2. The Entrance of the Mother of God into the Temple;
3. The Annunciation;
4. The Nativity of Christ;
5. Candlemas (The Meeting of Christ in the Temple);
6. The Theophany (The Baptism of Christ);
7. The Entrance into Jerusalem;
8. The Transfiguration;
9. The Ascension;
10. The Old Testament Trinity;
11. The Dormition of the Mother of God;
12. The Elevation of the Holy Cross.

The Resurrection – The Harrowing of Hades, with Church Feasts in 12 border scenes



Size: 36 x 31 x 2,5 cm.

END OF THE 19TH CENTURY. **ICON-PAINTING VILLAGES OF THE VLADIMIR REGION (KHOLUY OR MSTYORA)**

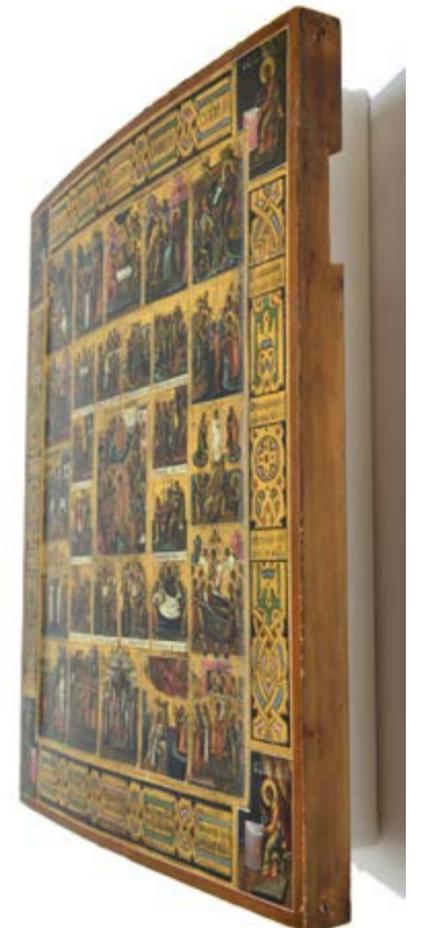
Wood (four panels), two incut support boards (now lost), a shallow incut centerpiece, underlying layer of canvas not visible, gesso, tempera.

The author's paintwork is in good condition.

THE RESURRECTION – THE HARROWING OF HADES, WITH THE PASSIONS OF CHRIST, THE CHURCH FEASTS AND THE FOUR EVANGELISTS IN 28 BORDER SCENES

The icon is dedicated to the Resurrection – the Harrowing of Hades, with the Passion cycle – a complex iconographic composition, which is quite traditional for the Imperial period. The composition includes two Resurrection scenes – the Rising from the Tomb and the Harrowing of Hades, connected by a diagonal processional line of the Pious marching from Hell to the Kingdom of Heaven, and supplemented by other scenes, which either took place before or after the Resurrection (in this case only one – the Revelation of Christ to the Apostles on the Sea of Galilee). The centerpiece does not really stand out alongside the exterior frame of Festive border scenes and seems to get lost among the depictions of the Passion narrative. The composition of the scenes is dependent on a wide range of sources – from the traditional medieval iconographic samples to Western European portrayals. The narrative of the upper tier of Feasts, which traditionally begins with the Nativity of the Mother of God, is chronologically broken by the depiction of the Old Testament trinity, placed along the central axis. The lower tier includes four minor Feasts, which were typically included into such icons since the time Palekh artists devised this complex composition in the early 19th century. These are the Beheading of John the Baptist, the Elevation of the Holy Cross, the Fiery Ascent of the Prophet Elias and the Pokrov of the Mother of God. In the corners we see the depictions of the Four Evangelists: John the Theologian, Matthew, Mark and Luke.

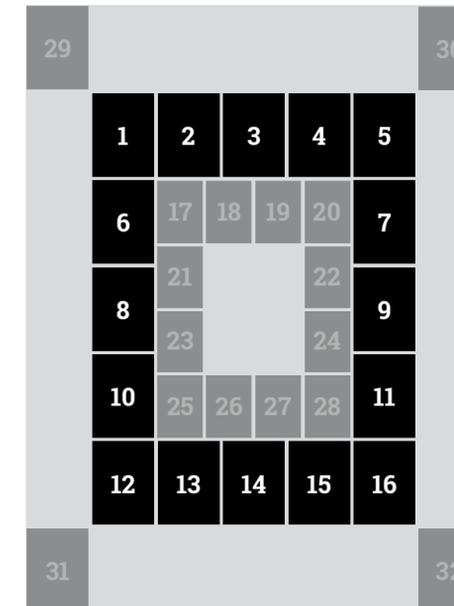
The simple character of the artwork attests to the fact that such icons were indeed produced on a mass scale. They were mainly painted in the icon-painting villages of the Vladimir region – in Mstyora and Kholuy, which had several workshops, specializing on mass production. The conventionalism of their execution, the highly-standardized painting style and the use of popular iconographic schemes in both centers make the differentiation between them difficult. Pre-revolutionary studies have left us detailed descriptions of the “popular” icon and its production: the process itself was broken into almost 40 stages (each taken on by a separate master or artisan), and the overall amount of icons produced yearly in Kholuy and Mstyora came up to shocking numbers – up to 2,500,000 a year. The manner of painting clearly reflects late 19th century art, when iconographers began to imitate the ornamentation of precious oklad covers, which they saw on higher level icons. The interwoven ornaments, which we also see, were in turn taken from the decorative motifs of 17th century Russian architectural depictions.





The Resurrection – The Harrowing of Hades, with the Passions of Christ, the Church Feasts and the Four Evangelists in 28 border scenes

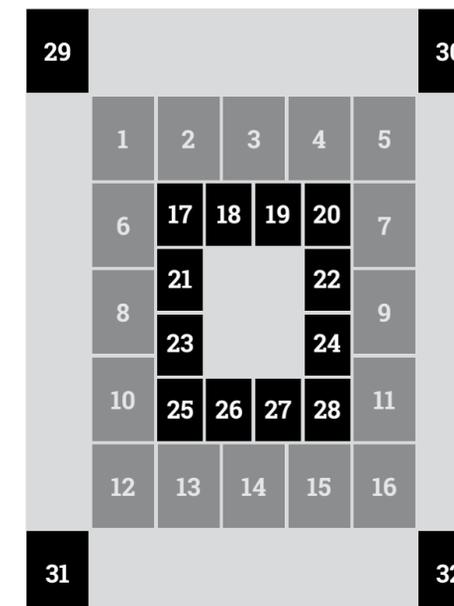
Diagram of the border scenes:



The Festive cycle:

1. The Nativity of the Mother of God;
2. The Entrance of the Mother of God into the Temple;
3. The Old Testament Trinity;
4. The Annunciation;
5. The Nativity of Christ;
6. Candlemas (The Meeting of Christ in the Temple);
7. The Theophany (The Baptism of Christ);
8. The Entrance into Jerusalem;
9. The Transfiguration;
10. The Ascension;
11. The Dormition of the Mother of God;
12. The Raising of Lazarus;
13. The Beheading of John the Baptist;
14. The Elevation of the Holy Cross;
15. The Fiery Ascent of the Prophet Elias;
16. The Pokrov (Feast of the Protective Veil of the Mother of God).

Diagram of the border scenes:



The Passion Cycle:

17. The Last Supper;
18. The Washing of the Feet;
19. The Prayer in Gethsemane;
20. The Betrayal of Judas and the Arrest of Christ;
21. The Bringing of Christ before Caiaphas;
22. Christ before Pilate;
23. The Flagellation of Christ;
24. The Crown of Thorns;
25. The Carrying of the Cross;
26. The Crucifixion;
27. The Taking Down from the Cross;
28. The Entombment of Christ.
29. The Evangelist John the Theologian;
30. The Evangelist Matthew;
31. The Evangelist Mark;
32. The Evangelist Luke.



Size: 36 x 31 x 2,5 cm.

FIRST QUARTER OF THE 19TH CENTURY. PALEKH

Wood (two panels), two incut support boards (now lost), absence of an incut centerpiece, underlying layer of canvas not visible, gesso, tempera, gold.

The author's paintwork is in very good state and is currently covered with a thin web of crazing. Slight chafing and small fallouts of the paint also present. On the reverse of the panel two abbreviated inscriptions, made in pencil: «Б. Я. / гор[шечни]кову» и «[и Хе] Гер[бер]».

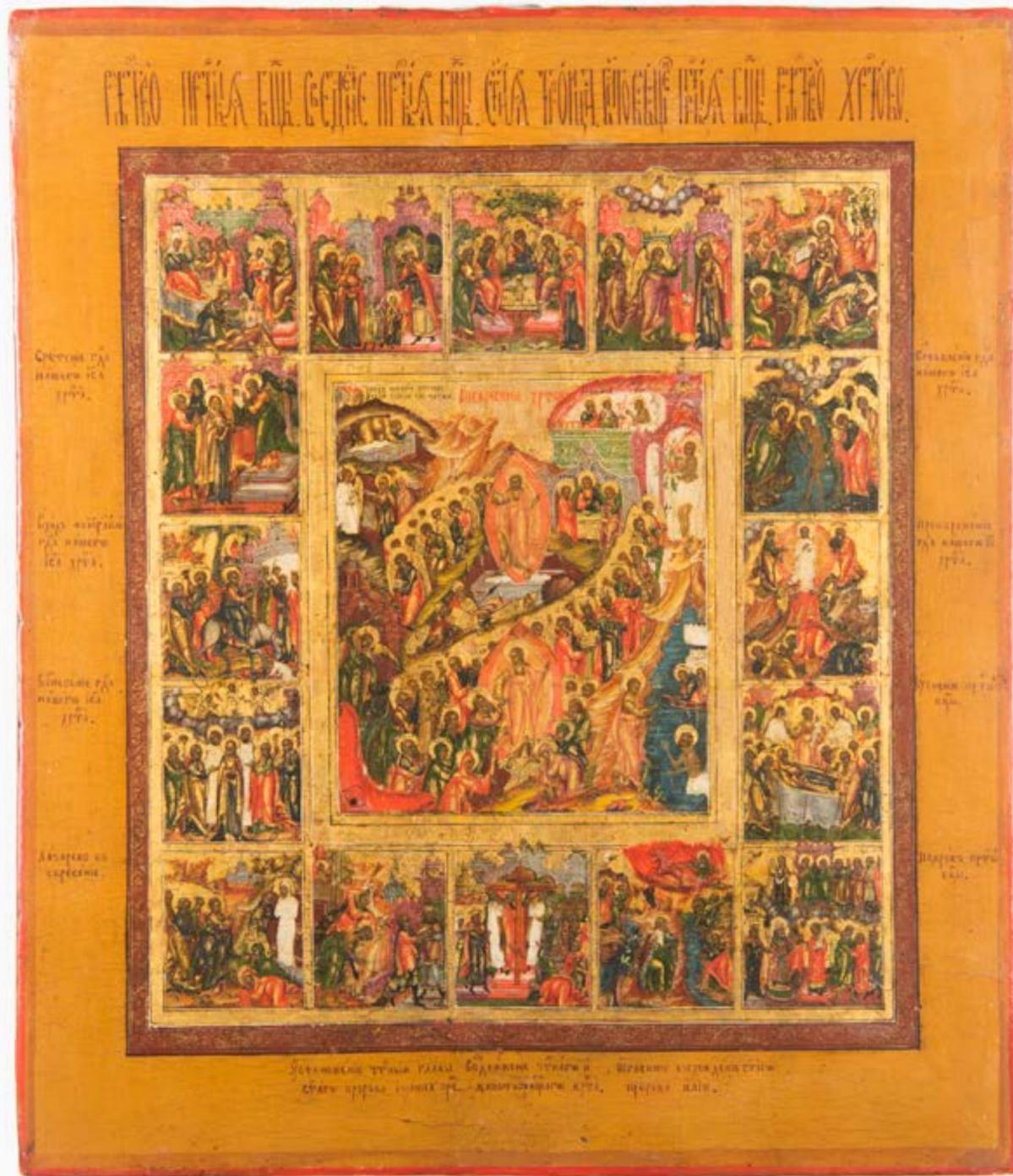
THE RESURRECTION – THE HARROWING OF HADES WITH CHURCH FEASTS IN 16 BORDER SCENES

The given piece belongs to a widespread type “full-cycle icons” (called “polnitsy” in Russian); these were quite complex compositions, which included the Twelve Great and the minor Feasts of the Church, brought together around the “Resurrection – The Harrowing of Hades” scene. The highly developed Resurrection iconography traditionally includes the scene of Christ Rising from the Tomb. This variation makes its way into Russian iconography already in the 16th century via Western European etchings. An important factor in its reception was the translation of the Gospel of Nicodemus, which was included into Metropolitan Macarius’ Great Almanac. By the middle of the 17th century the iconographic scheme becomes even more complex, encompassing new events, which took place between the Resurrection and the Ascension of Christ. Since the “Rising from Tomb” scene was brought into the upper tier, directly over the “Harrowing of Hades”, the composition begins to be built on two centers, lying along a single axis. This iconographic scheme was first established in Moscow, but became increasingly popular in the Volga region (especially in Yaroslavl and Kostroma). In the second half of the 18th century it was taken up by Palekh iconographers, and since that time we always see this version of the Resurrection as the centerpiece of polnitsy (“full-cycle”) icons. This tradition will endure until the early 20th century.

Overall, the iconography of the given piece finds many analogies among other 19th century icons. The composition is built on two major scenes – the Rising from the Tomb and the Harrowing of Hades – placed along an axis and united by a diagonal processional line of the Pious marching into Heaven. It is also supplemented by other scenes: Saint Peter at the Empty Tomb; the Revelation of Christ to the Apostles on the Sea of Galilee; the Revelation of Christ to Luke and Cleopas in Emmaus. The number and iconography of the Feast cycle is also typical for its time.

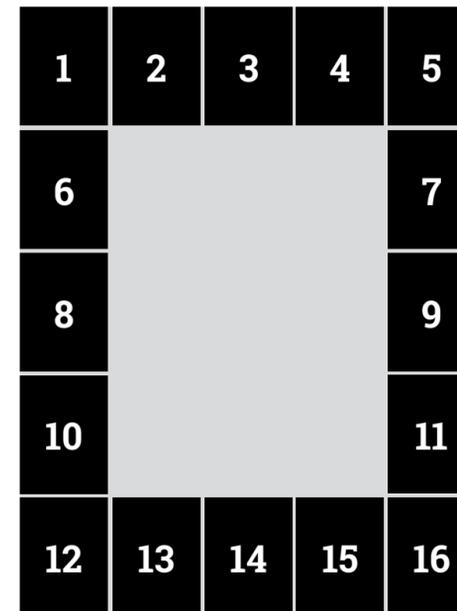
Palekh was renowned for its “miniature” painting-style, and here the iconographer’s artistry unravels in the small border scenes. Each border scene is no more than 5 cm in height, but the artist manages to brilliantly place the entire, complex Festive scene – with their large number of characters, standing before bizarre, highly decorated and ornamented architectural shapes, or before colorful mountainsides, with lights and intricate grasses, encompassed by blue-grey clouds. The resonating colors, lavish amounts of gold, which fills the background in the centerpiece and border scenes, the virtuoso ornamentation, the rhythmic balance of the entire composition clearly illustrate the words of the Paschal Troparion: “Christ is Risen from the Dead, Trampling down Death by Death/And upon those in the Tombs bestowing Life”. This icon is undoubtedly among the best examples of Palekh art of the first quarter of the 19th century.





The Resurrection – The Harrowing of Hades with Church Feasts in 16 border scenes

Diagram of the border scenes:



1. The Nativity of the Mother of God;
2. The Entrance of the Mother of God into the Temple;
3. The Old Testament Trinity;
4. The Annunciation;
5. The Nativity of Christ;
6. Candlemas (The Meeting of Christ in the Temple);
7. The Theophany (The Baptism of Christ);
8. The Entrance into Jerusalem;
9. The Transfiguration;
10. The Ascension;
11. The Dormition of the Mother of God;
12. The Raising of Lazarus;
13. The Beheading of John the Baptist;
14. The Elevation of the Holy Cross;
15. The Fiery Ascent of the Prophet Elias;
16. The Pokrov (Feast of the Protective Veil of the Mother of God).



Size: 45 x 37 x 2,5 cm.

SECOND HALF OF THE 19TH CENTURY (1870'S-1880'S). ICON-PAINTING VILLAGES OF THE VLADIMIR REGION (PALEKH)

Wood (two panels), two incut support boards (now lost), absence of an incut centerpiece, underlying layer of canvas not visible, gesso, tempera, gold.

The author's paintwork is in an overall good condition. In places there are small fallouts of paint. Restoration toning and various insertions on the borders.

THE RESURRECTION – THE HARROWING OF HADES WITH THE YEARLY MENAION

The Imperial period saw the appearance of new “compilation” icons, which brought together various scenes, narratives, saints and Marian images on a single panel. Such compositions, retaining the traditional “Resurrection – Harrowing of Hades” scene in the centerpiece, often included the Menaion – monthly compilations saints and feasts for every month, depicted in several rows, in accordance with their celebration day. Such universal “calendar” icons become increasingly popular in the second half of the 19th century.

“The Resurrection – The Harrowing of Hades” scene belongs to the complex iconographic variation, which includes two main scenes – the Rising from the Tomb and the Harrowing of Hades – placed along a single axis and united by two diagonal processions – of the Pious marching into Heaven, and the Angels descending to the Gates of Hell. The number of additional scenes is brought to a minimum: in the upper right corner we see “Saint Peter before the Empty Tomb”, in the lower right – “The Revelation of Christ to the Apostles on the Sea of Galilee”. The Menaion border scenes are traditionally in a line-by-line, left-to-right chronological order, following the Church (not the secular) calendar, beginning with September – the start of the Orthodox liturgical year. The Menaion icons were mostly based on etchings, made in the first quarter of the 18th century by Gregorii Tepchegorskii. Each border scene is split into four tiers, each filled with its respective number of Feasts and saints. The miniature size of the border scene naturally leads to the simplification of the iconographic schemes, the number of which is also brought to a minimum: here we see only the main events of the liturgical year, and often the composition only includes one or two main figures (“The Nativity of the Mother of God” – September 8th, “The Feast of the Archangel Gabriel” – March 26th, “The Nativity of John the Baptist” – June 24th, “The Deposition of the Robe of the Mother of God” – July 2nd, “The Deposition of the Belt of the Mother of God” – August 31st, all dates by the Julian calendar). The frame – which separates the border scenes from the centerpiece – is decorated with golden Rococo cartouches.

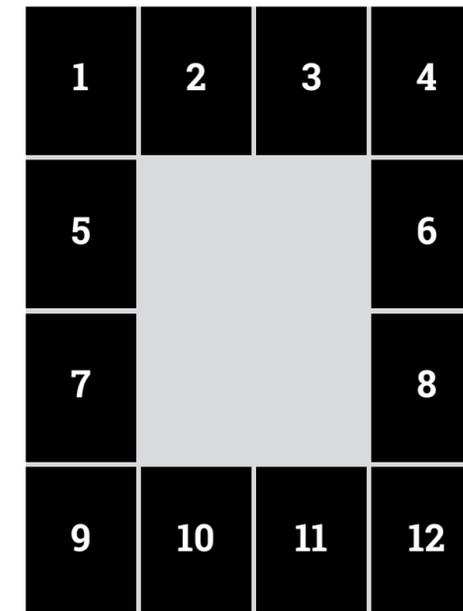
The icon's small size and overcrowded composition attests to the fact that it was commissioned and used for private prayer, as a form of a home calendar. The miniature painting style, the resonating colors and the almost enamel-like quality of the paint, enforced by the dense gold background, give the icon the air of preciousness. The piece finds close analogies among the later-period Palekh icons (of the 1870's-1880's). One of the closest analogies is the icon of the Resurrection with the Passion cycle, painted in the second half of the 19th century by Mikhail Zinoviev and Vasiliy Markichev (now kept in the State Palekh Art Museum). It is possible that the icon was painted in one of Palekh's workshops, specializing on “miniature” painting (for example in the workshops of Alexander Korovaikin or Phinogen Nanykin, both known since the 1860's).





The Resurrection – The Harrowing of Hades with the Yearly Menaion

Diagram of the border scenes:



1. The September Menaion;
2. The October Menaion;
3. The November Menaion;
4. The December Menaion;
5. The January Menaion;
6. The February Menaion;
7. The March Menaion;
8. The April Menaion;
9. The May Menaion;
10. The June Menaion;
11. The July Menaion;
12. The August Menaion.



Size: 53 x 43,5 x 3,5 cm.

FIRST HALF OF THE 19TH CENTURY. VETKA.

Wood (two panels), two incut smooth support boards, absence of an incut centerpiece, underlying layer of canvas not visible, tempera, colored lacquers, gold, engraving over gold, embossing over the gesso.

The author's paintwork is in good state. Restoration toning on the background and borders, slight chafing and losses of the paint layer.

