

The Convergence of Slobozhanska Iconography in the Discourse of Western European Baroque

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ENG Abstract: Based on the analysis, generalization and systematization of documents, some well-known to researchers and others not so much investigated, this article studies the influence of Western European Baroque art on the iconography of the region of Slobozhanska (Ukraine) during the 17th and 18th centuries. It is argued that the use of Western European religious themes by Slobozhanshchyna icon painters, in combination with previous iconographic traditions and their transformation to the spiritual and religious features of the region, contributed to the development of a regional iconographic art, a process that could be regarded as a unique phenomenon in the history of Ukrainian culture. As the text will highlight, the stylistic program of Slobozhanshchyna iconography of the Baroque period was influenced by symbolic and emblematic Western European collections that inspired icon painters to create new iconographic subjects. To that aim, the article analyses the artistic and figurative system of iconography, considers its characteristic stylistic features, and draws attention to the borrowing of elements of Western European painting and graphics in Orthodox iconography.

Keywords: Iconography; Baroque; Hryhorii Skovoroda; Emblematics; Ukraine; Slobozhanshchyna.

ES La convergencia de la iconografía slobozhanska en el discurso barroco de Europa occidental

ES Resumen: Basándose en el análisis, la generalización y la sistematización de documentos, algunos bien conocidos por los investigadores y otros poco investigados, este artículo estudia la influencia del arte barroco europeo occidental en la iconografía de la región de Slobozhanska (Ucrania) durante los siglos XVII y XVIII. Se argumenta que el uso de temas religiosos europeos occidentales por parte de los pintores de iconos de Slobozhanshchyna, en combinación con las tradiciones iconográficas anteriores y su transformación a las características espirituales y religiosas de la región, contribuyó al desarrollo de un arte iconográfico regional, un proceso que podría considerarse un fenómeno único en la historia de la cultura ucraniana. Como se destacará en el texto, el programa estilístico de la iconografía de Slobozhanshchyna del periodo barroco estuvo influido por colecciones simbólicas y emblemáticas de Europa occidental que inspiraron a los pintores de iconos para crear nuevos temas iconográficos. Para ello, el artículo analiza el sistema artístico y figurativo de la iconografía, considera sus rasgos estilísticos característicos y llama la atención sobre el préstamo de elementos de la pintura y la gráfica de Europa Occidental en la iconografía ortodoxa.

Palabras clave: iconografía; Barroco; Hryhorii Skovoroda; emblemática; Ucrania; Slobozhanshchyna.

Summary. 1. Introduction. 2. The objective and the methodological basis of the study. 3. Statement of the basic materials of the study. 4. Analysis of the emblematic icon *The Holy Family*, Putivl, region of Sumy. 5. Ways of development of the iconography of the Immaculate Conception: space and semiotics of religious experience. 6. Christological symbolic and allegorical icons: a “dialogue” between East and West. 7. Transmission of space and time in Slobozhanshchyna Baroque iconography 8. Conclusions. 9. Written Sources and bibliographical references.

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1. Introduction

Slobzhanshchyna is a region of Ukraine whose process of settlement began in the 17th century during the liberation struggle of the Ukrainian people for their independence¹. Cossack families moved here from different parts of Ukraine: from the regions of Galicia to Poltava, from Kholmshchyna to Podillia². In the studies of Dmitry I. Bahaley, Nikolay Sumtsov, and Yegor Redin *et al.*³, the authors noted that the territory of Slobzhanshchyna fostered the establishment of a differentiated ethnic type, the Slobzhanshchyna Ukrainians, which had a particular folklore and poetic worldview, habits, culture, as well as Orthodox traditions, different from those of other regions. Thus, the iconographic art of Slobzhanshchyna emerged as a result of the assimilation of the diverse cultural influences of the first immigrants⁴, who carried their artistic traditions to their new home.

The active settlement of Slobzhanshchyna took place during a particularly important period in the history of Ukrainian culture, the Ukrainian Baroque. This period is most thoroughly covered in the works of Ivan Ivanyo, Igor Isichenko, Alina Kondratyuk, Volodymyr Lichkovakh, Olena Matushek, Leonid Ushkalov, and Dmytro Chizhevsky⁵. The works of Polish researchers Waldemar Deluga and Agnieszka Gronek⁶, who pay attention to the relations between the West and the East in Ukrainian iconography, should likewise be considered.

Ukrainian Baroque culture is distinguished primarily by its all-encompassing religiosity and the prominence given to symbolism, which was dominant

in the philosophical thought of its time. Symbolism abounds in folk stories, stamped poems, and iconography; and Baroque art strove to see the symbolic order even in real, natural events. The artistic image was similar to the Word and, like all phenomena of the material world, was interpreted visually.