THE GREAT-MARTYR CATHERINE WITH 12 HAGIOGRAPHICAL SCENES

The Great-martyr Catherine of Alexandria (+ 305 - ?) is one of the most venerated saints of the Christian world. No historic evidence concerning her life survive; all versions of her Vita are variations of a Greek manuscript, written down in the early 6th century. According to these, Catherine was born in Egyptian Alexandria and was the daughter of a certain Emperor Constantine. The young Catherine was a girl of rare beauty and extreme skills: she brilliantly studied natural and humanitarian science, read the works of all known antique poets and historians, and spoke 72 languages. Catherine came to the Emperor Maxentius (or Maximine) preaching Christianity. Struck by her beauty and wit, the Emperor could not argue with her, that is why he called the pagan philosophers. Catherine won the hard dispute and converted the philosophers to the Christian faith. On hearing this the Emperor fell into a rage and ordered the philosophers to be burnt at the stake, while Catherine was to be imprisoned and tortured. In prison Catherine was visited by the Empress Augusta and the commander Porphyrius accompanied by a troop of 200 warriors. After a conversation with Catherine all those who visited her were converted. In order to strengthen the martyr Christ himself came to her prison, accompanied by a host of angels. Since the saint was not renounce her faith, Maxentius ordered for her to be put on a wheel of torture. But when Catherine was tied to the wheel, the mechanism miraculously broke. The anger of the emperor was such that when the Empress Augusta tried to intercede on Catherine's behalf, Maxentius ordered for her to be tortured and executed. At the same time he ordered the execution of Porphyrius and his Christian warriors. Catherine was beheaded on the next day. But at the time of her execution a miracle appeared: instead of blood, milk issued from her wounds. And at the same time four angels came down from the heavens and took Catherine's body away – to a mountain which stood near Mount Sinai. It was here that around the year 800 relics of Saint Catherine were found, and the mountain since that time was called St. Catherine's Mount. The relics are kept in the Sinai Transfiguration Monastery, which since the 9th century became known as St. Catherine's Monastery. The Feast of St. Catherine is celebrated on Decemner 7th (November 24th according to the Julian calendar).

In Russia the first hagiographical icons of Saint Catherine make their appearance in the 16th century. They become widespread in the Imperial period. The given icon was obviously a personal commission. It is a detailed



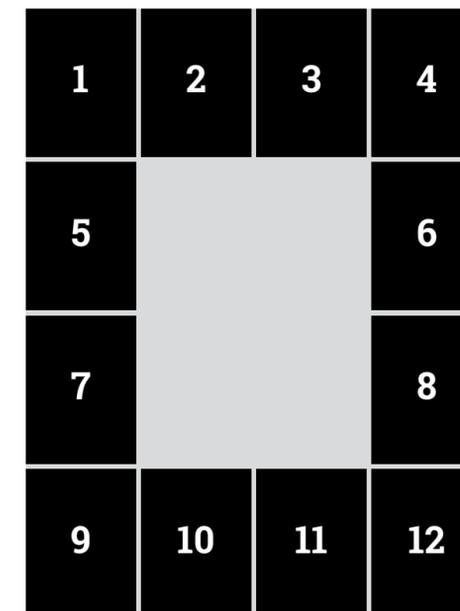
variation of Catherine's hagiography, typical for later-period icons. The scenes of Catherine's execution and the Translation of her relics are brought in to the centerpiece.

The stylistic traits indicate that the icon was painted in Vetka – one of the largest iconographic centers of the Old Believers, located in the western provinces of the Russian Empire. Vetka's icons are instantly recognizable because of their incredible artistry, decorative traits, a bright, powerful color pallet, especially the "burning" crimson-red tones, the rhythmical color accents, the rich ornamentation of the vestments and on the borders (the baroque flower motif), the vast expanses of gold. The icon of Saint Catherine is a wonderful piece of work, beautifully executed in both composition and technique, with special attention given to perspective. It is one of the grandest examples of Vetka iconography of the first half of the 19th century.



The Great-martyr Catherine with 12 hagiographical scenes

Diagram of the border scenes:



1. Saint Catherine comes to the pagan emperor Maxentius;
2. Saint Catherine preaches the Christian Faith before the emperor and his servants;
3. Saint Catherine preaches before the philosophers and converts them;
4. The burning of the converted philosophers;
5. The Flagellation of Saint Catherine;
6. The Imprisonment of Saint Catherine;
7. Saint Catherine is visited in prison by the Empress Augusta and the commander Porphyrius;
8. The Revelation of Christ and God's angels to Saint Catherine in her prison;
9. Saint Catherine is brought before the Emperor Maxentius;
10. Saint Catherine is freed from the wheel of torture;
11. The beheading of Empress Augusta;
12. Emperor Maxentius orders the beheading of commander Porphyrius and his warriors.



Size: 35 x 29 x 2 cm.

ICON: EARLY 19TH CENTURY. CENTRAL RUSSIA.

OKLAD COVER: 1814. ST. PETERSBURG.

Wood (three panels), two incut support boards, absence of an incut centerpiece, underlying layer of canvas not visible, gesso, tempera. Oklad cover: silver, etching, engraving.

Brands on the oklad cover: St. Petersburg coat-of-arms with the year "1814"; assayer's brand "84"; and the lettering "A.Я." as the master's hallmark.

The author's paintwork is well preserved. Slight chafing of the surface, small fallouts. The left field contains a restoration insertion. The surface of the oklad cover slightly darkened, the relief is a bit worn. In the lower part there is a crack in the metal.

THE NEW TESTAMENT TRINITY WITH SELECTED FEASTS AND THE FOUR EVANGELISTS

The iconography, known among art historians as the New Testament Trinity (unlike the Old Testament Trinity, with the Three Angels and the Hospitality of Abraham), is a depiction of the Triune God and has two variations: "The Fatherhood", where Christ is shown as a youth sitting on the lap of God Sabaoth, and the "Enthronement" iconography, where the Father and Son sit side by side on a throne, on both sides of a sphere, crowned by a cross, with the Holy Spirit floating in the air in likeness of a dove. The given icon belongs to the second type. In the 16th century this variation was called by the first words of the Paschal Troparion "In the Tomb lying in the Flesh"; "On the Throne You sat with the Father and the Holy Spirit". These words were taken from Psalm 109/110 "And the Lord said to my Lord sit upon my right hand, as I lay your enemies before your feet". In the Imperial period such icons, popular among the Old Believers, were known as "The Triune God". This variation was formed in the 16th century, probably as part of the iconography of the Last Judgment. Later on the image was included into the icons of the Creed and the Sabbath of All Saints. Icons bearing this version of the New Testament Trinity (The Enthronement), surrounded by border scenes with selected Feasts, are quite rare and are known only since the end of the 17th century. The selection of border scenes was probably established by the commissioner – a member of the Old Believers. This is indicated to by the "two-finger" sign of the cross and the titles over Christ «IC XC».

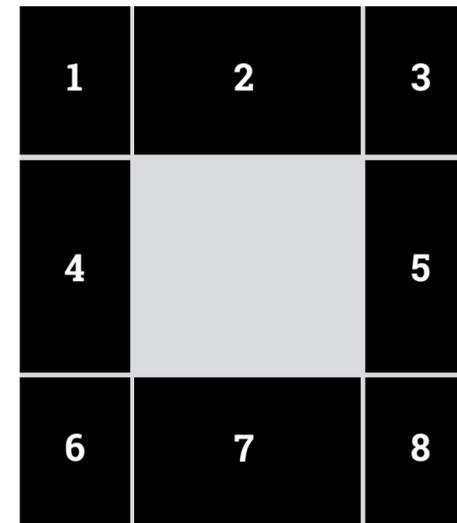
The artistic traits of the icon are somewhat dualistic, which is typical for the 18th-19th century transition period; the bright color scheme reflects the Baroque style, while the overall light tone, the local color combinations, the ordered composition, the rather dry execution of the vestments and movements were obviously tied to Classicism.

The silver riza or oklad cover was made in 1814 and belongs to "picturesque" or "artistic" movement among the ecclesiastical jewelers of Imperial Russia. The oklad does closely follow the art of the iconographer, becoming in itself an embossed icon. Its execution reflects the traits of the early Empire style – with its the structural clarity, the detail décor, and the thin pearl-ornamented frames, which separate the border scenes. The smooth surface of the metal bears the embossed depictions of the landscape and architecture. The great artistry of the silversmith is attested to by the relief embossing, line-etching, which create light reflexes and unique rhythm of the light. The borders of the frame rise above the overall surface and are decorated with palmette ornamentation, which is typical for the early 19th century. The characteristic traits of Empire style oklad covers are the votive crowns surrounded by heavenly light; in this case, they can be seen in the centerpiece.





Diagram of the border scenes:



1. The Evangelist Matthew;
2. The Entrance into Jerusalem;
3. The Evangelist John the Theologian;
4. The Ascension;
5. The Transfiguration;
6. The Evangelist Mark;
7. The Last Supper;
8. The Evangelist Luke.

The New Testament Trinity with selected Feasts and the Four Evangelists



Size: 31 x 27 x 3 cm.

ICON: MIDDLE – SECOND HALF OF THE 19TH CENTURY. MSTYORA.

OKLAD COVER: END OF THE 17TH CENTURY.

Wood (one whole panel), two incut smooth support board (the top one is now lost), the shallow incut centerpiece, underlying layer of gesso not visible, gesso, tempera. Oklad cover: white metal, embossment, silver plating, engraving.

The author's paintwork is chaffed in places and is under covered with a crazing net; small fallouts of gesso across the entire surface. Small restoration tonings. The oklad cover is in a good state. Part of the surface has darkened. Small losses of metal of the side panels, coming up to the border scenes.



THE RESURRECTION – THE HARROWING OF HADES, WITH CHURCH FEASTS IN 12 BORDER SCENES

The centerpiece bears the depiction of the Resurrection – The Harrowing of Hades, which includes both the historic image – the Rising from the Tomb and the symbolic – the Harrowing of Hades. The number of scenes is brought to a minimum: in the lower right corner we see only one Gospel narrative – the Revelation of Christ to the Apostles on the Sea of Galilee (John 21: 1-25). The surrounding border scenes are placed in chronological order, in a highly traditional matter.

The material and artistic traits of this icon unravel the artist's desire to add the fleur of great age to his work. Beginning the process, the master iconographer choses an old, rough icon panel. He skillfully adds artificial hazing, which covers the entire surface in an 'all too smooth' fashion. The master's orientation on Russian art of the first half of the 17th century clearly comes through in the traditionalist iconography, and in the icon's artistic traits: the subtle color scheme, the rather free composition of the border scenes, the miniature painting-style, the character of the architectural staffage, the small lights of the mountain-sides.

In the second half of the 19th century, the increasing interest in Medieval art drove iconographers to a new form of trade – painting forged medieval icons for the just-born antique market. Mstyora artists were especially prominent in this field, since they not only knew Old Russian art – with its schools and variations, but also laid the foundation of modern-day restoration techniques. Not only did they brilliantly imitate the technique, style and iconography – they also "aged" icons: using centuries' old boards and dark pigments, they imitated the darkened varnish, aged the paintwork, imitated hazing with graphic work, forged the "author's" autographs and inscriptions. The numerous green and brown tones in the color pallet also "give away" the recognizable style of Mstyora's iconographers.

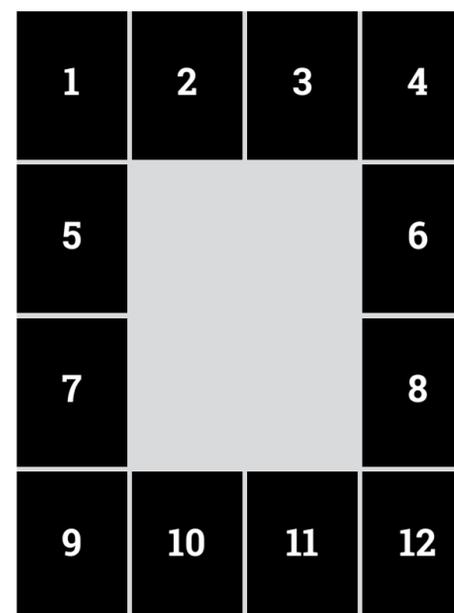
The oklad cover was selected for the icon after it was complete, which also indicated the dealer's desire to "age" the piece. It consists of four plates (brought together at a slight angle, with one plate coming on to another), which is typical for Medieval-period pieces; in the Imperial era these were replaced by whole-piece oklads. The oklad frame finds numerous analogies among 17th century covers, but lacks the tall towers and is decorated with quite a simple type of ornamentation – thin strands of "pearls", "stones" (diamond-like crystal shapes) and small stars, which indeed imitates the more precious oklads. The small surface is in turn decorated with sparsely placed rosettes. The Harrowing of Hades scene is separated from the border scenes by a frame with an engraved ornament.





The Resurrection – The Harrowing of Hades, with Church Feasts in 12 border scenes

Diagram of the border scenes:



1. The Nativity of the Mother of God;
2. The Entrance of Mother of God into the Temple;
3. The Annunciation;
4. The Nativity of Christ;
5. Candlemas (The Meeting of Christ in the Temple);
6. The Theophany (The Baptism of Christ);
7. The Entrance into Jerusalem;
8. The Transfiguration;
9. The Ascension;
10. The Old Testament Trinity;
11. The Dormition of the Mother of God;
12. The Elevation of the Holy Cross.



Size: 31 x 27x 2,2 cm.

AROUND THE MIDDLE OF THE 19TH CENTURY. ICON-PAINTING CENTERS OF THE VLADIMIR REGION (POSSIBLY PALEKH).

Wood (one whole panel), two incut smooth support board (the top one is now lost), the shallow incut centerpiece, underlying layer of gesso not visible, gesso, tempera. Oklad cover: white metal, embossment, silver plating, engraving.

The author's paintwork is chaffed in places and is under covered with a crazing net; small fallouts of gesso across the entire surface. Small restoration tonings. The oklad cover is in a good state. Part of the surface has darkened. Small losses of metal of the side panels, coming up to the border scenes.



THE RESURRECTION – THE HARROWING OF HADES, WITH THE PASSIONS OF CHRIST, THE FOUR EVANGELISTS AND CHURCH FEASTS IN 28 BORDER SCENES

The given piece belongs to a widespread type “full-cycle icons” (called “polnitsy” in Russian); these were quite complex compositions, which included the Twelve Great and the minor Feasts of the Church, brought together around the “Resurrection – The Harrowing of Hades” scene. The universality of the composition lead to the increasing popularity of such icons among all Russian social classes. One of the main production centers of such icons was the village of Palekh in the Vladimir region. Icons painted in Palekh, despite their growing numbers, were always known for the high-level of artistry, the miniature painting style and the diversity of various scenes. In this case the cycle of Twelve and Minor Church Feasts is supplemented by another one – the Passion cycle – which forms another ring around the centerpiece and really does create the impression of the full liturgical year.

The border scenes bear chronological depictions of the Gospel narrative and the Great Feasts, which show the symbolic meaning of Christ's sacrifice. The cycle begins with the Nativity of the Mother of God, which inaugurates the liturgical year, which ends with the Elevation of the Holy Cross. The iconography of the border scenes is traditional and follows samples known in 15th-17th century Russian art; yet in some cases the artist uses more complex variations. Thus, the “Nativity of the Mother of God” scene includes two women, bearing gifts and entering Joachim's house; in the Annunciation we see an additional depiction of the Archangel Gabriel, standing before the house of Joseph. The “Nativity of Christ” scene is increasingly complex, with the “Adoration of the Magi” in the foreground. Some iconographic details, such as those noted in the “Annunciation” scene, became immensely popular in Old Believer Art. The lower tier of border scenes includes the “Fiery Ascent of the Prophet Elias” and the “Elevation of the Holy Cross”, honoring two of Palekh's churches. The corners of the composition bear the depictions of the Four Evangelists.

The icon belongs to the archaic movement in 19th century Russian religious art, and is a stylization, based on Old Russian iconography, particular of the Stroganov school. This movement was predominately developed in the icon-painting villages of the Vladimir, which saw the mass production of such pieces. Local production was especially popular among the Old Believers, but also quickly won recognition among the adherents of the official Church.





The Resurrection – The Harrowing of Hades, with the Passions of Christ, the Four Evangelists and Church Feasts in 28 border scenes

Diagram of the border scenes:

29						30
	1	2	3	4	5	
	6	17	18	19	20	7
	8	21			22	9
	10	23			24	
	12	13	14	15	16	
31						32

The Festive cycle:

1. The Nativity of the Mother of God;
2. The Entrance of the Mother of God into the Temple;
3. The Old Testament Trinity;
4. The Annunciation;
5. The Nativity of Christ (The Adoration of the Magi);
6. Candlemas (The Meeting of Christ in the Temple);
7. The Theophany (The Baptism of Christ);
8. The Entrance into Jerusalem;
9. The Transfiguration;
10. The Ascension;
11. The Dormition of the Mother of God;
12. The Raising of Lazarus;
13. The Beheading of John the Baptist;
14. Pentecost (The Descent of the Holy Spirit on the Apostles);
15. The Fiery Ascent of the Prophet Elias;
16. The Pokrov (Feast of the Protective Veil of the Mother of God).

Diagram of the border scenes:

29						30
	1	2	3	4	5	
	6	17	18	19	20	7
	8	21			22	9
	10	23			24	
	12	13	14	15	16	
31						32

The Passion Cycle:

17. The Last Supper;
18. The Washing of the Feet;
19. The Prayer in Gethsemane;
20. Judas receives the 30 pieces of silver;
21. The Betrayal of Judas and the Arrest of Christ;
22. The Bringing of Christ before Pilate;
23. The Flagellation of Christ;
24. The Crown of Thorns;
25. The Carrying of the Cross;
26. The Crucifixion;
27. The Taking Down from the Cross;
28. The Entombment of Christ.
29. The Evangelist John the Theologian;
30. The Evangelist Matthew;
31. The Evangelist Mark;
32. The Evangelist Luke.



Size: 31 x 26 x 2 cm.

FIRST THIRD OF THE 19TH CENTURY. PALEKH

Wood (one whole panel), two incut profiled support boards, a shallow incut centerpiece, underlying layer of canvas, gesso, tempera, gold.

The author's paintwork is in very good state. In places there are fallouts of paintwork and slight chafing. On the rib of the panel (on the right) there is an ink inscription «праз/ики» (Russian for "Feasts). On the backside of the panel, above the top support board there is another inscription – in pencil – with the Russian word "ризу" ("Riza cover"). Such inscriptions are common in the 19th century, and were usually placed by the craftsman who took an icon to make an oklad (or riza) cover. The nail holes on the edges of the icon panel indicate that an oklad cover was indeed devised and placed on the icon.



THE RESURRECTION – THE HARROWING OF HADES WITH CHURCH FEASTS IN 12 BORDER SCENES

Icons of the Resurrection – The Harrowing of Hades, surrounded by the Twelve Great Feasts, were widespread in the 19th century. Large icons were commissioned by churches as 'temple icons', while smaller ones were placed on the analoion during Sunday services. Small icons with such scenes could also be found in homes. Such icons gained popularity because of their all-inclusive composition, which brought together the main Feasts of the Liturgical year, with the main Feast – of Pascha (The Resurrection of Christ) – being placed in the center.

The border scene cycle begins with the Nativity of the Mother of God – the first major Feast, celebrated on September 8th of the Julian calendar (the Orthodox Church year begins on September 1st). Then the border scenes follow the historic order, since many of the Feasts are moveable – having no fixed day and depending on the date of Pascha. Despite the fact that the liturgical year ends with the Feast of the Dormition of the Mother of God (August 28th of the Julian calendar), the last border scene of this icon is occupied by the Elevation of the Holy Cross (September 27th of the Julian calendar). Thus, one icon contains the entire Festive cycle, revolving around the main Feast – the Feast of Pascha.

The central event is represented in great detail. According to the tradition, which appeared in the 16th century and became quite popular in the Imperial era, Christ is depicted twice. In the upper part of the composition Christ is represented Rising from the Tomb, with His hand in a blessing gesture. Simultaneously, Christ is shown in the Harrowing of Hades scene, raising Adam by the arm and taking him out of the mouth of Hell. The line of those saved from Hell is led by the Good Thief – Rach – who is also depicted twice: standing before the gates of Heaven and in Heaven itself, conversing with Elijah and Enoch. Often iconographers would include other scenes into the Resurrection narrative, which either took place before or after the event. In the given icon, only one such scene is shown: the Revelation of Christ to the Apostles on the Sea of Galilee. According to the Gospel (John 21), Christ was first recognized by the apostle John, while Peter – being naked, clad himself into his cloak and jumped into the sea, swimming towards the Lord.

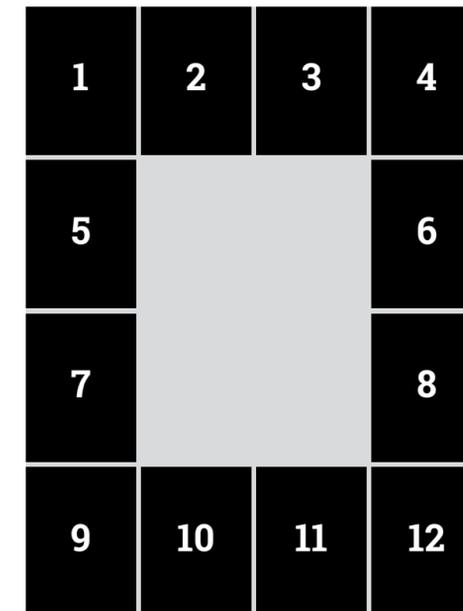
The noble and subtle color scheme (with its green and brown tones), enriched by crimson and cherry tones, dark, grass-green borders, the exquisite miniature painting, the highly-recognizable architectural staffage, with its white ornamentation, the crystal-like mountains with small light covered platforms, all attest to the fact that the icon was painted in Palekh. Despite the wonderful artistry – the complexity of the composition and the darkened color pallet indicate that the icon was painted in the 1820's or 1830's, not earlier.





The Resurrection – The Harrowing of Hades with Church Feasts in 12 border scenes

Diagram of the border scenes:



1. The Nativity of the Mother of God;
2. The Entrance of the Mother of God into the Temple;
3. The Annunciation;
4. The Nativity of Christ;
5. Candlemas (The Meeting of Christ in the Temple);
6. The Theophany (The Baptism of Christ);
7. The Entrance into Jerusalem;
8. The Transfiguration;
9. The Ascension;
10. The Old Testament Trinity;
11. The Dormition of the Mother of God;
12. The Elevation of the Holy Cross.



Size: 27,5 x 22 x 2 cm.

AROUND THE MIDDLE OF THE 19TH CENTURY. THE ICON-PAINTING VILLAGES OF THE VLADIMIR REGION (POSSIBLY PALEKH)

Wood (one whole panel), two incut profiled support boards, a shallow incut centerpiece, underlying layer of gesso not visible, gesso, tempera.

The author's paintwork is in a satisfactory state, a bit chafed, the surface is covered with small fallouts of paint, gesso absent on the borders. In the lower border there is a candle burn covered with restoration toning.

On the reverse, under the lower support board, there is a pencil inscription: «H.M». Between the support boards there is a barely readable inscription made in ink (in two lines).



THE RESURRECTION – THE HARROWING OF HADES, WITH CHURCH FEASTS, THE HOLY TRINITY AND THE FOUR EVANGELISTS IN 16 BORDER SCENES

In the Imperial period icons bearing the depictions of the Resurrection – the Harrowing of Hades, surrounded by border scenes with the Twelve Great and Minor Church Feasts, became increasingly popular. In folk culture they began to play the role of an agricultural calendar, whose cycle was closely linked with the liturgical year. Such icons became widely commissioned and were painted by various masters, ready to meet the demand of any Russian social class. Palekh was especially keen on the creation of such “Festive” icons, with local artists developing and standardizing their iconography and style. The centerpiece usually contains the detailed iconography of the Resurrection of Christ, with the scenes of the Rising from the Tomb and the Harrowing of Hades placed along a single axis, and connected by a diagonal processional line of the Pious marching from the Gates of Hell to the Kingdom of Heaven. The composition often includes the depiction of Heaven itself, where we see the Good Thief (Rach) conversing with the Prophets Elias and Enoch. This composition is surrounded by other scenes, which took place before or after the Resurrection: in the upper left – “Saint Peter at the Empty Tomb”, in the lower right – “The Revelation of Christ to the Apostles on the Sea of Galilee”. The border scene cycle is highly traditional in its iconography and execution: it contains 16 border scenes, which give a chronological narrative of the Gospel events and the Twelve Great Feasts that reveal the symbolic meaning of Christ's sacrifice. The inclusion of the Old Testament Trinity into the upmost tier (breaking the liturgical chronology of Feasts), is a typical element of the iconographic scheme, developed by Palekh's artists. The composition is further supplemented by the New Testament Trinity (Enthronement), placed in the upper tier, which is also typical for complex Palekh icons, whose border scenes would often be selected by the commissioner. The lower tier of border scenes includes the Fiery Ascent of the Prophet Elias and the Elevation of the Holy Cross, the feasts in honor of which two of Palekh's churches were consecrated. In the corners we see the depictions of the Four Evangelists: John the Theologian, Matthew, Mark and Luke.

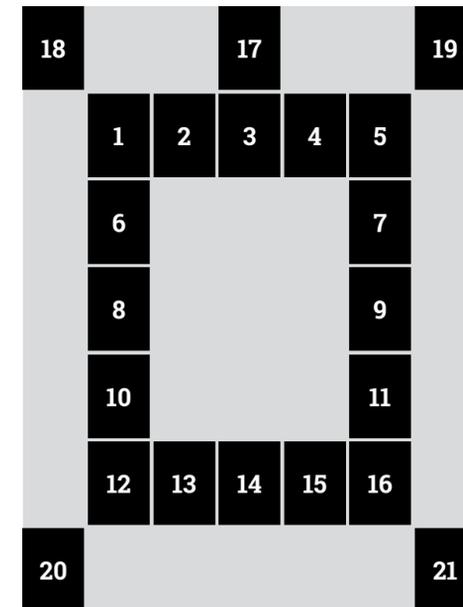
Stylistic traits of the given icon – the miniature, draft-like manner of painting, the subtle, slightly dark color pallet, the dry gold hatching on the vestments – are typical of the traditionalist movement, popular in mid-19th century Russian iconography. Traditionalist artists did seek to imitate Palekh art, but in a simplified manner. Such icons were especially popular with the Old Believers, who commissioned them both – in Palekh and in other “imitation-prone” centers, which makes their attribution increasingly complicated.





The Resurrection – The Harrowing of Hades, with Church Feasts, the Holy Trinity and the Four Evangelists in 16 border scenes

Diagram of the border scenes:



1. The Nativity of the Mother of God;
2. The Entrance of the Mother of God into the Temple;
3. The Old Testament Trinity;
4. The Annunciation;
5. The Nativity of Christ;
6. Candlemas (The Meeting of Christ in the Temple);
7. The Theophany (The Baptism of Christ);
8. The Entrance into Jerusalem;
9. The Transfiguration;
10. The Ascension;
11. The Dormition of the Mother of God;
12. The Raising of Lazarus;
13. The Beheading of John the Baptist;
14. The Elevation of the Holy Cross;
15. The Fiery Ascent of the Prophet Elias;
16. The Pokrov (The Feast of the Protective Veil of the Mother of God);
17. The New Testament Trinity (The Enthronement);
18. The Evangelist John the Theologian;
19. The Evangelist Matthew;
20. The Evangelist Mark;
21. The Evangelist Luke.



Size: 31 x 26 x 2 cm.

LAST QUARTER – END OF THE 19TH CENTURY. ICON- PAINTING VILLAGES OF THE VLADIMIR REGION.

Wood (two panels), two incut profiled support boards, a shallow incut centerpiece, underlying layer of canvas not visible, gesso, tempera, gold.

The author's paintwork is in good state. Slight chafing, in places – remnants of darkened varnish (olifa), missed at restoration.

On the reverse of the panel On the reverse, under the lower support board, there is a pencil inscription: «№ 10».

THE RESURRECTION – THE HARROWING OF HADES, WITH THE PASSIONS OF CHRIST, THE FOUR EVANGELISTS AND CHURCH FEASTS IN 28 BORDER SCENES.

The given piece is a traditional and highly popular in the 19th century variation of the Resurrection – the Harrowing of Hades with sixteen feasts is supplemented by the Passion cycle in ten border scenes, which narrate the last days of Christ, and the depictions of the four Evangelists, placed in corner compositions, which imitate the precious covers of the Altar Gospels. Icons with a complex composition that included the Resurrection – the Harrowing of Hades and the main Feasts of liturgical year become widespread in the 19th century. The centerpiece bears the detailed version of the Resurrection – the Harrowing of Hades, which becomes quite popular in later-period Russian iconography. Besides the image of Christ - Rising from the Tomb and taking Adam by the hand from the pits of Hades, the scene includes two processions – that of the angels, marching towards the Gates of Hell, and of the Pious – walking towards Heaven and led by the Good Thief. In the lower left corner we see the Gospel scene of the Revelation of Christ to the Apostles on the Sea of Galilee. All scenes are supplemented by inscriptions, which name each scene and are placed nearby, on the borders.

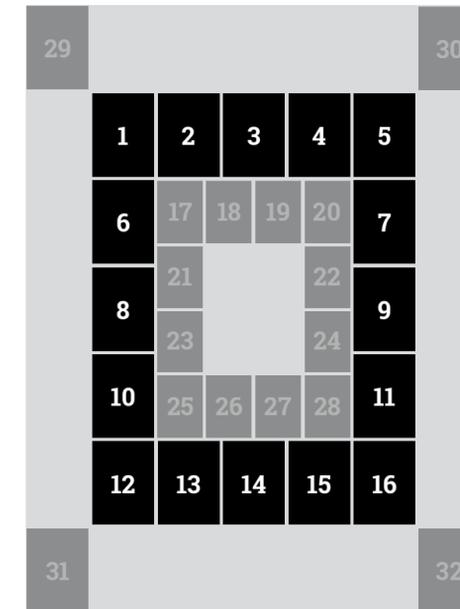
The icons of the Feasts were especially popular among the faithful, in many ways due to their practicality – a single panel contained the main events of the liturgical year, becoming a miniature home iconostasis. In folk culture they were also seen as a kind of agricultural calendar, whose cycle was closely connected to the feasts of the liturgical year. The production of such icons soon took on a mass scale, with iconographers ready to meet the tastes and financial abilities of any commissioner. Judging by the quick and draft-like manner of painting, which was developed by Palekh artists and taken up by iconographers of other Vladimir centers, as well as the monochromatic color pallet, one should come to the conclusion that the icon was clearly painted at the end of the 19th century. The conventional character of such icons and the standardized execution, along with the use of popular iconographic scheme makes precise attribution of such pieces incredibly difficult. That is why it would be fair to state that the icon could have been painted either in Kholuy or in Mstyora, since both had workshops specializing in mass production of icons, finishing up to 2-3 million a year.





The Resurrection – The Harrowing of Hades, with the Passions of Christ, the Four Evangelists and Church Feasts in 28 border scenes.

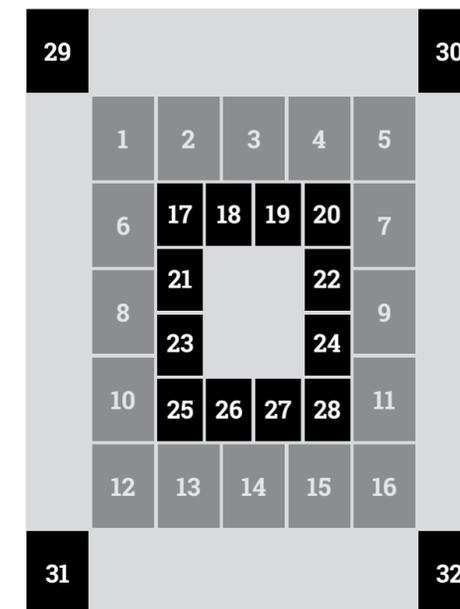
Diagram of the border scenes:



The Festive cycle:

1. The Nativity of the Mother of God;
2. The Entrance of the Mother of God into the Temple;
3. The Old Testament Trinity;
4. The Annunciation;
5. The Nativity of Christ;
6. Candlemas (The Meeting of Christ in the Temple);
7. The Theophany (The Baptism of Christ);
8. The Entrance into Jerusalem;
9. The Transfiguration;
10. The Ascension;
11. The Dormition of the Mother of God;
12. The Raising of Lazarus;
13. The Beheading of John the Baptist;
14. The Fiery Ascent of the Prophet Elias;
15. The Pokrov (The Feast of the Protective veil of the Mother of God);
16. The Elevation of the Holy Cross.

Diagram of the border scenes:



The Passion Cycle:

17. The Last Supper;
18. The Washing of the Feet;
19. The Prayer in Gethsemane;
20. Judas receives the 30 pieces of silver;
21. The Betrayal of Judas and the Arrest of Christ;
22. The Bringing of Christ before Pilate;
23. The Flagellation of Christ;
24. The Crown of Thorns;
25. The Carrying of the Cross;
26. The Crucifixion;
27. The Taking Down from the Cross;
28. The Entombment of Christ.
29. The Evangelist John the Theologian;
30. The Evangelist Matthew;
31. The Evangelist Luke;
32. The Evangelist Mark.



Size: 35 x 30,5 x 2 cm.

FIRST QUARTER OF THE 19TH CENTURY. PALEKH.

Wood (one whole panel), two incut profiled support boards, absence of an incut centerpiece, underlying layer of canvas not visible, gesso, tempera, gold.

The author's paintwork is well preserved. Chafing and small fallouts of paint are minimal.

THE RESURRECTION – THE HARROWING OF HADES WITH CHURCH FEASTS AND THE FOUR EVANGELISTS IN 16 BORDER SCENES

The 19th century saw the rise in popularity of icons, bearing the depiction of the Resurrection – the Harrowing of Hades, surrounded by the main Feasts of the liturgical year. The iconographic scheme – with its many-figured centerpiece and a rich variation of border scenes – was especially popular among Palekh iconographers, who led to its final development and, at the same time, strived to preserve the traditions of 17th century Russian art.

The centerpiece bears the detailed variation of the Resurrection: on a single axis we see the Rising from the Tomb and the Harrowing of Hades, connected by a diagonal processional line of the Pious marching into Heaven. In the upper left we see the Saint Peter at the Empty Tomb; in the lower right – the Revelation of Christ to the Apostles on the Sea of Galilee. A noticeable trait of Palekh art is the depictions of the Gates of Hell in the upper left of the centerpiece. They are depicted as a cone-shaped structure, made of square masonry, at whose door we see an Angel binding Satan. Simplified versions of such depictions are found in a large number of later-period Palekh icons, which is easily explainable, since artists relied on the same, circulating samples. The surrounding frame includes sixteen border scenes, whose iconography and style are typical for the age. Following the Palekh tradition, the iconographer brings the Old Testament Trinity in the center of the topmost tier. In the lower tier we always see the Elevation of the Holy Cross, since the altar of Palekh's main church was consecrated in honor of that Feast. The Crucifixion scene – placed in the center of the bottom tier – is a rare feature, probably included by the direct order of the commissioner. Another special trait of Palekh icons is the depictions of the Four Evangelists in the corner segments, which resemble the highly decorated covers of Altar Gospels.

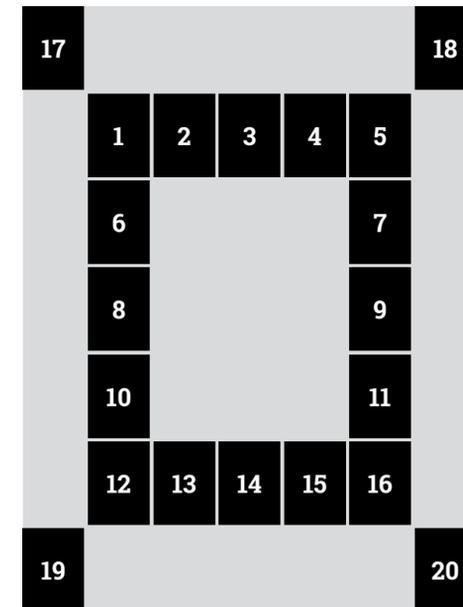
The icon is among the highly-recognizable works of Palekh art, brought to life in the first quarter of the 19th century and noted for their mastery. Among character traits of such icons is "miniature" painting-style with the highly-detailed execution of the faces, the elegant proportions of the elongated figures, the clarity of the composition. The iconographer manages to brilliantly bring detailed images into the tiny border scenes, placing numerous figures before complex, ornamented architectural motifs or colorful mountain-sides, covered with vines and grasses, and veiled with feather-like blue-grey clouds. The resonance of the colors, the lavish amounts of gold – covering the background of the border scenes and the centerpiece, the virtuoso ornamentation, the rhythmic balance of the entire piece give the icon a clear feeling of Paschal celebration.



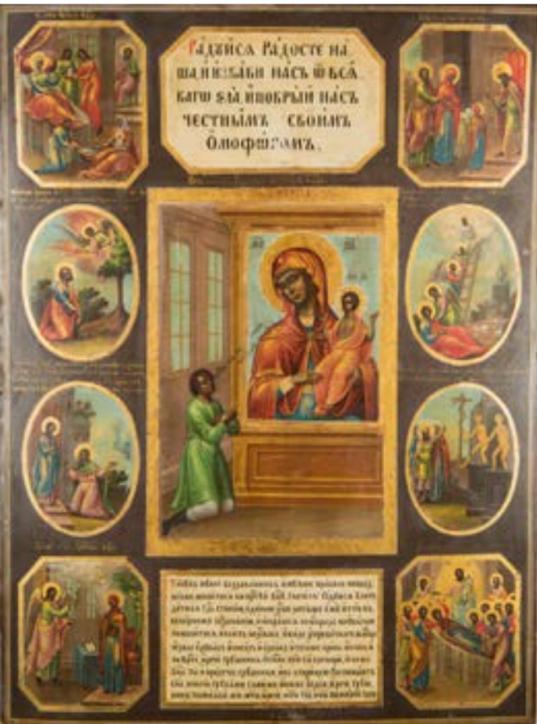


The Resurrection – The Harrowing of Hades with Church Feasts and the Four Evangelists in 16 border scenes

Diagram of the border scenes:



1. The Nativity of the Mother of God;
2. The Entrance of the Mother of God into the Temple;
3. The Old Testament Trinity;
4. The Annunciation;
5. The Nativity of Christ;
6. Candlemas (The Meeting of Christ in the Temple);
7. The Theophany (The Baptism of Christ);
8. The Entrance into Jerusalem;
9. The Transfiguration;
10. The Ascension;
11. The Dormition of the Mother of God;
12. The Raising of Lazarus;
13. The Beheading of John the Baptist;
14. The Crucifixion;
15. The Pokrov (Feast of the Protective veil of the Mother of God);
16. The Elevation of the Holy Cross;
17. The Evangelist John the Theologian;
18. The Evangelist Matthew;
19. The Evangelist Mark;
20. The Evangelist Luke.



Size: 58 x 44 x 3 cm.

THIRD QUARTER OF THE 19TH CENTURY. MOSCOW

Wood (two panels), two incut profiled support boards, absence of an incut centerpiece, underlying layer of canvas not visible, gesso, tempera.

The author's paintwork is well preserved; slight chafing.

THE UNEXPECTED JOY ICON OF THE MOTHER OF GOD, WITH MARIAN FEASTS AND OLD TESTAMENT PROPHECIES

The iconographic scheme of the piece contains the central venerated image of the Mother of God "The Unexpected Joy", surrounded by the main Marian Feasts (the Nativity of the Mother of God, the Entrance of the Mother of God into the Temple, the Annunciation, the Dormition of the Mother of God) in diagonally-angled shields, and the Old Testament prophecies, enclosed in ovals and placed at the sides of the centerpiece. The upper and lower fields contain texts of the Akathistos to the Pokrov of the Mother of God ("Rejoice, our Joy, and deliver us from all evil, and cover us with your omophorion"), and the fragment of the Legend of the Unexpected Joy Icon as told by St. Demetrius of Rostov in his treatise "The Watered Fleece". Thus, the Wonder-working icon and scenes of Marian veneration are placed along a single axis, which gives the image an intense devotional character.

Marian icons supplemented by additional devotional scenes become popular in the 19th century, reflecting the believers' need for divine intervention and aid. The narrative source for the "Unexpected Joy" iconography was St. Demetrius of Rostov's treatise "The Watered Fleece" (1680). The treatise contains the description of miracles from the Marian icon of St. Elias monastery in Chernigov, supplemented by various other texts. One such narrative contains the story of a lawless man, who always prayed before the icon of the Mother of God before going out on another evil deed. One time he saw that blood issued from the hands and feet of the Baby Jesus. Struck by what he saw the man asked the Mother of God, why Christ's wounds were opened. In response he heard that it was because sinners crucify Jesus again and again. Repenting, the man began praying to the Mother of God, asking for Her intercession on his behalf. Christ denied Her three times. And only when the Mother of God fell on Her knees before Her Son, did the Savior forgive the sinner. That is why the icon was known as the "Unexpected Joy" – as a symbol of the Unexpected Joy of Salvation and Forgiveness, and the sign of the endless Mercy of the Mother of God.

It is unknown which icon was associated with the miracle, for it was not the main venerated icon of St. Elias Monastery. Moreover, St. Demetrius's text does not call the icon "The Unexpected Joy"; this title was given to it in a later period. Most likely the narrative and the iconography were taken from the Western Christian tradition. The veneration of this particular icon becomes widespread only in the middle-second half of the 19th century and is closely tied with the miraculous healings, which took place in 1837 and came from the oldest known "Unexpected Joy" icon, kept in the Mother



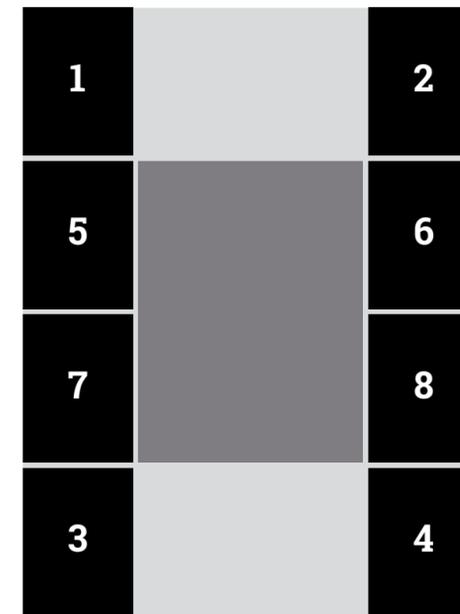
of God the Unburnt Bush Church in Moscow's Khamovniki district. The origins of the icon's veneration closely ties together the two Marian images – The Unburnt Bush and the Unexpected Joy. This is why the given icon includes Old Testament prophecies, associated with the Mother of God: "Moses before the Unburnt Bush" (Exodus 3: 1-8), "Jacob's Latter" (Genesis 28: 12-22), "Ezekiel's vision of the Closed Gates" (Ezekiel 44:1-3), which traditionally accompany the Unburnt Bush iconography.