Therefore, in order to understand the philosophy of Slobzhanshchyna iconography, to comprehend the symbolic, emblematic nature of iconographic compositions, we turn to the figure of the famous Slobzhanshchyna thinker and philosopher Hryhorii S. Skovoroda, who exerted an invaluable influence on the formation of the stylistic program of Slobzhanshchyna iconography. The rich spiritual heritage of Skovoroda in relation to European emblematic tradition has been thoroughly studied by our contemporaries. The authors Irina Betko, Irina Gutsulyak, Natalia Kondratieva, Igor Kudrya, Richard Marshall Marshall, Giuseppe Perri, and Stephen Scherer⁷, in their respective studies have all considered the mystical worldview of Skovoroda through his religious and philosophical works, literary, and artistic heritage.

The formation of the Baroque artistic program, its evolution, and dissemination were carried out in parallel with Ukraine's growing self-awareness as an autonomous ethno-cultural entity. And the defence of the Orthodox faith and homeland became a driving force in the affirmation of historically matured artistic ideals. Since the 17th century, Kyiv has played the role of a national Orthodox centre, and the Ukrainian Church at that time advocated

¹ Since the 17th century, Slobzhanshchyna has occupied the lands of modern Kharkiv, the eastern part of Sumy (up to the Seim River), the northern parts of the regions of Donetsk (up to the Bakhmutka River) and Luhansk (up to the Aidar River), the southeastern parts of Voronezh (from Korotoyaka to Boguchar), the southwestern parts of Belgorod (Graivoron, Khotmyzk), and the southern part of Kursk (Glushkovo, Sudzha). *Slobids'ka Ukrayina: Korotkyi istoryko krayeznavchyy dovidnyk* (Kyiv: Budivel'nyk, 1994), 55.

² Stefan A. Taranushenko, *Mystetstvo Slobzhanshchyny XVII-XVIII stolittya* (Kharkiv: Vyd-vo muzeyu ukraïns'koho mystetstva, 1928), 12.

³ Dmitry Y. Bahaley, *Yz proshloho Svyatohors'koho monastyrya* (n.d.); Dmytro Bahaley, *Materialy do istoriyi kolonizatsiyi ta pobutu Kharkivs'koyi ta chastkovo Kurs'koyi ta Voronezh'koyi huberniy* (Kharkiv: Vyd. K. P. Schasny, 1890); Dmitry I. Bahaley and Dmitry P. Miller, *Istoriya Kharkova za 250 rokiv yoho isnuvannya (1655-1905)* (Kharkiv: Parovaya tip.-litogr. M Zil'berberg i S-v'ya, 1905-1912); Dmitry I. Bahaley, *Istoriya Slobids'koyi Ukrayiny* (Kharkiv, 1918); Dmitry I. Bahaley, *Zamitky i materialy do istoriyi Slobids'koyi Ukrayiny* (Kharkiv: Vyd. Huberns'ke pravlinnya, 1893); Nikolay Sumtsov, "K istorii ukrainskoy ikonopisi". *Sb. trudov khar'kovskoy komissii po ustroystvu XIII arkhheologicheskogo s"yezda v Yekaterinoslavle* (1905): 131-141; Yegor Redin, *Al'bom vystavki XII arkhheologicheskogo s"yezda v g. Khar'kove* (Moscow: Tipolit. N. I. Grossman and G. A. Wendelstein, 1903); Yegor Redin, *Catalog of the Exhibition of the XII Archaeological Congress: Department of Church Antiquities* (Kharkiv: Provincial government printing house, 1902).

⁴ Along with the Ukrainian *slobodas* (settlements of Cossack families) there were also Moscow settlements, mostly inhabited by *svedentsi* (fugitives from the court, the master, children of boyar riflemen and people expelled from the Moscow State). As a result of various mutual influences and assimilation, special cultural patterns of everyday life as well as spiritual and religious features were formed, which were also reflected in the Slobzhanshchyna's iconography.

⁵ Ivan V. Ivanyo, "Pro ukrayins'ke literaturne barokko", *Radyans'ke literaturoznavstvo*, no. 10 (1970): 11-15; Igor Isichenko, *Istoriya ukrayins'koyi literatury: epokha Baroko XVII-XVIII st.* (Lviv: Svyatogorets, 2011); Igor Isichenko, "On Basilian Baroque", *Slovo i Chas*, no. 1 (2011): 3-21, accessed August 30, 2023, <http://dspace.nbuv.gov.ua/handle/123456789/143777>; Dmytro Chizhevsky, *Ukrainian literary baroque* (Kyiv: Charms, 2003); Dmytro Chizhevsky, *Philosophy of H. Skovoroda* (Kharkiv: Act, 2003); Alina Kondratyuk, *Monumental Painting of the Trinity Gate Church of the Kiev-Pechersk Lavra* (Kyiv: KVITs Publishing House, 2005); Volodymyr Lichkovakh, *Filosofiya etnokul'tury* (Kyiv: PARAPAN, 2011); Olena Matushek, "Symbolika Bohomateri v metateksti barokovoyi literatury" (Ph.D. Thesis, Kharkiv State University, 1999); Leonid Ushkalov, *Ukrayins'ke barokove bohomyslennya: Sim etyudiv pro H. Skovorodu* (Kharkiv: Act, 2001); Leonid Ushkalov, *Svit ukrayins'koho baroko. Filolohichni etyudy* (Kharkiv: Oko, 1994).