Stylistic traits of the icon, the artist's manner of depicting faces, the peculiar, highly aesthetic color juxtaposition (the dark-brown background, on which we see border scenes – depicted in likeness of enamel medallions, with their powerful greens, blues, crimson reds, and soft lilacs), while the high-class artistry and the unique iconographic concept attest to the fact that the given piece was painted in Moscow in the third quarter of the 19th century (most likely in the 1860-1870's).



The Unexpected Joy icon of the Mother of God, with Marian Feasts and Old Testament prophecies

Diagram of the border scenes:



1. The Nativity of the Mother of God;
2. The Entrance of the Mother of God into the Temple;
3. The Annunciation;
4. The Dormition of the Mother of God;
5. Moses before the Unburnt Bush;
6. Jacob's vision of the Ladder;
7. Ezekiel's vision of the Closed Gates;
8. King Hezekiah destroys the Bronze Serpent.



Size: 45 x 37 x 3 cm.

ICON: LAST QUARTER – END OF THE 18TH CENTURY. THE RUSSIAN NORTH (VOLOGDA REGION). **OKLAD COVER:** LAST QUARTER OF THE 19TH CENTURY. ST. PETERSBURG

Wood, absence of an incut centerpiece, underlying layer of canvas not visible, gesso, mixed paint technique. The back of the icon is covered with velvet. Oklad cover: silver, embossing, engraving, etching, selective gilding.

Hallmarks and brands of the oklad cover: St. Petersburg coat of arms with the assayer's mark "84" (last quarter of the 19th century); barely readable mark "EГ[E]" – the hallmark of an unknown silversmith.

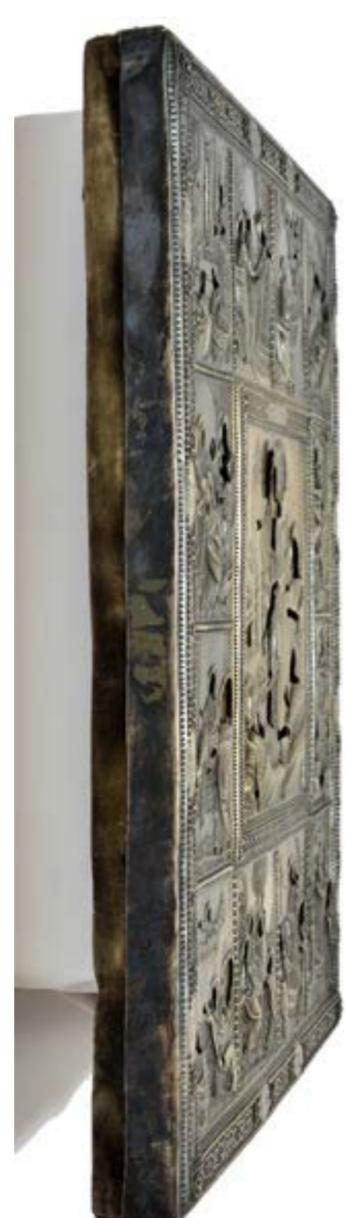
The author's paintwork is in a satisfactory state. Chafing and restoration toning, fallouts of gesso on the borders of the icon.

The compositional and iconographic scheme attest to the artist's orientation on Western European etchings and samples. The Resurrection of Christ, depicted in the centerpiece, follows the Imperial-era variation, known as the "Rising from the Tomb" – an image based on one of the etchings from Piscator's Bible, published in the end of the 17th century in the Netherlands. This version of the illustrated Bible, with its numerous etchings, was widely used by Russian iconographers in the following, 18th century. Closely following the original, the master depicts Christ half-naked, in white, flowing robes, with His legs crossed and a banner in His hands. Christ is surrounded by the amazed warriors, who guarded His Tomb. The composition also often includes the figure of an Angel, holding the lid of Christ's tomb. The overtly triumphant spirit of the scene emotionally reflected the spirit of the Imperial era, that is why it basically replaced the traditional Resurrection iconography – The Harrowing of Hades.

The iconographic scheme of the border scenes, the complex architectural details, the emotional posing of the figures, the composition of such scenes as "The Annunciation" – with the Archangel descending to Mary from a cloud, and "The Nativity of Christ" basically depicting the Adoration of the Magi and Herdsmen – all attest to an extremely powerful Western European influence. The iconography of other border scenes also reflects a new spirit of change and the disregard for the original Russian tradition: in the Theophany scene, for example, we see an Angel holding a white piece of cloth over Christ's loins.

The icon is a wonderful example of the late Baroque style of iconography, which is reflected in the lively, emotional poses, the color scheme – which is built on the juxtaposition of various tones of blues and reds, the traditional thin, dark borders. Other stylistic traits – such as the clumsy poses, the emotional and draft-like manner of painting, the rather simple color work – all indicate that the icon was painted in the Russian province. The closest analogies are found in the Vologda and Veliky Ustyug regions in the last third and end of the 18th century. It was here, in the Russian North, that the Baroque traditions held out the longest, and were adapted to blend in with the local, folk culture.

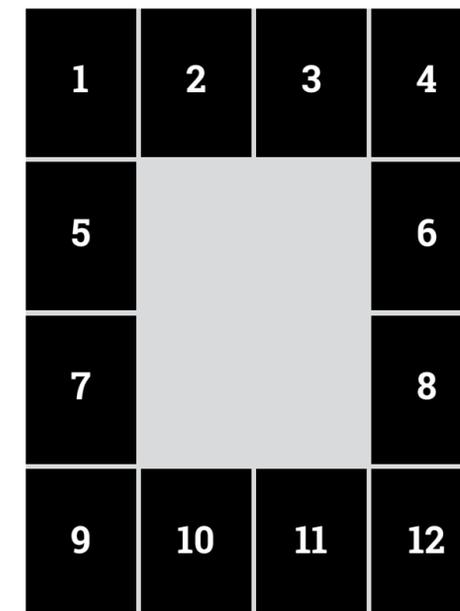
The oklad cover was made much later – in the last quarter of the 19th century in St. Petersburg. It is a wonderful example of the Neo-Russian style. Its ornamentation reflects the folklore tradition; in many ways its popularity is linked with the study and re-discovery of Russian wooden architecture, which took place in this period. The retrospective spirit of the age is reflected in the introduction of 17th century Russian architectural motifs; the frame of the cover is decorated with open-work streams of geometric patterns, reminiscent of traditional wood-carving. The ornaments are all clearly visible on the smooth metal surface, due to the fine etching, which especially brings out the edges of the cover. The high-level of craftsmanship – evident in the execution of the saints' vestments, which reflects every element of light and texture, the ethereal spirit of the clouds – testify to the fact, that the oklad cover was devised by one of the best silversmiths of St. Petersburg.



THE RESURRECTION – THE HARROWING OF HADES WITH TWELVE FEASTS

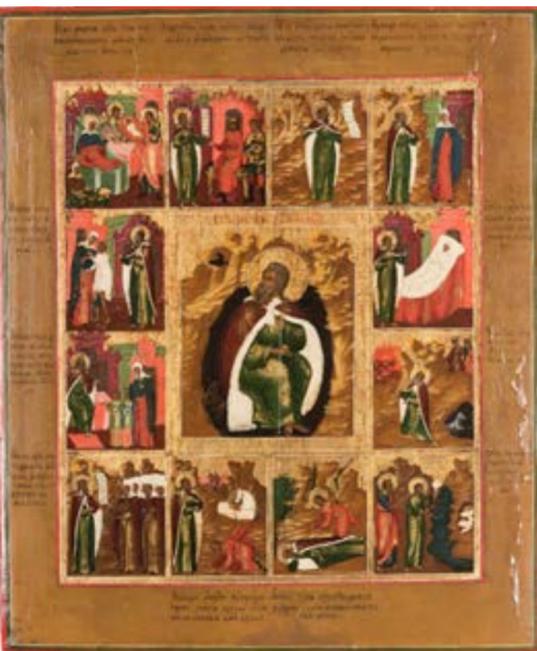


Diagram of the border scenes:



1. The Nativity of the Mother of God;
2. The Entrance of the Mother of God into the Temple;
3. The Annunciation;
4. The Nativity of Christ (The Adoration of the Magi);
5. Candlemas (The Meeting of Christ in the Temple);
6. The Theophany (The Baptism of Christ);
7. The Entrance into Jerusalem;
8. The Transfiguration;
9. The Ascension;
10. The Old Testament Trinity;
11. The Dormition of the Mother of God;
12. The Elevation of the Holy Cross.

The Resurrection – The Harrowing of Hades with Twelve Feasts



Size: 31 x 26 x 2,2 cm.

SECOND QUARTER – MIDDLE OF THE 19TH CENTURY.

Wood (two panels), two incut profiled support boards, a shallow incut centerpiece, underlying layer of canvas not visible, gesso, tempera. The author's paintwork is well preserved.

Restoration tonings on the background and borders; some chafing and fallouts of paint visible across the surface.

THE PROPHET ELIAS IN THE DESERT, WITH 12 HAGIOGRAPHICAL BORDER SCENES

The Prophet Elias is one of the most revered and venerated Christian saints, who lived in the times of the Israelite Kings Ahab and Ahaziah (9th century BC). The events of his life are described in the Old Testament Book of Kings (3 Kings. 17:1–19; 18; 21:17–28; 4 Kings. 1: 3–17; 2: 1–18); as well as in the apocryphal "Praise to Elias", hailing from the writings of Pseudo-Dorotheus and Pseudo-Epiphanius. The name of the Prophet is translated as "Yahweh is my Lord", which reflects his fervent and relentless service to the One God. Elias was born in the Galilean town of Tishbe, from which he would later yearn his nickname "Thisbite". The Prophet Elias was held in incredible reverence in Russia; in folk culture he was seen as the Prophet who could command the forces of nature (namely – thunder and lightning), as well as a healer. In the end of his life Elias was taken up into the heavens in a fiery chariot, which was traditionally seen as a prophetic witness to Christ's future Resurrection. A series of his deeds also seem as the forerunners of Christ's miracles; the multiplying of bread, the raising from the dead, the walking on waters, the ascension.

Hagiographical icons of the Prophet Elias are known in Russian art since the 13th century. They become especially numerous in the 17th century in the Volga region, since Elias won special veneration in the merchant cities of Yaroslavl and Kostroma, where churches were built in his name. The centerpiece depicts the popular Old Testament episode, describing Elias in the desert during a horrible drought, when the Prophet was fed by the raven at the Horaf stream (3 Kings. 17:3–7). The image Prophet Elias in the desert is seen as the ideal of hermit and monastic life, but is also brings to light the Eucharistic theme, since the Prophet was miraculously fed by God through the raven. The large figure of Elias occupies the center; the Prophet sits on a rock, before a cave, dressed in a long green tunic and a brown goats' wool cloak, turning towards the raven. The surrounding hagiographical scenes are traditional in their iconography and execution. The only rare scene is the depiction of Ahab's courtier, Avdius, who saved over a 100 of God's prophets from being murdered; meeting Elias, he falls to his knees before the great Prophet.

The artistic traits of the piece, namely its subtle color scheme, built on the combination of pale ochres, dimmed browns, reds, pinks, blues and the highly active greens and whites (which shame the accents), as well as the rather harsh gold hatching allows us to consider with the highest level of probability that the icon was painted in one of the greatest Old Believer iconographic centers in the Moscow region – Guslitsy.





Size: 45 x 37 x 3 cm.

SECOND QUARTER OF THE 19TH CENTURY. GUSLITSY

Wood (two panels), two incut profiled support boards, a shallow incut centerpiece, underlying layer of canvas not visible, gesso, tempera.

The author's paintwork is in good condition. Slightly visible scratches on the upper field, near the side. Small fallouts of gesso on the borders. Several restoration tonings on the bottom field.

SAINT COSMAS AND DAMIAN OF ASIA WITH 12 HAGIOGRAPHICAL SCENES

In the Eastern Christian tradition we see the veneration of three pairs of Holy Brothers, known for their healing and medical powers. All of them bear the names Cosmas and Damian. The Arabian and Roman brothers lived in the second half of the 3rd century and were not twins, unlike the Asian brothers (depicted on the icon), who lived in 4th century Asia Minor. The Asian Cosmas and Damian were born in a Greek family; their mother Theodotia was a Christian, and it was she who taught the brothers the art of medicine and healing. The brothers were known as the Anargyri doctors – meaning that they did not accept payment for their services. Instead, they preached the Christian faith to their patients. The brothers died peacefully, without suffering martyrdom, and were buried in the same grave. Numerous miracles and healings took place before their relics. Their Feast is celebrated on November 1st according to the Julian calendar.

The Vita of the Asian Brothers was known in Russia since the pre-Mongolian period, which gave rise to their widespread veneration, and the commission of their icons (including hagiographical ones). The number and selection of border scenes is typical for later-period iconography; it includes the saints' nativity, and the miracles performed in their lifetime and after their repose (among the former – the healing of Palladia from an unknown malady and the miracle of the camel, who spoke in favor of the brothers' burial together; among the latter – the miraculous healings of the youth, who lost his mind, the man whose lung condition was healed in his sleep, and Malch's wife, saved by the Anargyri brothers from the Devil).

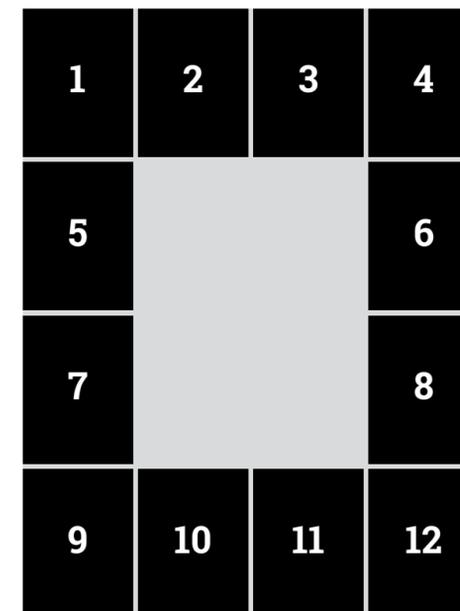
The artistic traits and characteristics of the icon indicate that it was painted in one of the most significant Old Believer centers – Guslitsy. A rather large area, known as "Old Believer Palestine" was located along the river Guslitsa in the eastern part of the Moscow Province. Guslitsy were at the forefront of Old Believer art, and by the mid-19th century it became one of the main spiritual centers of the Old Believer Metropolia (the so-called Belokrinitsy Hierarchy). Local artists were known for the production of illustrated books, metalwork and icons, which were then spread across Russia. The icon-painting centers of the nearby Vladimir region (Palekh, Mstyora, Kholuy) influenced the development of Guslitsy's style and tradition. Embracing Palekh's iconographic and compositional schemes (as well as the such techniques as adding the lights on the vestments, mixed with the basic tone), local artists developed their own recognizable style. Guslitsy's traditional execution of faces is built on a solid use of an ochre-red tone, without any contrasting layers; the color scheme is usually dominated by various shades of brown and olive, which come into contract with bright reds, bright ochres, emerald greens and purples. The strong graphic work and the calligraphy of the inscriptions reflect the fact that the artists were well acquainted with the craft of book production and illumination – a trait, which also gives away Guslitsy's iconographers.





Saint Cosmas and Damian of Asia with 12 hagiographical scenes

Diagram of the border scenes:



1. The Nativity of Saints Cosmas and Damian;
2. The Healing of Palladia;
3. Palladia convinces Damian to accept a gift in return for her healing;
4. Saint Cosmas asks for his body not to be buried with that of Damian, since the latter broke their pledge;
5. The Burial of Saint Cosmas;
6. A healed camel speaks with the human voice and implores the people to bury Saint Damian alongside his brother;
7. Saints Cosmas and Damian cure a sleeping man from his malady;
8. The miraculous healing of a mad youth from the relics of the Saints;
9. Malch brings his wife Thekla to the Church of Saints Cosmas and Damian;
10. Malch leaves his wife under the protection of the Holy Brothers;
11. Saints Cosmas and Damian save Thekla from the Devil;
12. Thekla tearfully thanks the Holy Brothers for her salvation.



Size: 45 x 37 x 2,2 cm.

SECOND QUARTER OF THE 19TH CENTURY. GUSLITSY

Wood (two panels), two incut support boards (now lost), absence of an incut centerpiece, underlying layer of canvas not visible, gesso, tempera, gold.

The author's paintwork is in very good condition. Small fallouts of paint on the borders.

SAINT MACARIUS OF UNZHA (ZHELTOVODSK) WITH 12 HAGIOGRAPHICAL BORDER SCENES

Saint Macarius (1349-1444) is one of the most venerated Russian saints and wonder-workers, the founder of a series of monasteries in the Nizhniy Novgorod region, a great ascetic, known for his work among the Cheremis, Chuvash and Tatar peoples. Macarius was born in 1349 in Nizhniy Novgorod in a pious family. When he was 19, he secretly left his home and was tonsured a monk in the Pechersk Ascension monastery. He proved himself to be a strict ascetic, winning the approval and respect of other monks.

Leaving the Pechersk convent, Macarius went to the river Lukh, where he soon founded the Theophany (Bogoyavlenskii) monastery. Then he left for a small place known as Zheltye Vody, where he built a small cell, and in 1434 founded the Holy Trinity Monastery (later on it was known as the Troitsky–Zheltovodsky monastery). In 1439 the monastery was sacked by the Kazan Tatars, who killed most of the monks and took Macarius prisoner. The Saint was freed only after giving a promise not to restore the monastery in its original place. After this Macarius went up the river Unzha and founded a new convent, also consecrated in honor of the Holy Trinity (the Macariev Unzhenskii monastery). Here Macarius fell asleep in the Lord in 1444, being 95 years of age. Before being canonized by the Patriarch Filaret of Moscow in 1619 the saint was venerated locally in the regions of Nizhniy Novgorod, Galich and Kostroma. His holy relics were retrieved in 1671 during the building of the stone church, dedicated to him, in the Unzha monastery. Saint Macarius's feast is celebrated on August 7th and February 5th as part of the Sobor of the Kostroma Saints.

The images of Saint Macarius become widespread in the 17th century, following his canonization. The saint is traditionally depicted in monastic garments, with the hood dropped on his shoulders, with an unraveled scroll containing the prayer to the Holy Trinity, before his monastery on the Volga River. The representation is fairly symbolic, yet the main buildings of the convent are recognizable: the Gate Church of the Archangel Michael (1670), the main cathedral of the Holy Trinity (1658) and the Church of the Dormition of the Mother of God with its bell-tower (1651). The hagiographical border scenes are typical for such icons: they contain the main events of the Saint's Vita, including his birth, tonsure and canonization, as well as his establishment of monasteries.

Stylistic traits of the icon, the miniature painting style, subtle and rather dark color pallet, the dryness of the gold hatching are highly characteristic elements of the traditionalist movement in Russian iconography, from the middle to the third quarter of the 19th century. These iconographers followed the Palekh tradition but in an extremely simplified fashion.

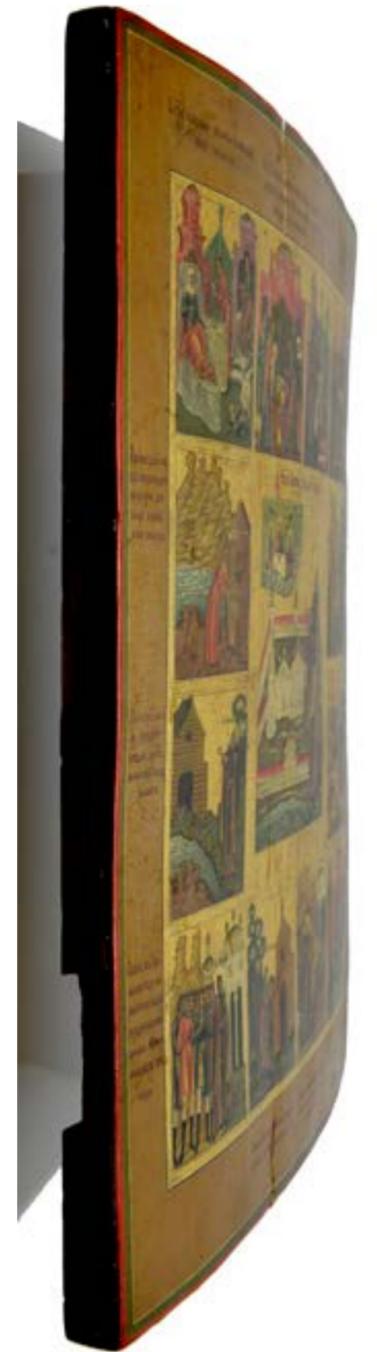
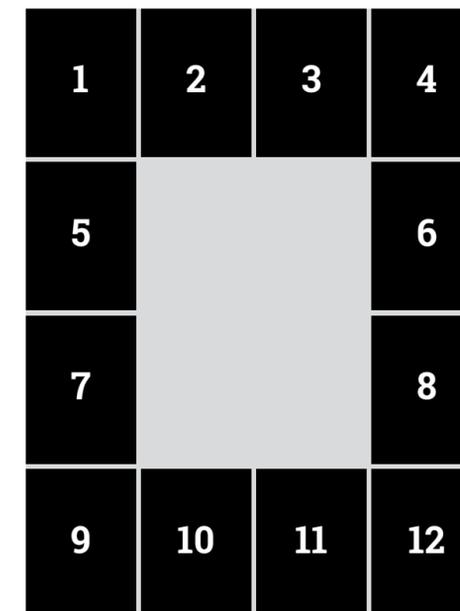




Diagram of the border scenes:



1. The Nativity of Saint Macarius;
2. Parents bring their weeping baby into the Church;
3. The Education of Saint Macarius;
4. Saint Macarius is tonsured a monk in the Pechersk monastery in Nizhniy Novgorod;
5. Macarius's Father comes to the monastery, but the Saint would not meet with him;
6. Fleeing from fame, Saint Macarius goes to the river Lukh, where he builds a hut for himself;
7. The Prayer of Saint Macarius in the Church;
8. The Tatars sack the monastery and take Saint Macarius prisoner;
9. The Foundation of the Holy Trinity Monastery in Zheltovodsk;
10. Saint Macarius builds a church in the forest and prays there;
11. Saint Macarius comes to Unzha;
12. The Dormition of Saint Macarius.

Saint Macarius of Unzha (Zheltovodsk) with 12 hagiographical border scenes



Size: 45 x 37 x 2,2 cm.

END OF THE 19TH CENTURY. MSTYORA

Wood (three panels), two incut profiled support boards, a shallow incut centerpiece, underlying layer of canvas not visible, gesso, tempera.

The author's paintwork is very well preserved.

THE SEPTEMBER MENAION

The September Menaion was part of a twelve icon complex, which included the Feasts and saints for every month, in accordance with the Menaion – the book, which regulated Church celebrations, services and prayers for every day of the year. The Menologion (or Menaion) icons were known in Byzantium since the 11th century; they were derived from the illuminated hagiographical book compilations, as well as Feast cycle illustrations, which could be found on the pages of the Gospel. In Russia the Menaion becomes widespread in the 16th century, when, by the initiative of Metropolitan Macarius of Moscow, various menologia texts were compiled into the Great Almanac, which included services to all saints venerated and canonized in Russia. Menaion icons were meant to be placed on the analoion during the church services. Despite changes in the secular calendar, brought about by the 18th century reforms, the church calendar remained intact, and the Menaion follows the traditional chronology – beginning in September and ending in August. Thus, the September Menaion inaugurates the church year.

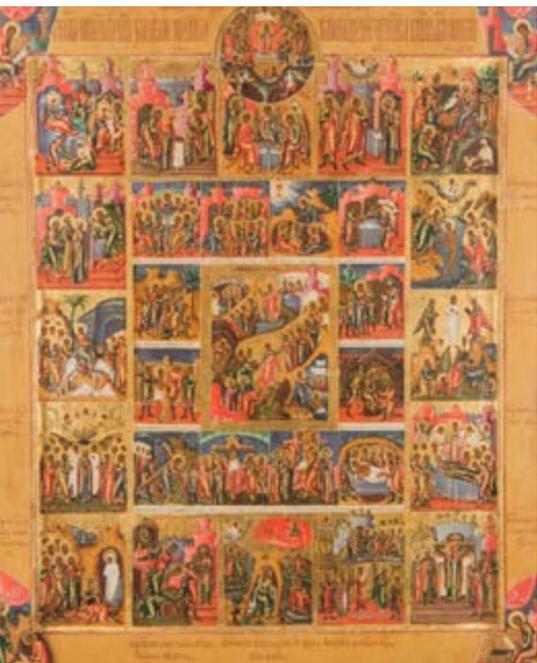
The icon's composition is split into five tiers, each broken up into a series of border scenes, with the letters marking the specific day of the month. Usually not all saints were placed into the border scene of that particular day: they were selected by the commissioner. The given icon has an extended number of saints and a more detailed iconography of the feasts. On September 1st – the day of the New Ecclesiastical Year – we see the Gospel scene of Christ preaching in the Synagogue of Nazareth, the first time that Jesus witnessed to the fact that the Old Testament prophecies on the Messiah were coming true (Luke 6:17-23). According to tradition, this happened on the first day of the Jewish Feast of the Harvest, which came about in early September. September 1st is also the Feast of Saint Simeon the Stylite (called by the Russians the "The Conductor of Summer") and his mother Martha. Besides Eastern Christian saints, whose presence was established partly by tradition, partly – by personal reasons, the icon includes a number of Russian saints – John the Archbishop of Novgorod (September 7th), Theodore, David and Constantine – the Right Believing Princes of Yaroslavl (September 19th), the Martyr Prince Michael of Chernigov and his boyar Theodore (September 20th), Saint Nikander the Hermit of Pskov (September 24th), Saint Euphrosinia of Suzdal (September 25th), Saint Savvatus of Solovki (September 27th), Prince Vyacheslav of the Czech lands (September 28th), Bishop Michael of Kiev and Saint Gregory of Pelshema, the Vologda Wonderworker (September 30th), as well as Feasts, commemorating the burial, the retrieval and the translation of relics of Russian saints, marked only by their figures: for example – the translation of relics of Sergius and Herman of Valaam (September 11th), the Dormition of Saint Sergius of Radonezh (September 25th).





The September Menaion

The icon's artwork fully reflects the aesthetics of the Russian Art Nouveau, which was especially popular in the Imperial Church during the last two decades – from the late 19th to the early 20th century. The elongated, fragile figures, the mannerist poses – clearly visible on the bright blue background, the bright and extravagant color combinations, the special attention to details and gestures, the professional, calligraphic execution of the inscriptions – all of these elements testify to the fact that the icon was painted by one of the best Mstyora iconographers for a high-class commissioner. By the middle of the 19th century the Vladimir village of Mstyora became the main iconographic center of the Russian Empire. The evolution of the local tradition and the rapid development of this center was in many ways made possible by the large number of commissions, coming from the Old Believers who lived in the Bogoyavlenskaya sloboda on the Mstyora river. The tastes and ideals of the adherents of the “Old Piety” established the recognizable imagery of the Mstyora icon, which followed the pre-reform traditions; local artists were known as the “old masters”, since they managed to replicate the centuries’ old heritage of Russian iconography. Accepting expensive commissions, Mstyora masters created incredibly detailed icons, which often demonstrate their ability to work in accordance with various Russian traditions and schools.



Size: 53 x 44 x 2,8 cm.

THIRD QUARTER OF THE 19TH CENTURY. PALEKH

Wood (two panels), two incut, profiled support boards, absence of an incut centerpiece, underlying layer of gesso not visible, gesso, tempera.

The author's paintwork is in an overall good state. Small fallouts and chafing of paint.

THE RESURRECTION –
THE HARROWING OF HADES, WITH THE
MONOGENIS, THE PASSIONS OF CHRIST,
THE CHURCH FEASTS AND THE FOUR
EVANGELISTS IN 28 BORDER SCENES.

Icons with a complex composition, which included the Resurrection – the Harrowing of Hades and the main Church feasts become widespread in the 19th century. The centerpiece bears the detailed variation of the Resurrection – the Harrowing of Hades, popular in later-period Russian iconography. Besides the depictions of Christ – rising from the tomb and leading Adam out of the pits of hell – the composition includes two processions; the angels, descending to the Gates of Hell, and the Pious, led by the Good Thief, and marching up to the Kingdom of Heaven. In the corners of the centerpiece we see two other Gospel scenes – “The Revelation of the Angel to the Myrrh-bearing women” and “The Revelation of Christ to the Apostles on the Sea of Galilee”. In the earlier cycles, made in the 16th and 17th centuries, these scenes, along with the Feasts, would be included into the Passion iconography, or into icons, dedicated to the Revelations of Christ after the Resurrections. In this case, the Passion cycle forms the inner frame of border scenes, twelve in number. The selection of Passion scenes is traditional for this iconographic variation. The only unique feature is the scene of Judas accepting the 30 pieces of silver (border scene 20), not often seen in such cycles.

The Feast cycle – containing 16 border scenes and forming the exterior frame – begins with the Nativity of the Mother of God, which inaugurates the yearly liturgical cycle, and ends with the Elevation of the Holy Cross. The inclusion of the “Raising of Lazarus”, “The Fiery Ascent of the Prophet Elias” and the “Beheading of John the Baptist” is highly symbolic. John the Baptist is the first man who openly proclaims the coming of Christ and the Messiah's role in the Salvation of Mankind, while the other two scenes are seen as forerunners of the Resurrection. In the upmost tier we see the Old Testament Trinity and the “Monogenis” (The Only Begotten Son) icons, which are symbols of the Reunification of the Three Persons of the Trinity and the sign of Mankind's return to the Kingdom of Heaven.

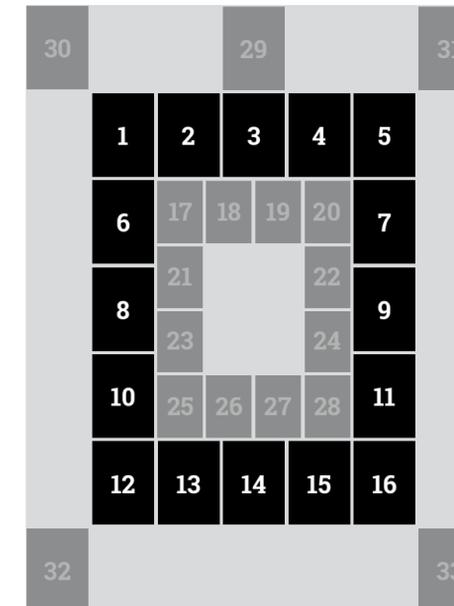
The described iconography was especially popular among Palekh masters, who yearned for complex, many-figured compositions, and were inclined to the “miniature” painting style. The icon finds very close analogies among the icons of known Palekh masters – Michael Zinoviev and Vasiliy Markevich, who worked in the second half of the 19th century.





The Resurrection – The Harrowing of Hades, with the Monogenis, the Passions of Christ, the Church Feasts and the Four Evangelists in 28 border scenes.

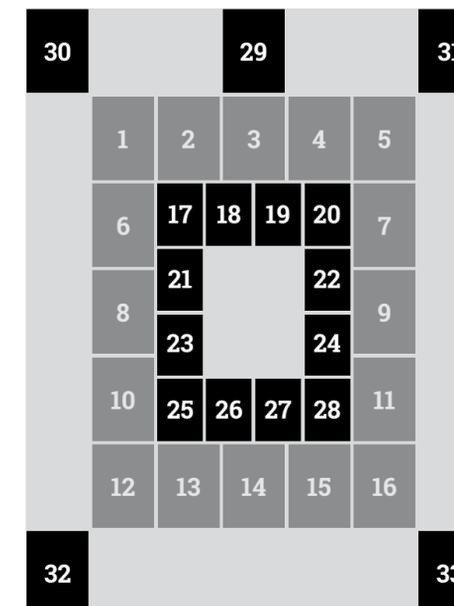
Diagram of the border scenes:



The Festive cycle:

1. The Nativity of the Mother of God;
2. The Entrance of the Mother of God into the Temple;
3. The Old Testament Trinity;
4. The Annunciation;
5. The Nativity of Christ;
6. Candlemas (The Meeting of Christ in the Temple);
7. The Theophany (The Baptism of Christ);
8. The Entrance into Jerusalem;
9. The Transfiguration;
10. The Ascension;
11. The Dormition of the Mother of God;
12. The Raising of Lazarus;
13. The Beheading of John the Baptist;
14. The Fiery Ascent of the Prophet Elias;
15. The Pokrov (Feast of the Protective veil of the Mother of God);
16. The Elevation of the Holy Cross

Diagram of the border scenes:



The Passion Cycle:

17. The Last Supper;
18. The Washing of the Feet;
19. The Prayer in Gethsemane;
20. Judas accepts the 30 pieces of silver;
21. The Betrayal of Judas and the Arrest of Christ;
22. Christ is brought before Pilate;
23. The Flagellation of Christ;
24. The Crown of Thorns;
25. The Carrying of the Cross;
26. The Crucifixion;
27. The Taking Down from the Cross;
28. The Entombment of Christ.
29. The Monogenis;
30. The Evangelist Matthew;
31. The Evangelist Mark;
32. The Evangelist John the Theologian;
33. The Evangelist Luke.



Size: 45 x 37 x 2,2 cm.

SECOND HALF OF THE 19TH CENTURY. ICON-PAINTING CENTERS OF THE VLADIMIR REGION (POSSIBLY PALEKH).

Wood (two panels), profiled incut support boards, a shallow incut centerpiece, underlying layer of canvas not visible, gesso, tempera, gold.

The author's paintwork is in very good condition. Slight chafing and fallouts of gesso on the borders.

SAINT NICHOLAS – THE ARCHBISHOP OF MYRA, WITH 16 HAGIOGRAPHICAL BORDER SCENES

Saint Nicholas of Myra is one of the most venerated saints of the Christian world. He was born in the second half of the 3rd century in Asia Minor to pious Christian parents, who pledged that their son will serve the Lord. One of the first miracles of the saint happened at his baptism – when the baby stood for three hours in the baptismal font (border scene 2). From the youngest age Nicholas strove to the ascetic life, spending time studying the New Testament. His uncle – the Bishop of Patar – seeing the young man's zeal for God, ordained Nicholas a priest. The Vita of St. Nicholas tells us of his humility, mercy and the fervent desire to come to the aid of those who suffered. These qualities he retained throughout his life, even after being elected and ordained the Archbishop of Myra in Lycia (present day town of Demre in Turkish Asia Minor). In 325 Nicholas took part in the First Ecumenical Council, which condemned the Arian heresy. According to later-day Church tradition, Saint Nicholas hit the heretic Arius, and for this offence he was stripped of his episcopal authority and thrown into prison. Soon many of the Council Fathers experienced a vision in their sleep of Christ and the Mother of God personally giving Saint Nicholas the two most important symbols of the episcopacy – the Gospel and the omophorion. This vision, which served as the official reason for the reinstatement of Nicholas in the episcopacy, became known as "The Miracle of Nicaea" and is depicted on almost all icons of the saint. In this case it is shown in the centerpiece, with Christ and the Mother of God depicted half-length in medallions.

In Russia Saint Nicholas was widely venerated since the pre-Mongolian era. The depiction of Saint Nicholas belongs to the oldest and best-known iconographic type: it is a half-figure portrait of the saint, vested in a cross-ornamented phelonion, with his right hand in a blessing gesture, and his left, covered hand holding the Gospel. The selection of border scenes is traditional, the majority dedicated to various miracles of the saint. One of the usual scenes is the "Healing of the withered woman" (border scene 4) – a miracle, performed by Nicholas when he was just seven. The hagiographical border scenes often include the story of the three maidens (border scene 6), whose broke and despaired father pushed to prostitution, in order to save them from starvation. Hearing this, Saint Nicholas secretly came in the night to their house, and threw three bags of gold to the Maidens, saving the family from the moral fall. The most popular miracle was the delivery of three men from execution (border scene 8), when Nicholas broke through to the executioner and stopped his sword from descending on the wrongly-condemned. One of the more popular Imperial era



scenes is the "Miracle of Three Icons" (border scenes 11 and 12). According to this legend, Saint Nicholas appeared to the Elder Theophanes and asked him to commission three icons – of the Savior, of the Mother of God and of himself. When the icons were finished, they were brought to the Ecumenical Patriarch Athanasius, who refused to bless the icon of Saint Nicholas, ordering it to be removed. After this, Patriarch Athanasius left by sea and was soon engulfed in a storm. He was saved only after praying and asking forgiveness of Saint Nicholas. The border scenes of this icon actually brake the chronology: the Salvation of the Patriarch Athanasius is shown before his refusal to bless the icon of Saint Nicholas. Imperial-era hagiographical icons of Saint Nicholas end with the scenes of the Dormition (the saint died at a great age around the year 345), and the Translation of His Relics to the Italian city of Bari in 1087, after Myra was taken by the Turks. The latter scene also breaks the chronology and is located over the Dormition of Saint Nicholas.

The traditionalist execution of the icons, the use of bright, resonating colors, which stand out on the gold background, the flat and monochromatic approach to the faces all attest to the fact that the icon was painted in one of the centers of the Vladimir region; it is possible that the center was Palekh. The icon clearly belongs to the second quarter of the 19th century.



Diagram of the border scenes:

1	2	3	4	5
6				7
8				9
10				16
11	12	13	14	15

1. The Nativity of Saint Nicholas;
2. The Baptism of Saint Nicholas. The Miracle in the Font;
3. Исцеление сухорукой жены The Healing of the Withered Woman;
4. The Education of Saint Nicholas;
5. Saint Nicholas is ordained Deacon;
6. The Miracle of the Three Maidens;
7. Saint Nicholas is ordained bishop;
8. Избавление трех мужей от казни The Delivery of Three Men from Execution;
9. The Appearance of St. Nicholas to the Emperor Constantine in his sleep;
10. The Miracle of the Carpet;
11. The Delivery of the Patriarch Athanasius from Drowning;
12. Чудо о трех иконах The Miracle of the Three Icons;
13. The Liberation of Basil, the son of Agricus, from the Saracens;
14. The Delivery of Demetrius from the Bottom of the Sea;
15. The Dormition of Saint Nicholas;
16. The Translation of the Relics of St. Nicholas to Bari.

Saint Nicholas – the Archbishop of Myra, with 16 hagiographical border scenes



Size: 39 x 38 x 3 cm.

ICON: SECOND HALF OF THE 18TH CENTURY. CENTRAL RUSSIA.

OKLAD COVER: 1852. MOSCOW. V.S. SEMENOV'S WORKSHOP.

Wood, underlying layer of canvas not visible, gesso, tempera. Oklad cover: silver, embossing, engraving, gilding.

Brands on the Oklad cover: Moscow coat-of-arms (around the middle of the 19th century); silver hallmark «84»; «M·Ч / 1852» – the brand of the assayer Michael Pavlovich Churmazov (1841–1852); «B·C» in the oval shield – the official brand of the Vasiliy Sergeevich Semenov's silversmith workshop.

The author's paintwork is in an overall good state and is currently under the slightly darkened varnish (olifa) layer. Small fragmentations seen on the metal oklad cover.



THE RESURRECTION – THE HARROWING OF HADES, WITH CHURCH FEASTS IN 12 BORDER SCENES

The complex iconography of the Resurrection – the Harrowing of Hades, which was built on two compositional centers, was developed in the middle of the 17th century and became increasingly popular in the following two centuries. In some cases we see that the artists disregarded the strict compositional principle, moving one of the two central scenes to the side and increasing the other in size. In this case, the accent is placed on the Harrowing of Hades, while the “Rising from the Tomb” is moved into the upper left corner. The iconography clearly attests to the artist's dependence on Western European samples; in the “Rising from the Tomb” exactly replicates the compositional scheme found in the Piscator Bible, where Christ is shown rising over the tomb, in floating robes, surrounded by guards, who flee in amazement. Another western trait is the banner in Christ's hand (in the Harrowing of Hades scene), which can be seen as the “victory standard”. The colorful rock-face stoned wall of the New Jerusalem is clearly reminiscent of similar depictions, found in Italian art.

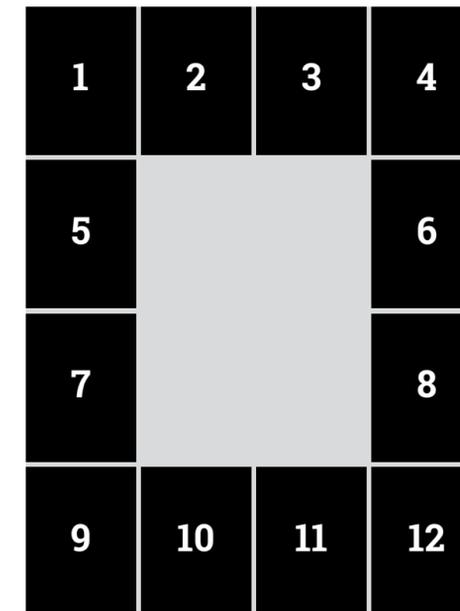
The icon clearly yearns to Baroque art – with its shapes, intense color scheme, floating vestments, expressive, flying draperies and the energetic poses of the heavily-built figures. The compositions are surrounded by extravagant cartouche frames, gold with black graphic work, imitating the gilded woodcarving that filled the interior of churches in the 18th century. The elegance and beauty of the miniature painting enforces the festive, pompous spirit of the given piece. The Baroque style was incredibly popular among various Russian social classes, where it held out until the 19th century, despite the seeming domination of Classicism. The given icon was painted in the second half of the 18th century, when Baroque began to lose its primary position in art. As to the location – the piece probably comes from Central Russia, and is closely linked to the Moscow tradition, which is attested to by the simplified and draft-like painting manner.

The precious, extravagant quality of the icon is enforced by a shining oklad cover, which was commissioned several decades later – in 1852, at V.S. Semenov's silversmith, engraving and embossing workshop. Semenov's workshop was known since 1852; it was located on Moscow's Kaluzhskaya street, in Semenov's own house. The workshop was well-known for its silverwork, decorated with niello. It reached the peak of fame in the 1870's. From the end of the 19th century the business was successfully inherited and led on by Semenov's daughter – Maria Vasilieva. The given oklad cover is among the first commissions of this renowned workshop, which at that time had barely opened its doors. It is executed in the Second Baroque style and consists of recognizable natural motifs; lavish leaves, flowers and rocailles. Yet the symmetry and absence of accents in the embossing strips the oklad of the Baroque emotionality, which could be found in works of art of the previous century.





Diagram of the border scenes:



1. The Nativity of the Mother of God;
2. The Entrance of the Mother of God into the Temple;
3. The Annunciation;
4. The Nativity of Christ (The Adoration of the Magi);
5. Candlemas (The Meeting of Christ in the Temple);
6. The Theophany (The Baptism of Christ);
7. The Transfiguration;
8. The Entrance into Jerusalem;
9. The Ascension;
10. The Old Testament Trinity;
11. The Dormition of the Mother of God;
12. The Elevation of the Holy Cross.

The Resurrection – The Harrowing of Hades, with Church Feasts in 12 border scenes



Size: 27 x 22 x 2 cm.

ICON: 1840'S. PALEKH.
OKLAD COVER: 1849.
 ST. PETERSBURG

Wood (two panels), two incut profiled support boards, absence of an incut centerpiece, underlying layer of canvas not visible, gesso, tempera. Oklad: silver, embossing, etching, selective gilding.

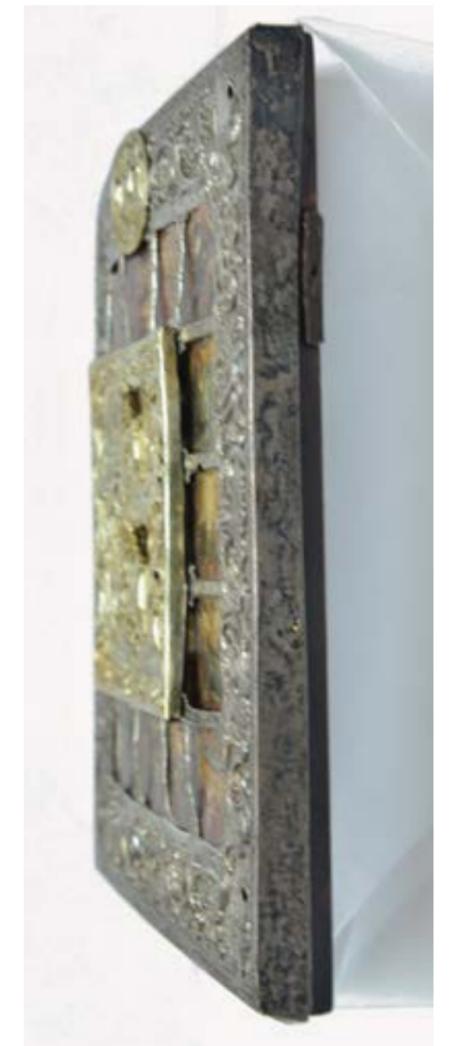
Brands on the Oklad cover: St. Petersburg coat-of-arms (1818–1864); silver hallmark «84»; «Д.Т / 1849» – brand of the assayer Dmitrii Ilyich Tverskoy (1832–1850); «Ф.Ф» in the rectangular shield – probably the hallmark of the silversmith Faber Friedrich (born in 1802).

Chafing and small fallouts of the paint. Few restoration tonings. The oklad cover is excellently preserved.

THE RESURRECTION – THE HARROWING OF HADES, WITH THE MONOGENIS, THE FOUR EVANGELISTS AND CHURCH FEASTS IN 16 BORDER SCENES

In the 18th and 19th centuries icons depicting the Resurrection – the Harrowing of Hades, surrounded by border scenes with the Twelve Great and Minor Feasts of the Church won immense popularity. These were produced by the thousands, with iconographers being ready to meet the tastes and financial abilities of any commissioner. Palekh was especially known for the production of such icons, with local artists standardizing the process and establishing the main variations of the iconographic composition. The centerpiece usually bore the detailed iconographic depiction of the Resurrection: with the scenes of the Rising from the Tomb and the Harrowing of Hades portrayed along a single axis, and connected by the diagonal processional line of the Pious marching from the Gates of Hell into the Kingdom of Heaven. This composition would be supplemented by other scenes – which either predate or follow the Resurrection: the number of such scenes depended on the size of the icon, and on the master's level of artistry and attention to details. In the given icon the number of such scenes is brought to a minimum: in the upper left we see "Saint Peter at the Empty Tomb"; in the lower right – "The Revelation of Christ to the Apostles on the Sea of Galilee". The centerpiece is encompassed by the traditional cycle of 16 border scenes. A unique trait of this particular piece is the inclusion of the "Monogenis" scene ("The Only Begotten Son"), which, unlike other border scenes, is placed in a medallion, in the center of the topmost tier. It is the basic illustration of the Troparion: «Only-Begotten Son and Immortal Word of God/Who for our salvation didst will to be incarnate of the holy Theotokos and Ever-Virgin Mary/Who without change didst become man and was crucified/Who art one of the Holy Trinity, glorified with the Father and the Holy Spirit/O Christ our God, trampling down death by death, save us!». The inclusion of this scene and its clear compositional domination gives the icon an increasingly eschatological character, which reflects the emotional state of the Old Believer communities, constantly subject to state persecution.

The stylistic aspects of the icon, the "miniature" painting style, the dimmed, rather dark color pallet, the dry gold hatching of the vestments are all usual for the traditionalist movement, popular in Russian iconography in the second quarter of the 19th century. This movement yearned to continue the Palekh tradition, but in a rather simplified manner. Such icons were especially cherished among the Old Believers, who not only commissioned icons from Palekh, but set up their own workshops, who strove to



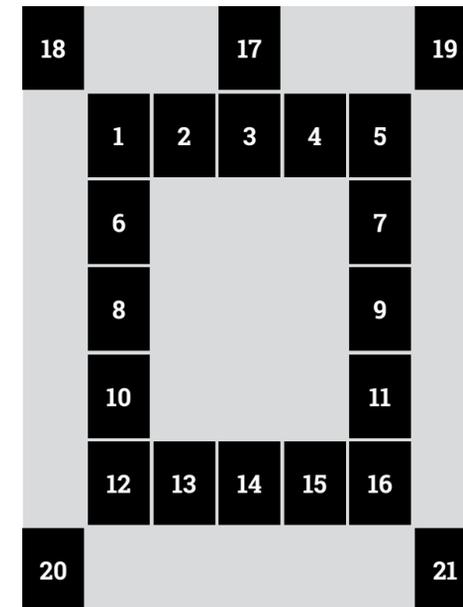
imitate this center's tradition. This makes the attribution of such pieces increasingly difficult.

The silver embossed oklad cover was made in St. Petersburg in 1849, in the Second Baroque style. It is noted for its festive, pompous character, which fully reflects the eclectic spirit of the age. The overwhelming Baroque décor is clearly seen in the rich ornamentation, in the broad, interwoven floral and sea shell motif, held up by the highly-decorated border. The silversmith craft, his clever use of etching and polishing of the surface – creates a wonderful play of light on the surface and enforces the ornamentation. The centerpiece is connected to the border scene frame by a grated line. The precious oklad gives greater depth to the miniature paintwork, enforcing the resonance of the colors, with the border scenes resembling precious enamel medallions, framed in silver.



The Resurrection – The Harrowing of Hades, with the Monogenesis, the Four Evangelists and Church Feasts in 16 border scenes

Diagram of the border scenes:



1. The Nativity of the Mother of God;
2. The Entrance of the Mother of God into the Temple;
3. The Old Testament Trinity;
4. The Annunciation;
5. The Nativity of Christ;
6. Candlemas (The Meeting of Christ in the Temple);
7. The Theophany (The Baptism of Christ);
8. The Entrance into Jerusalem;
9. The Transfiguration;
10. The Ascension;
11. The Dormition of the Mother of God;
12. The Raising of Lazarus;
13. The Beheading of John the Baptist;
14. The Elevation of the Holy Cross;
15. The Fiery Ascent of the Prophet Elias;
16. The Pokrov (Feast of the Protective veil of the Mother of God);
17. The Monogenesis;
18. The Evangelist John the Theologian;
19. The Evangelist Matthew;
20. The Evangelist Mark;
21. The Evangelist Luke.



Size: 35 x 30 x 3 cm.

ICON: LAST QUARTER OF THE 19TH CENTURY. ICON-PAINTING CENTERS OF THE VLADIMIR REGION.

OKLAD COVER: LAST QUARTER OF THE 19TH CENTURY.

Wood (two panels), two incut profiled support boards, a shallow incut centerpiece, underlying layer of canvas not visible, gesso, tempera. Oklad cover: white metal, embossing, engraving, etching, silver-plating.

The paintwork is well preserved. Remnants of the darkened varnish, missed at restoration; small fallouts of gesso on the borders. The oklad cover is very well preserved.

THE RESURRECTION –

THE HARROWING OF HADES WITH CHURCH FEASTS IN 12 BORDER SCENES, PENTECOST, THE POKROV, THE BEHEADING OF JOHN THE BAPTIST, AND THE PROPHET ELIAS IN THE DESERT.

Icons of Church Feasts were especially popular among the faithful, in many ways due to the practicality of such pieces: a single panel contained the main events of the liturgical year, becoming the home's small iconostasis.

In folk culture they were seen as a sort of agricultural calendar, since its cycle was clearly linked with the feasts of the liturgical year. The Nativity of the Mother of God (September 8th) was the day that bees were to be locked away and onion was collected. The Elevation of the Holy Cross (September 14th) reminded about the coming of winter: it was the day bread was harvested. The Feast of the Entrance of the Mother of God into the Temple (November 21st) marked the coming of winter; the season's first slay-rides were held on that day. The Nativity of Christ (December 25th) was the main family feast, whose celebration embraced several old, pre-Christian Slavonic traditions (the Svyatki). According to popular beliefs, river waters blessed at the Feast of the Theophany (January 6th) held special powers; the water was collected and used throughout the year to bless the home, farm and livestock, belonging to a family. Candlemas (February 2nd) was seen as the day when Winter met the incoming Spring: to aid the latter, Russian peasants would engage in ritual fist-fights. Water blessed on that day was also seen as especially sacred. On the Annunciation (March 25th) the peasants burned their old straw beds, to prevent the return of last year's maladies; crumbs of the prosphora (holy bread) received on the Annunciation were preserved and placed in the ground with the seed grain. Pussy willow branches – blessed in Russian instead of palms during the Entrance into Jerusalem Feast – were used for healing the sick. On the Ascension the Russians made pies and pancakes, and boiled eggs, with which the villagers marched in procession across the fields, asking for good harvest. Pentecost or the Holy Trinity Feast (the 50th day after Pascha) was the time or the rebirth of the land and forests; on this day churches and homes would be decorated with green tree branches and flowers – as the symbols of Eternal Life. The Transfiguration (August 6th) ripe apples and fruits would be brought to the church and blessed; this was followed by the blessings of the fields with holy water. Evening of the Transfiguration marked the last farewell to Summer Sun and the meeting of Autumn. The Dormition of the Mother of God (August 15th) marked the end of harvest season: in churches priests would bless the harvested crops. This was seen as the best time for the sowing the late seeds. The Beheading of John the Baptist ended the summer and began the Fall season; it was a day of strict fasting, with the villagers abstaining from all round types of food, as well as from



dancing and singing, remembering the cruelty of Salome.

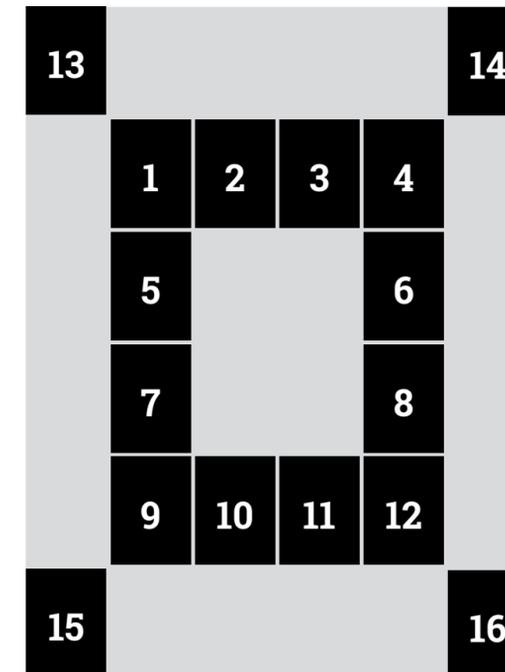
The stylistic characteristics of the piece, especially its dark color pallet, the olive-brown color of the borders, the dry gold hatching of the vestments all attest to the fact that the icon was painted in the late 19th century. Instead of the traditional depictions of the Four Evangelists in the corners we see other Feasts (Pentecost, the Pokrov, the Beheading of John the Baptist, the Prophet Elias in the Desert), which expand the Festive cycle and give the icon a more universal character.

The embossed oklad frame brings more structure to the icon. The complex, floral ornamentation on the borders imitates 17th silverwork; the vines take a spiral shape, and all floral texture is brilliantly executed by the silversmith. Such ornamentation was widespread among ecclesiastic silversmiths in the 1860's and endured until the end of the 19th century.



The Resurrection – The Harrowing of Hades with Church Feasts in 12 border scenes, Pentecost, the Pokrov, the Beheading of John the Baptist, and the Prophet Elias in the Desert.

Diagram of the border scenes:



1. The Nativity of the Mother of God;
2. The Entrance of the Mother of God into the Temple; 3. The Annunciation;
4. The Nativity of Christ;
5. Candlemas (The Meeting of Christ in the Temple);
6. The Theophany (The Baptism of Christ);
7. The Entrance into Jerusalem;
8. The Transfiguration;
9. The Elevation of the Holy Cross;
10. The Ascension;
11. The Old Testament Trinity;
12. The Dormition of the Mother of God;
13. Pentecost (The Descent of the Holy Spirit on the Apostles);
14. The Pokrov (Feast of the Protective veil of the Mother of God);
15. The Beheading of John the Baptist;
16. The Prophet Elias in the Desert.



Size: 44,5 x 37 x 2,7 cm.

THIRD QUARTER OF THE 19TH CENTURY. PALEKH.

Wood (two panels), two incut support boards,
absence of an incut centerpiece, underlying layer
of canvas not visible, gesso, tempera.

The author's paintwork is very well preserved.
Slight chafing on the borders.

THE CRUCIFIXION WITH THE PASSIONS OF CHRIST AND SELECTED CHURCH FEASTS

Icons of the Crucifixion, which included the great Church Feasts and the Passion narrative, become widespread in later period Russian religious art. The centerpiece of such icons usually bears depictions of the Resurrection – the Harrowing of Hades, but in this case it is replaced by the Crucifixion, which places greater emphasis on the Passions of Christ. The compositional scheme is indeed complex and original, with the centerpiece being enclosed in a circle along whose perimeter we see four rows of border scenes – diamond-shaped, many-angular and triangular. Usually such icons are connected with Palekh, in whose workshops this iconographic scheme was finally shaped. The traditionalists execution and stylistic traits of the icon allow the dating of the piece to be placed at the third quarter of the 19th century.

The iconography of the centerpiece belongs to the highly developed type of the Crucifixion, with the composition including two crucified thieves, the Myrrh-bearing women, the Mother of God, Longinus the Centurion and the Roman warriors. The scene is supplemented by a rather rare depiction of John the Baptist preaching the coming of Christ in Hell, so that “all those who have faith in Him will be saved, and those that do not – be condemned”. The central axis brings together the main events linked with the Passions and Resurrection narrative – the culmination of God's Salvation of Mankind. The life of suffering, ending with the Death on the Cross, brings Christ to the glory of the Resurrection and the Harrowing of Hades. Christ himself attested to this at the Last Supper: “Now the Son of Man is glorified and God is glorified in him” (John 13:31) – this is why the Last Supper scene is depicted directly below the Harrowing of Hades. The centerpiece composition includes the images of the Four Evangelists (John the Theologian, Matthew, Mark and Luke) depicted at each corner, as the four Pillars of the Church.





The Crucifixion with the Passions of Christ and selected Church Feasts

The Passion cycle unravels in the diamond-shaped border scenes, which take their place between the centerpiece and the Great Feasts. It includes fourteen border scenes (the Washing of the Feet; Judas taking the 30 pieces of silver; the Prayer in Gethsemane; the Betrayal of Judas and Arrest of Christ; Christ before Pilate; the Denial of Peter; Christ before Caiaphas; the Flagellation of Christ; the Crown of Thorns; the Carrying of the Cross; Joseph of Arimathea asking Pilate for the Body of Christ; the Taking Down from the Cross), two of which (The Last Supper and the Entombment of Christ) are brought out to the central axis and are expanded in size, emphasizing the themes of Passion and the Resurrection.

The exterior cycle of border scenes includes the Twelve Great and Minor Feasts of the Church: the Nativity of the Mother of God; the Entrance of the Mother of God into the Temple; Candlemas (the Meeting of Christ in the Temple); the Theophany (Baptism of Christ); the Entrance into Jerusalem; the Transfiguration; the Ascension; the Dormition of the Mother of God; the Raising of Lazarus; the Beheading of John the Baptist; the Old Testament Trinity; the Pokrov of the Mother of God; the Elevation of the Holy Cross.

Icons of the Feasts were especially venerated by the faithful, which is explained by their practical use in the prayer life of a home; a single panel contains the main Feasts of the Liturgical year, the icon in itself becoming a miniature iconostasis. In folk culture these icons were seen as the reflection of the agricultural year – with all of its cycles and events. This is why these icons were painted for commissioners hailing from all social classes, since iconographers were willing to accept all orders.



Size:
 14 x 11 cm – the icon;
 23 x 20 cm – the frame.

END OF THE 19TH – EARLY 20TH CENTURY

Icon: wood (one whole panel), absence of an incut centerpiece, underlying layer of canvas not visible, gesso, oil. Frame: wood, carving, gesso, gold.

The author's paintwork is in an overall good condition. It is still under the darkened layer of varnish. Slight chafing of the paint.

THE RESURRECTION OF CHRIST WITH CHURCH FEASTS IN 12 BORDER SCENES

Icons depicting the Twelve Great and Minor Feasts of the Church, surrounding the Resurrection scene, were immensely popular among all Russian social classes. They were created in great numbers in various iconographic workshops across Russia. In folk culture they were seen as a sort of agricultural calendar, since its cycle was clearly linked with the feasts of the liturgical year. The Nativity of the Mother of God (September 8th) was the day that bees were to be locked away and onion was collected. The Elevation of the Holy Cross (September 14th) reminded about the coming of winter: it was the day bread was harvested. The Feast of the Entrance of the Mother of God into the Temple (November 21st) marked the coming of winter; the season's first slay-rides were held on that day. The Nativity of Christ (December 25th) was the main family feast, whose celebration embraced several old, pre-Christian Slavonic traditions (the Svyatki). According to popular beliefs, river waters blessed at the Feast of the Theophany (January 6th) held special powers; the water was collected and used throughout the year to bless the home, farm and livestock, belonging to a family. Candlemas (February 2nd) was seen as the day when Winter met the incoming Spring: to aid the latter, Russian peasants would engage in ritual fist-fights. Water blessed on that day was also seen as especially sacred. On the Annunciation (March 25th) the peasants burned their old straw beds, to prevent the return of last year's maladies; crumbs of the prosphora (holy bread) received on the Annunciation were preserved and placed in the ground with the seed grain. Pussy willow branches – blessed in Russian instead of palms during the Entrance into Jerusalem Feast – were used for healing the sick.

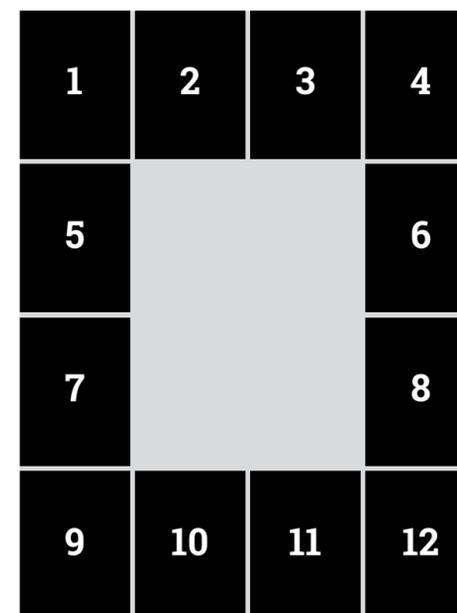
On the Ascension the Russians made pies and pancakes, and boiled eggs, with which the villagers marched in procession across the fields, asking for good harvest.

Pentecost or the Holy Trinity Feast (the 50th day after Pascha) was the time or the rebirth of the land and forests; on this day churches and homes would be decorated with green tree branches and flowers – as the symbols of Eternal Life. The Transfiguration (August 6th) ripe apples and fruits would be brought to the church and blessed; this was followed by the blessings of the fields with holy water. Evening of the Transfiguration marked the last farewell to Summer Sun and the meeting of Autumn. The Dormition of the Mother of God (August 15th) marked the end of harvest season: in churches priests would bless the harvested crops. This was seen as the best time for the sowing the late seeds.

The given icon of the Resurrection belongs to the "artistic" movement in late 19th century Russian religious art. The icon's composition clearly signifies the artist's good acquaintance with academic painting, most notably – with the murals of the Cathedral of Christ the Savior in Moscow, which were painted by T.A. Neff and F.A. Bronnikov in the 1860's and 1870's and heavily influenced the iconography and style of this period. Phototype editions dedicated to the Cathedral were incredibly popular among iconographers, and were sent to all corners of the Empire. The border scenes of this particular piece also imitate the composition and details of either the Festive tier or the pylons of the Cathedral, yet the artist drastically simplifies the original image. The copyist character of the icon is clearly seen in a number of distortions, especially in the proportions, the poses, the perspectives. The centerpiece bears the "Rising from the Tomb" version of the Resurrection, which, in the Imperial period, became more popular than the traditional "Harrowing of Hades" iconography. Russian iconographers often used Western European samples, but simplified the original, so that it often remains unidentifiable during attribution.



Diagram of the border scenes:



1. The Nativity of the Mother of God;
2. The Entrance of the Mother of God into the Temple;
3. The Annunciation;
4. The Nativity of Christ;
5. Candlemas (The Meeting of Christ in the Temple);
6. The Theophany (The Baptism of Christ);
7. The Transfiguration;
8. The Entrance into Jerusalem;
9. The Ascension;
10. The Old Testament Trinity;
11. The Dormition of the Mother of God;
12. The Elevation of the Holy Cross.

The Resurrection of Christ with Church Feasts in 12 border scenes



Size: 22 x 17,5 x 1,7 cm.

SECOND HALF – END OF THE 19TH CENTURY

Wood (one whole panel), no support boards or incut centerpiece, underlying layer of canvas not visible, gesso, tempera.

The author's paintwork is in an overall good state. Slight chafing and fallouts of paint, predominantly on the borders of the panel.

The reverse of the panel has several inscriptions. «№ 4196» made in pencil in the upper left corner; «Ф В» to the right, in the center. In the left part a nearly faded ink inscription, made in three lines: «Ф / праз[ники] икону / []я у[]ья». In the center there is also another faded pencil inscription.

THE RESURRECTION – THE HARROWING OF HADES WITH THE CHURCH FEASTS AND THE FOUR EVANGELISTS IN 12 BORDER SCENES

Icons depicting the Resurrection – the Harrowing of Hades, surrounded by the Twelve Great Feasts, were incredibly popular in the 19th century. Their popularity is in many ways explained by the complexity of the composition, which included all the main Feasts of the liturgical year, with the main Feast – that of Pascha, or the Resurrection of Christ, in the center. Such icons were often commissioned by churches; large examples were considered temple icons, while smaller ones were placed on the analoion during Sunday services. They were also commissioned for private prayer. In folk culture these icons were seen as a type of an agricultural calendar, since the main events of the natural cycle were closely linked with the liturgical calendar, to which the peasant was accustomed. The demand on such icons saw their mass production, with various artists being ready to match the tastes and financial capabilities of all Russian social classes.

According to the traditional iconographic scheme, the centerpiece is occupied by the complex composition of the Resurrection of Christ, which includes the “Rising from the Tomb” scene. This variation was shaped in 16th century Russian art under the influence of Western European etchings; by the middle of the 17th century the iconography became even more complex, and began to include events, which follow the Resurrection and predate the Ascension. With the “Rising from the Tomb” being placed in the upper tier, directly over the “Harrowing of Hades” the composition is set on two centers, placed along a single axis; this symbolic axis is further supplemented by the Holy Trinity (Enthronement) scene. The Resurrection – placed in an oval, is supplemented by the symbols of the Four Evangelists: John the Theologian, Matthew, Mark and Luke.

The order of the border scenes begins with the Nativity of the Mother of God – the first main feast of the liturgical year (celebrated on September 8th by the Julian calendar). It is probably necessary to remind that the Orthodox Church year begins on September 1st.

Then the events (and border scenes) follow their historic chronology, since many of the feasts were moveable and, depending entirely on the date of Pascha, did not have a fixed day of their own. Despite the fact that the liturgical year ends with the Feast of the Dormition of the Mother of God (August 28th by the Julian calendar), the final scene in such icons is usually the “Elevation of the Holy Cross” (September 28th by the Julian calendar). Thus, the icon encompasses the yearly liturgical cycle, eternally rotating around the main feast – Pascha.

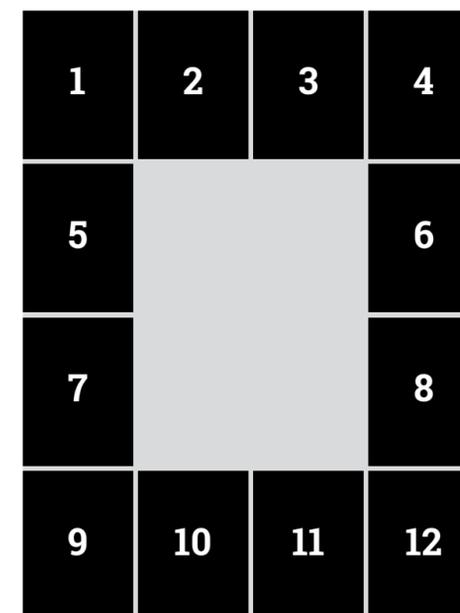
The simplicity of the artistry, the likeness to folk art and naïve color scheme attests to the fact that this icon was among those that were painted by the millions and distributed all over Russia in the second half or end of the 19th century.





The Resurrection – The Harrowing of Hades with the Church Feasts and the Four Evangelists in 12 border scenes

Diagram of the border scenes:



1. The Nativity of Saint Macarius;
2. Parents bring their weeping baby into the Church;
3. The Education of Saint Macarius;
4. Saint Macarius is tonsured a monk in the Pechersk monastery in Nizhniy Novgorod;
5. Macarius's Father comes to the monastery, but the Saint would not meet with him;
6. Fleeing from fame, Saint Macarius goes to the river Lukh, where he builds a hut for himself;
7. The Prayer of Saint Macarius in the Church;
8. The Tatars sack the monastery and take Saint Macarius prisoner;
9. The Foundation of the Holy Trinity Monastery in Zheltovodsk;
10. Saint Macarius builds a church in the forest and prays there;
11. Saint Macarius comes to Unzha;
12. The Dormition of Saint Macarius.



Size: 44,5 x 37 x 2,7 cm.

ICON: SECOND HALF OF THE 19TH CENTURY. MOSCOW REGION (POSSIBLY GUSLITSY)

OKLAD COVER: 1899–1908. MOSCOW.

Wood (two panels), two incut border scenes (now lost), a shallow incut centerpiece, underlying layer of canvas not visible, gesso, tempera. Oklad cover: silver, embossing, engraving, etching.

Brands on the Oklad cover: a woman's head in a kokoshnik, turned left, with the initials «ИЛ» and the silver hallmark «84» – the mark of the Moscow regional assayer (1899–1908); «И.В.З.С.Я» – the S.I. and V.I. Zakharov Brothers' trade store; «18» – the name brand of an unknown silversmith.

Small fallouts of paint on the borders and in the top part of the saint's halo. Chafing and fallout of paint all over the surface. In places there are restoration tonings with fake grazing.

SAINT SERGIUS OF RADONEZH WITH 16 HAGIOGRAPHICAL BORDER SCENES, IN A SILVER OKLAD COVER

Saint Sergius of Radonezh (May 3rd 1314 – September 25th 1392, his secular name – Bartholomew) is the most venerated Russian saint, a great ascetic and spiritual father to an entire monastic movement, the founder of the Holy Trinity Sergius Lavra. According to his Vita, Sergius – still being a young man – renounced his home and heirlooms and left for the Radonezh forests, where he lived as a hermit alongside his brother. In 1337 he was tonsured a monk, and in 1344 he established the Holy Trinity convent in the Moscow region. This hermit saint won immense respect among both – the clergy and political leaders of Russia, inspiring his people to fight against the Tatars. In 1380 he blessed Prince Demetrius Donskoy, predicting his great victory at the Kulikovo field. For his sincere asceticism, Saint Sergius was rewarded by a series of visions and revelations. One of the greatest was the Revelation of the Mother of God, who promised the convent Her Divine protection until the end of time. Saint Sergius's incorrupt relics were discovered in 1422 and by the mid-15th century he was regarded as one of the greatest Russian saints.

The hagiographic depictions of Saint Sergius are known in a number of variations, with the artists following different narratives. The oldest version of Saint Sergius's Vita was written by his disciple – Epiphanius the Wise in the first quarter of the 15th century. The oldest known hagiographic icon of Saint Sergius is the one that is currently part of the iconostasis of the Holy Trinity Cathedral in the Lavra; it was painted around the year 1480.

The hagiographic cycle of the published icon is quite traditional: it begins with the Nativity and Baptism of the saint, and carries on to tell the tale of the Education of the young Bartholomew, who encounters an Angel, disguised as an Elder. This is followed by the scenes of the saint's tonsure (and his acceptance of the name "Sergius"). The border scenes include only those miracles that the saint performed during his lifetime: the calling of the waters from the stone (7), the raising of the dead youth (8), the Vision of an Angel at liturgy (13). As a reward for his ascetic life, Sergius received the Revelation from the Mother of God, who came to him with the Apostles Peter and John. This Revelation is among the most popular hagiographic scenes of Saint Sergius.

Three scenes (9-11) tell us the story of a certain villager, who heard a lot of Sergius and wanted to meet the saint. Yet seeing the saint's worn out, poor clothing he did not believe the stories, for he expected to see a pious elder, surrounded by awe and glory. The villager was greatly disappointed; but at that moment Sergius was called, since a Prince with his courtiers came to see him, and humbly awaited at the monastery gates, asking for the saint's blessing. The saint gave his blessing to the Prince, who then proceeded with



his court to Sergius's cell. Seeing this, the villager could not believe his eyes. After the high-ranked guests left the convent, he approached Sergius with repentance. Sergius comforted him, saying "Child, do not be ashamed, for you are the only one who saw me correctly – as a simple man, while all others are mistaken, considering me great!". Thus the saint showed his great humility: accepting and loving the scornful villager more, than the Prince, who showed such great respect. This tale, written down by Epiphanius the Wise, is rarely found in the icons of Saint Sergius. Almost all known icons of St. Sergius belong to the Old Believer tradition, as does the given piece.

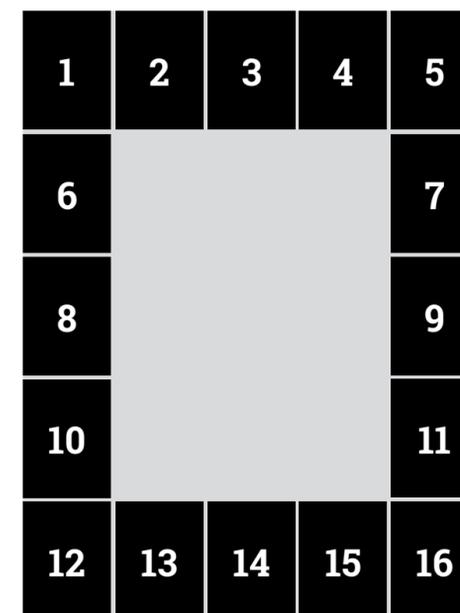
The subtle color scheme, the "miniature" painting style with the careful execution of faces and details, the clear composition all attest to the fact that it was created in the second half of the 19th century, in one of the Moscow provincial workshops, possibly – in the famous Old Believer center of Guslitsy. The piece is noted for its artificial hazing, which has been placed over the author's original paintwork. This trick was widely used by artists who not only restored, but also "aged" icons, so that they could pass for medieval works of art.

The silver oklad cover is noteworthy for the good silverwork and the original embossed décor in the Russian style. It was made in the last quarter of the 19th century by an unknown master. Judging by the brand, the icon in the silver oklad cover was sold through the well-known store, which belonged to the Zakharov Brothers in the 1896-1905.

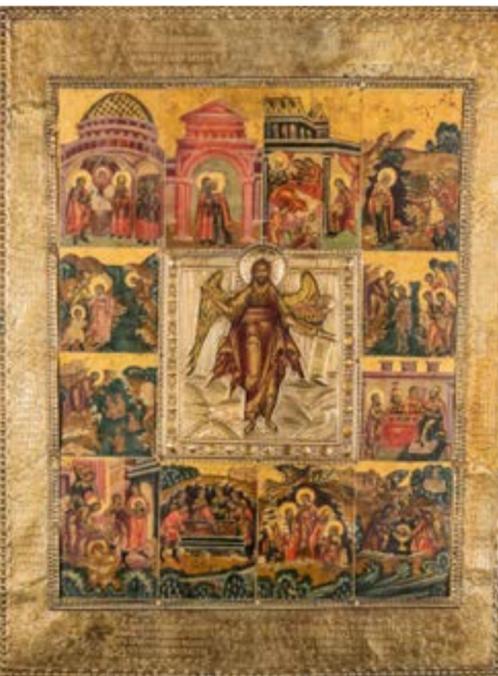


Saint Sergius of Radonezh with 16 hagiographical border scenes, in a silver oklad cover

Diagram of the border scenes:



1. The Nativity of Saint Sergius;
2. The Baptism of Saint Sergius;
3. The Education of Saint Sergius;
4. The Meeting of Saint Sergius (the child Bartholomew) with the Heavenly Elder. Bartholomew learns his grammar;
5. The monastic tonsure of Bartholomew with the name "Sergius";
6. The Exorcism of the Demons;
7. The Miraculous Calling of Waters from the Rock;
8. Raising the youth from the dead;
9. A villager shuns Saint Sergius because of his poor clothing;
10. A Prince comes to the monastery; Saint Sergius blesses the Prince and leads him to his cell;
11. The Conversation of Saint Sergius and the Prince;
12. The Revelation of the Mother of God to Saint Sergius;
13. The Vision of the Holy Fire in shape of an Angel at Liturgy;
14. Saint Sergius names his disciple Nikon as Abbot;
15. The Repose of Saint Sergius;
16. The Discovery of the Relics of Saint Sergius.



Size: 38 x 29 x 3 cm.

END OF THE 18TH – EARLY 19TH CENTURY. CENTRAL RUSSIA.

Wood (one whole panel), two incut smooth support boards, underlying layer of canvas not visible, gesso, tempera. Oklad cover: low-class silver, embossing, engraving.

The author's paintwork is in overall good condition. The oklad has partially darkened.

JOHN THE BAPTIST – THE ANGEL OF THE DESERT WITH 12 HAGIOGRAPHICAL BORDER SCENES

John the Baptist (also known as the Forerunner) – was the last Old Testament Prophet, who preaches the coming of Christ into the world and baptized Him in the waters of the Jordan. John is mentioned in all four Gospels, in the Book of Acts, in early Christian apocrypha. According to the Gospel of Luke (Luke 1:5-24) John was born to the elderly Zachariah and Elizabeth, a couple previously bereft of children. His forthcoming conception was proclaimed by the Archangel Gabriel, who appeared to Zachariah during his prayer in the Temple. Disbelieving the prophecy, Zachariah asked the Archangel to prove his words; he was made a mute, and could not speak until the birth of his son. The Gospels do not mention the meeting of Zachariah and Elizabeth, but since the 13th century we see the separate scene depicting "The Conception of John the Baptist" in Byzantine art; this composition mimics the iconography of "The Meeting of Joachim and Anna at the Golden Gate" (The Conception of the Mother of God). The common fate of two "childless" mothers – Anna and Elizabeth, both of which gave birth to their only child at a great age – is also reflected in the likeness of the two "Nativity" icons (of Mary and the Forerunner), where they are shown diagonally, lying on their beds, surrounded by women bearing gifts and servants washing their cherished newborns. Even in the oldest surviving icons of the Nativity of John the Baptist we see the depiction of Zachariah naming his son: he is shown writing on the tablet, after which he resumes the ability to speak. Soon after giving birth, Elizabeth was forced to flee with her infant son into the desert, saving him from King Herod's warriors, who were sent to kill all the children in Bethlehem - two years and younger. Elizabeth died forty days after in a cave, while the Infant John was raised in the desert by an Angel, until the day the Forerunner was called by God to preach. John preached "baptism of repentance, for the forgiveness of sins" (Mark 1:4, Luke 3:3), seeing that the coming of the Messiah and the Kingdom of Heaven are at hand. Even Christ, being sinless, accepted Baptism from the hands of John, which becomes an integral part of the Salvation of Mankind. Openly condemning King Herod for his incestuous marriage to Herodiada, the great saint was thrown into prison and later – beheaded. According to the apocryphal Gospel of Nicodemus Saint John, after his execution, preached the coming of Christ to the dead in Hades. Fearing the Resurrection of the Prophet, Herodias secretly buried his head in one of Herod's estates, while the body was taken by the Forerunner's disciples. According to church tradition, the

Head of John the Baptist was discovered by two monks in 4th century Jerusalem. This scene, known as the "First Discovery of the Head of John the Baptist" is the final border scene of the given icon.

Hagiographical icons of Saint John the Baptist are known since the end of the 14th century and can be characterized by a large number of iconographic variations. The current icon has quite a standard selection and number of border scenes. The depiction of the great prophet in the centerpiece – dressed in camels' skin and cape, but vested with angels' wings – belongs to the so-called "Angel of the Desert" iconography, which reflects one of the Old Testament prophecies: "I will send by messenger (angel) and he will prepare the way before me" (Malachai 3:1, Mathew 11:10, Mark 1:2, Luke 7:27). Russian iconography such depictions of John the Baptist become widespread in the 16th century, often as centerpieces of hagiographical icons.

The given icon belongs to one of the leading art movements of the late 18th – early 19th century, which evolved among the Old Believers and yearned to retain Stroganov traditions. Artists belonging to this movement brought back the gold background, the static state of the figures, the graphic base and locality of the colors, traditional for proper iconography. The fact that the icon was held by the Old Believers is attested to not only by the traditionalist artwork, but also by the use of an old panel, which could have been kept as a family relic. Often icons, whose paintwork was lost through the generations, could be repainted, with the old image being replaced by a new Festive scene or a the patron saint of the commissioner. The fact that the artist had to "fill in" an unusually sized panel is clearly evident in the disproportion of the border scenes: the topmost and lowest tiers are extremely elongated, with the iconographer being forced to fill the top row with architecture, and the low one with grasses and vegetation.

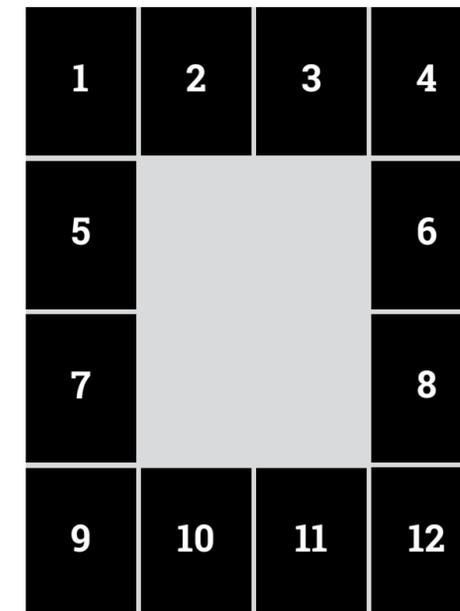
The oklad is made in likeness of a frame, completely covering the borders, and a cover plate – placed on the centerpiece. The style of the cover allow us to establish the time of its creation at the late 18th – early 19th century. Baroque influence is evident in the floral ornamentation, with the large leaves and pearl-like frames; yet the dry and ordered composition, the symmetry of the graphic work and the cartouches – all attest to a strong classicist influence. This combination of Baroque and Classicist style (along with numerous surviving analogies), enforces our claim as to the cover's time of origin.





John the Baptist – the Angel of the Desert with 12 hagiographical border scenes

Diagram of the border scenes:



1. The Appearance of the Archangel Gabriel to the Prophet Zachariah;
2. The Meeting of Zachariah and Elizabeth (The Conception of John the Baptist);
3. The Nativity of John the Baptist;
4. The Flight of Elizabeth and the Infant John into the Desert;
5. The Angel leads the Infant John into the Desert;
6. The Theophany (The Baptism of Christ);
7. The Baptism of the People of Israel;
8. The Condemnation of Herod;
9. The Beheading of John the Baptist;
10. The Burial of John the Baptist;
11. John the Baptist preaches to the dead in Hades;
12. The First Discovery of the Head of John the Baptist.



Size: 35,5 x 31 x 2 cm.

THIRD QUARTER OF THE 19TH CENTURY. ICON-PAINTING CENTERS OF THE VLADIMIR REGION

Wood (three panels), two incut support boards (now lost), absence of an incut centerpiece, underlying layer of canvas not visible, gesso, tempera.

The author's paintwork is in generally good state. Restoration tonings and insertions on the borders; chafing, fallouts of paint and restoration tonings in the centerpiece.

THE TIKHVIN MOTHER OF GOD, WITH THE LEGEND OF THE ICON IN 16 BORDER SCENES.

Border scene depictions of the Legend of the Tikhvin Icon make their appearance in Russian art in the 16th century. They were based on the Tale of the Miracles of the Tikhvin Icon of the Mother of God, which circulated in several variations. According to church tradition, the icon made seven appearances and revelations: once on the Ladoga Lake, then over the river Oyat, then on Kukov Mountain, on Kozhel and finally – on the shores of the river Tikhvinka. It was here that the icon finally delivered itself into the hands of the faithful. The spot where the miracle appeared was marked by the construction of a wooden church. But when the three domes of the wooden church were complete, the Icon, along with its shrine, miraculously moved to the other bank of the river. A convent was later built around the church, with the icon being glorified with a number of miracles and healings. The wooden complex of the Tikhvin monastery suffered three fires, but each time the icon remained unharmed. In the given piece, all three fires are depicted by a single border scene (№9). The next border scene depicts another well-known miracle – the salvation of workers during the collapse of the portico of the stone Dormition Cathedral.

From the 17th century onwards the cult of the Tikhvin Mother of God rises in popularity, which leads to the expansion of The Tale. The final literary variation was completed in 1658, with the help of the Tikhvin iconographer Herodion Sergeev, who was called to Moscow to complete the new Tale of the Miracles of the Tikhvin Icon of the Mother of God. The given icon belongs to this final literary and iconographic variation. This is clearly attested to by a number of scenes, not seen before the middle of the 17th century, such as the Revelation of the Icon to fishermen on Lake Nevo (border scene 1), the Miracle of the Iron Cross (border scene 8), which the Mother of God, in her Revelation to Yurysh the Acolyte, asked to be replaced by a wooden one. Border scene 15 depicts the tragic moments of Russian history, when the Tikhvin monastery was besieged by the Swedish (1613); yet when the enemy forces were approaching the monastery, the Swedes thought that they are being surrounded by a much larger army, which led to their lifting of the siege and retreat.

A remarkable trait of this particular piece is the almost complete absence of border scenes, depicting miraculous healings from the icon. Only the last scene bears such a depiction, with the multitude of crippled and ill people approaching the icon.

Border scenes 13 and 14 are of greatest interest, since they illustrate the Vita of Saint Martyrius. Saint Martyrius

of Zelenetsk (early 16th century – 1603) was known as the founder of the Holy Trinity Zelenetsk monastery. In the early stages of his ascetic life, the saint served as a cellarer in the Velikolutsky St. Sergius monastery. Once he experienced a Marian Revelation, which reminded him of the revered Tikhvin icon. It was in the Tikhvin monastery that Saint Martyrius received a revelation from one of his disciples about the exact place in the wild bogs between Old Ladoga and Tikhvin, where God wanted him to establish his new convent. While staying in the monastery and preparing for his journey, the saint commissioned two icons – of the Holy Trinity and of the Tikhvin Mother of God – which he kept with him until his repose. It was with his copy of the Tikhvin icon that Saint Martyrius raised Prince Ivan, the son of the Khan of Kasima, from the dead. This is considered one of the greatest miracles of the Tikhvin icon. The story of Saint Martyrius was included into The Tale in the middle of the 17th century, yet it is rarely found in Russian iconography; this gives exclusive value to the given piece.

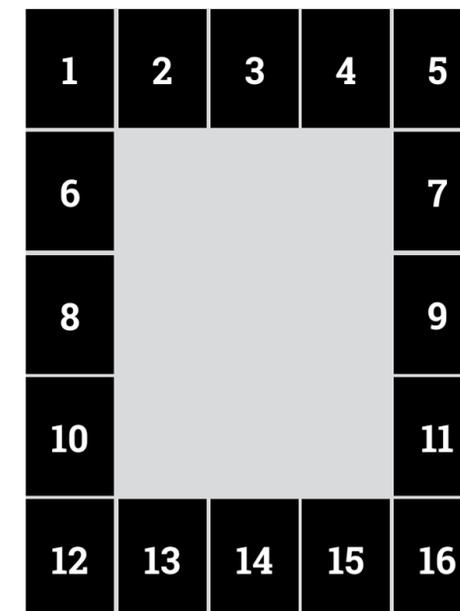
Small icons depicting the Tikhvin Mother of God with its legend in border scenes were popular among the Old Believers, being often commissioned for chapels and homes. The traditionalist execution of the icon attest to the fact that it was painted in one of the main icon-painting centers of the Vladimir region in the third quarter of the 19th century.





The Tikhvin Mother of God, with the Legend of the Icon in 16 border scenes.

Diagram of the border scenes:



1. The Revelation of the Icon to fishermen on Lake Nevo;
2. The Appearance of the Icon on the river Oyat and Smolkova Mountain(?);
3. The Appearance of the Icon on the Pasha River and on Kukov Mount (?);
4. The Revelation of the Icon on the River Tikhvin. The Icon delivers itself into the hands of the faithful;
5. The building of the wooden Dormition Church;
6. The Appearance of the Icon on the other bank of the Tikhvin River. The Miraculous transfer of the wooden church to its new place;
7. The Revelation of the Mother of God and of Saint Nicholas to Yurysh the Acolyte;
8. The installment of the iron cross over the church and the fall of a worker from a rooftop;
9. The miraculous salvation of the Icon during a fire;
10. The miraculous salvation of the icon during the collapse of the church portico;
11. Metropolitan Pimen delivers the keys to the church;
12. The court of the Great Prince prays before the icon;
13. The Revelation of the Icon in a Fiery Column to Saint Martyrius;
14. Saint Martyrius raises Prince Ivan from the dead by placing the Tikhvin Icon over his head;
15. The Icon defends its monastery from the enemy;
16. Miraculous healings from the Icon in the monastery.



Size: 54 x 43 x 3 cm.

SECOND QUARTER OF THE 19TH CENTURY. VETKA

Wood (two panels), two incut support boards (now lost), absence of an incut centerpiece, underlying layer of canvas not visible, gesso, tempera, gold.

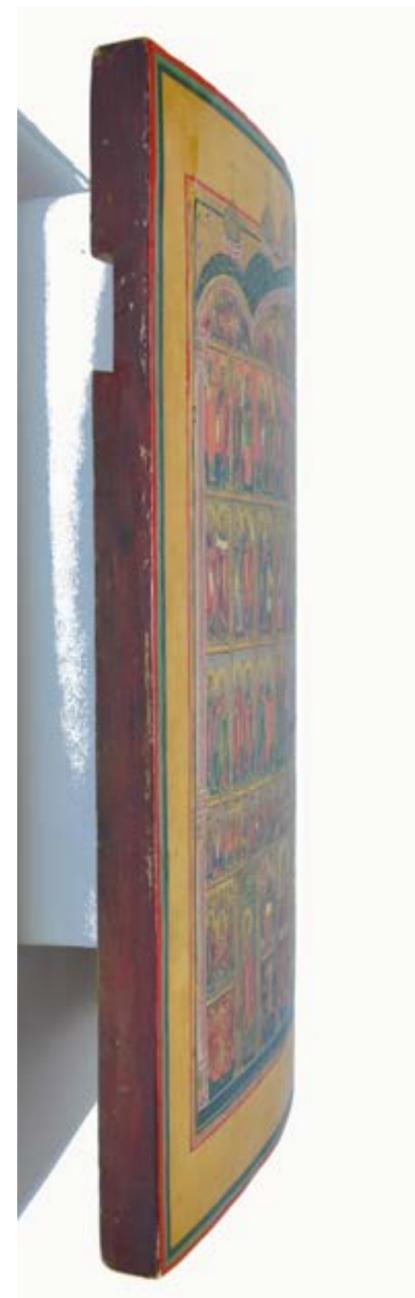
The paintwork is in generally good condition, chafing is insignificant; slight restoration tonings, primarily on the borders.

THE ICONOSTASIS

("THE IMAGE OF THE ONE, HOLY,
CATHOLIC AND APOSTOLIC CHURCH")

The given piece belongs to a new type of iconography, which strives to imitate the tall, many-tiered Russian iconostasis. Some art historians link the formation of this iconographic type with disenchantment with Western European art, which awakens in Russian society following the War of 1812. The general wariness of Western European influence, and the intense self-identification and unity of the Russian nation led artists to search for a new, national style, which naturally led to the re-discovery of the ancient ecclesiastical tradition. The tall iconostasis was seen as a powerful symbol of Russian Orthodox spirituality, and it naturally was taken up as the main depiction of national religious culture.

These new icons are often called "The Iconostasis" or "The Church". The majority of known pieces actually strive to replicate the iconostasis of the Moscow Kremlin's Dormition Cathedral. In the 17th century the cathedral's iconostasis was restructured by the Patriarch Nikon, who introduced the Apostolic Deesis, which can be seen in the given piece. The "Iconostasis" was often commissioned by the "priests' strain" of the Old Believers, who retained their clergy and liturgical life, and built churches with altars and iconostases; the three entrances into the Holy of Holies can clearly be seen quite realistically depicted in this particular icon. Not only home prayer, but various Church mysteries (such as marriage ceremonies) would be held before such icons, which made them increasingly popular. The fact that this icon was part of the "priests' strain" of the Old Believers is also attested to by the inscription «І.І.І.» ("Jesus of Nazareth, King of the Jews") over the cross, as well as the inclusion of the New Testament Trinity (The Enthronement) into the Forefathers' tier. The latter image, also called "The Triune God", was venerated only by the "priests' strain" of the Old Believers; the "priestless strain" of the Old Believer movement forbade the uncanonical depictions of God the Father.





The miniature depictions of the tall Russian iconostasis included six tiers. In this case we see two Marian icons at the sides of the Royal Doors – the Vladimirskaya and the Kazanskaya – with the traditional (and canonical) icon of Christ Pantokrator completely omitted from the scene. This unusual trait might be explained either by the fact that the artist had to copy a particular iconostasis, or by the fact that the Old Believers were completely enamored in Marian veneration, with an excessive number of icons of the Mother of God in their homes, chapels and churches. The second tier contains twelve icons of the Church Feasts. It is noteworthy that in such icons, the Feasts do not follow any chronological order. In the center, along the main axis, we see the icons of the Nativity of Christ and the Resurrection – the Harrowing of Hades, which illustrate the beginning of the Gospel Narrative and the final act of Salvation and victory over Death. The 18-figure Deesis tier has the “classical” number of saints: following the figures of Saints Peter and Paul we only see the Apostles (a tradition, introduced by the Russian Patriarch Nikon), who bow in prayer before the enthroned figure of the Pantokrator (in the majority of other Deesis tiers, Christ Pantokrator is replaced by the icon of “Christ in Majesty”). Over the Deesis lie the Prophetic and the Forefathers’ tiers, and over these – the Passions tier, with the icon of the Crucifixion in the center. The resonating artistry and paintwork, brilliantly executed over the rich gold background, creates the impression of an ideal church structure.

The artistic language of the piece is noted for the recognizable color scheme, with its crimson, cherry, dark blue and emerald-green tones. The icon is also highly ornamented: the stylized acanthus leaves fill the spaces between the icons of the local (or “royal”) tier, while the underlying draperies, bearing the depiction of the Golgotha cross, are completely covered with rich bouquets. The colors and ornamentation of the icon, the artist’s clear yearning for the Baroque style, the color scheme and the execution of the faces – all of these traits indicate that the icon was painted in Vetka, one of the major centers of the “priests’ strain” of the Old Believers.

The Iconostasis (“The Image of the One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church”)



Size: 36 x 30 cm.

LAST QUARTER – END OF THE 18TH CENTURY. PALEKH

Wood (one whole panel), two incut profiled support boards, a shallow incut centerpiece, underlying layer of canvas not visible, gesso, tempera, gold.

The author's paintwork is in an overall good state. In places small fallouts of the paint, chafing on the sides, several restoration tonings on the borders of the panel.

THE RESURRECTION – THE HARROWING OF HADES, WITH THE HOLY TRINITY AND THE CHURCH FEASTS IN 16 BORDER SCENES

The art of the small village of Palekh (in the Vladimir region) is rightly considered one of the most significant phenomena of the Russian Imperial period. Already in the middle of the 18th century Palekh became a large and independent art center. The given icon of the Resurrection – the Harrowing of Hades with Church Feasts is one of the first-class examples of local iconography, and is one of the signature pieces of the early period of Palekh art.

By the end of the 18th century Palekh saw the formation of several iconographic schemes of Church Feasts, which won immense popularity in the following century. One of the favorite variations was the "Resurrection – the Harrowing of Hades" scene, surrounded by Church Feasts; such icons were known among artists as "polnitsy" (Russian for "full-cycle" icons), since they reflected the main events of the liturgical year. The centerpiece of such icons was traditionally occupied by the detailed version of the Resurrection scene. The Rising from the Tomb and the Harrowing of Hades were portrayed along a single axis, embraced by the diagonal processional line of the Pious, marching from the Gates of Hell to the Kingdom of Heaven. This scene was surrounded by other events, which either predate or follow the Resurrection. The earlier icons include a number of such supplementary scenes: besides "The Revelation of the Angel to the Myrrh-bearing women", "Saint Peter at the Empty Tomb", "The Revelation of Christ to the Apostles on the Sea of Galilee" they also include the depiction of the Heavenly Kingdom, where the Good Thief is shown conversing with Elias and Enoch. The surrounding frame is highly traditional and includes 16 border scenes. It begins with the Nativity of the Mother of God, which opens the Feast cycle of the liturgical year, and ends with the Elevation of the Holy Cross. The inclusion of the Old Testament Trinity into the center of the topmost tier, which breaks the liturgical and historic chronology, is a typical and symbolic element of Palekh iconography. Over the top tier we also see the New Testament Trinity (The Enthronement) – another characteristic element of complex Palekh iconographies, whose border scenes would usually be established by the commissioner.

The artistic execution of the piece, noted for its highly individual and expressive manner, aesthetic and emotional painting (with the elongated figures and delicate, round heads), was clearly embraced from the Stroganov tradition. The fact that the icon was painted at quite an early stage of Palekh's development is clearly attested to by the

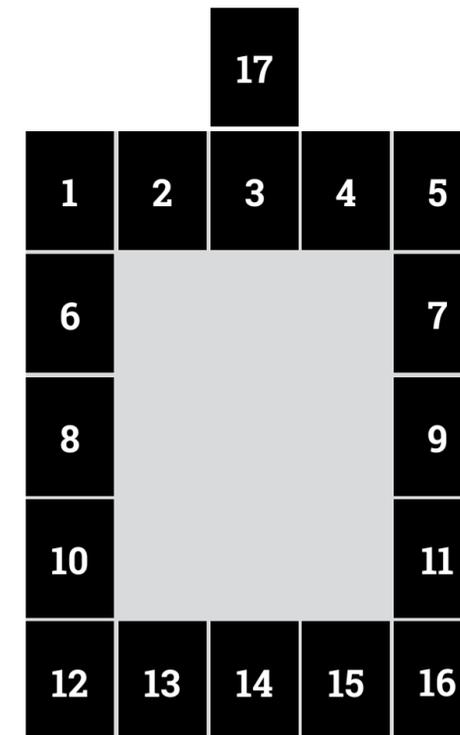


lively manner of the artist, not prone to standardization and copying; he intuitively creates the light shapes, the uplifting rhythm of the feather-like mountains, the transparency of the many-colored layers. The artist's skill as a "miniature" painter is revealed in the extensive and exquisite ornamentation, covering the architectural motifs, the interior of the chambers, the numerous fabrics and draperies, as well as the frames of the centerpiece and border scenes. Each border scene is no more than 3 cm in height, yet is filled with details. For example the small scene of the Beheading of John the Baptist includes the depiction of King Herod feasting at his table; the Old Testament is shown in the "Hospitality of Abraham" version, with Abraham and Sarah present. This small and wonderfully painted icon, made for home prayer, is a great testament to the glory of Palekh's artists.



The Resurrection – The Harrowing of Hades, with the Holy Trinity and the Church Feasts in 16 border scenes

Diagram of the border scenes:



1. The Nativity of the Mother of God;
2. The Entrance of the Mother of God into the Temple;
3. The Old Testament Trinity;
4. The Annunciation;
5. The Nativity of Christ;
6. Candlemas (The Meeting of Christ in the Temple);
7. The Theophany (The Baptism of Christ);
8. The Entrance into Jerusalem;
9. The Transfiguration;
10. The Ascension;
11. The Dormition of the Mother of God;
12. The Raising of Lazarus;
13. The Beheading of John the Baptist;
14. The Pokrov (Feast of the Protective veil of the Mother of God);
15. The Fiery Ascent of the Prophet Elias;
16. The Elevation of the Holy Cross;
17. The Holy Trinity (Enthronement).

The given collection of icons was brought together during the course of several decades, acquiring its own, unique, highly recognizable style and value. It primarily comprises traditional religious works of art of the 19th century, including numerous first-class pieces made in the most notable iconographic centers of the Russian Empire – the renowned villages of the Vladimir Province – Palekh, Mstyora, Kholuy. A separate strand is represented by Old Believer iconographic workshops of Guslitsy and Vetka, whose stylizations won both prominence and extreme popularity in the given period. Executed in the traditional egg-tempera technique, these icons clearly belong to the great workshops of central Russia, and are noted for their varied subjects and artistry.

First and foremost, the collection includes a wide range of icons dedicated to the Resurrection – The Harrowing of Hades, with major Church Feasts; these icons were known in Imperial period Russia as “polnitsy” (“full-cycle icons”). Such complex iconographic schemes allowed an artist to bring together all of the major events of the Gospel narrative on a single panel – which guaranteed the popularity of these icons among all Russian social classes. Palekh iconographers were especially fond of this subject-line, retaining a remarkable high level of artistic execution, with their instantly recognizable “miniature” painting style. The collection currently includes a number of early Palekh icons (produced in the end of the 18th and early 19th centuries), with a detailed, refined, and highly emotional painting style. These are complimented by later period icons, with their growing simplicity and “laid back” approach to the artwork.

Several Resurrection icons of the second half of the 18th century were created under the increasing influence of Baroque art, with the artist’s dominant orientation on Western European Art. This influence is especially evident in the floating figure of Christ – rising above the tomb in his long, flowing robes, with the Temple guard depicted stricken down in awe and amazement. Separate attention should be given to the late 18th century icon, which can most certainly be linked with the Yaroslavl school. It is not only an exceptional work of art, brilliant in its painting-style and craftsmanship; it is also a unique historic artifact, containing the owners inscription, which unravels details of its provenance and its exact localization in the early 20th century.

Another jewel of the collection is the yearly Menaion icon complex, painted in Palekh in the second quarter of the 19th century. This comprise a series of 12 icons with the depictions of the saints and feast for each successive month of the ecclesiastical year – from September to August. These Menaion icons are noted for their extended number of saints, and the unique, highly detailed iconographic schemes of the Feasts. The fact that the given complex contains all twelve icons – each in perfectly preserved condition – makes it an invaluable rarity among private and state collections.

Several icons are noted for their complex, compositional iconography, which includes the main Feasts of the Church year, depictions of the Prophets, Church Fathers, Russian Holy Hierarchs, venerated Marian images and a large number of selected saints. This “iconostasis-like” principle of combining various scenes became quite popular in the Imperial era; usually the selection and placement of scenes reflects a special meaning and the main events or relationships in the life of the icon’s owner. In this particular group one finds the icon of the Resurrection – the Harrowing of Hades with selected saints; the New Testament Trinity with the Feasts and Evangelists; and the depiction of the tall iconostasis, known among the Russians as The Iconostasis or The Church. The latter type served for special prayer services in home chapels and churches, for example – for wedding ceremonies; this made these icons very popular among the “priest” strain of the Old Believers (the “popovtsy”).

Another group or strand in the collection is comprised of hagiographical icons, highly venerated by the Russian Orthodox faithful. This includes several masterpieces painted in Vetka – one of the largest centers of the Old Believers (the “popovtsy”) on the western borders of the Russian Empire. Among these one finds the hagiographical icons of St. Catherine and St. Alexius – the Man of God, which are incredibly decorative and have a vivid artistry and resounding color work to them. One of the leading trends in late 18th-early 19th century art, highly widespread among the Old Believers, is the so-called “traditionalist” movement, perfectly represented by the small icon of Saint John the Baptist with 12 hagiographical scenes, painted on a centuries-old panel. Also popular among the Old Believers were icons of Saint Charalambos – the protector from sudden death without repentance, the patron of livestock and the guardian of the crops. The icon of St. Charalambos of Magneisa –

painted in the first half of the 19th century in Palekh – was previously decorated by an elaborate oklad cover, ornamented with enamels and precious stones; this is attested to by a detailed inscription, found on the reverse of the panel. Another Old Believer center – Guslitsy (located in the Moscow Province) – is also represented in the collection, namely – by the hagiographical icons of the Prophet Elias, Saints Cosmas and Damian, and St. Sergius of Radonezh – all of which reflect this center’s traditionalist trends and subtle color scheme.

Some Marian icons – with cycles dedicated to their respective legends – deserve our special attention as well. All of these icons were painted in the Vladimir provincial iconographic centers in the second half or end of the 19th century. The Feodorovskaya Icon of the Mother of God is of particular interest. The inscription on the reverse of the panel attests to the fact that on January 9th 1894 the icon was given to the Reverend Abbess Nectaria on the day of her enthronement in the Seraphim-Ponetaevsk Monastery. It was a gift from the Archimandrite Theodosius (Sobolev) – a cleric who was brutally murdered by the Bolsheviks in 1918 and was canonized by the Russian Orthodox Church as a martyr in 2003. The icon of the Tikhvin Mother of God, with a cycle of border scenes representing its legend, includes to incredibly rare depictions of Saint Martyrius of Zelenetsk. This element makes the given icon a piece of extreme significance for collectors. The Unexpected Joy icon, in turn, has an extraordinary iconographic scheme, which includes a cycle of border scenes with Marian Feasts and Old Testament prophecies regarding the Holy Virgin. It is possible that this icon is directly linked to its first known prototype and its native shrine – the Church of the Unburnt Bush in Khamovniki.

This particular collection perfectly reflects the remarkable stylistic variance of Imperial period Russian iconography. Its special trait is the large number of small, compact icons, originally meant for family prayer, home chapels and prayer corners. This is clearly reflected in the iconographic schemes, supplemented by images of certain patron saints and feasts, selected by the commissioner.