⁶ Waldemar Deluga, "Between Candia and Venice. The Role of European Engravings in the Iconographic Transformations of Post-Byzantine Painting in Greece", *Series Byzantina XII* (2014): 76-109; Agnieszka Gronek, "„A Stowo było u Boga". O nowotestamentowych cytatach na ikonach Chrystusa w XV-XVIII w. z terenów Polski, Ukrainy i Białorusi", *Latopisy Akademii Supraskiej* (2021): 61-73; Agnieszka Gronek, *Ikony męki pańskiej. O przemianach w malarstwie cerkiewnym ukraińsko-polskiego pogranicza* (Kraków: Collegium Columbinum, 2007).

⁷ Irina Betko, "Current Issues of Research on Religious-Philosophical Legacy of Hryhorii Skovoroda", *Roczniki humanistyczne* 7, no. 66 (2019): 161-176; Irina Gutsulyak, "Reception of the Bible in the symbolism of the Ukrainian poetic baroque", *Linguistic and Stylistic Studies*, no. 12 (2020): 37-53; Natalia Kondratieva, "Hryhorii Skovoroda: Aesthetics of Thinkind and Ethics of Life (225 years from the date of death)", *Interdisciplinary studies of complex systems* 14 (2019): 109-121; Igor Kudrya, "Baroque Culture: Structural and Functional Analysis", *Humanities Science Current* 6, no. 27 (2020): 8-12; Richard Marshall and Thomas Bird eds., *Hryhorii Savvyi Skovoroda: An Anthology of Critical Articles* (Canada: Canadian Institute of Ukrainian Studies Press, 1994); Giuseppe Perri, "The Prologue to the Narcissus of Hryhorii Skovoroda: A Philosophical Testament", *Kyiv-Mohyla humanities journal*, no. 2 (2015): 83-98; Stephen P. Scherer, "Skovoroda by the Numbers: Numbers and Geometric Figures in the Philosophy of Hryhorii Skovoroda (1722-94)", *East Europe Quarterly* 4, no. 42 (2009).

the idea of the universal Eastern Church of Kyiv as the second Jerusalem and its iconographic continuity “Jerusalem – Constantinople – Kyiv”⁸. As Natalya Yakovenko rightly notes, “the return of the metropolitan capital to Kyiv after a two-hundred-year break gave a ‘new breath’ to the old sacred legend of the ‘city of God’s salvation’ [...] A parallel emerges between Jerusalem as the ‘mother of churches’ and Kyiv as the ‘mother of the Russian baptism’, that is, likewise a kind of ‘mother of churches’ that survived among hostile environments”⁹.

In the 19th century, scholars like Peter G. Fomin, Filaret (Gumilevsky, Dmytro), and Vasily Narbekov¹⁰ noted that in the 17th and 18th centuries a significant number of monasteries, which became centres of culture and education and had their own icon-painting schools, were built in the Slobozhanshchyna region. Monastery icon painters developed the region’s peculiar style of the religious art, which reflected the established aesthetic principles that were characteristic of the first settlers. Unfortunately, as a result of the anti-religious campaign and Bolshevik terror of the 20th century, extraordinarily little information has survived about Slobozhanshchyna icon painters, their education and their iconographic centres.

During the investigation for this study, significant amounts of archival documents, museum exhibits, published pre-revolutionary materials, memoir literature, which formed the factual basis of the article, were involved. The author has studied the relevant materials from the Central State Archive of Ukraine¹¹, Sumy Regional Archive¹², Volodymyr Vernadsky National Library of Ukraine at the Academy of Sciences of Ukraine¹³, as well as from other centres. In this process, important documents were discovered, which not only make it possible to complete the history of Slobozhanshchyna iconography, but likewise enable us to revise certain key concepts.

2. The objective and the methodological basis of the study

This essay argues that Western European Baroque influenced during the 18th century the art of the region of Slobozhanshchyna in terms of stylistic and iconographic features that defined its regional specificity. In this article, iconographic aspects are correlated with the territorial boundaries of Slobozhanshchyna area in the 17th and 18th centuries.

The methodological basis of the study is the principles of systematicity and historicism. The use of a

complex approach involves a combination of comparative and descriptive, iconographic analysis with art criticism, artistic and stylistic, as well as historical and cultural analysis.

3. Statement of the basic materials of the study

As shall be seen throughout this study, both Ukrainian culture and its art from the 17-18th centuries were actively influenced by modern European traditions, namely the triumph of Baroque and Mannerism. The Baroque, with its whimsical, symbolic, paradoxical nature, suited the multicultural aspects of Ukrainian society, and its comprehensive religiosity laid the basis of Ukrainian Baroque ideology.

Among the central ideas of the Baroque is the idea of “symbolism”, which, as Dmytro Chizhevsky (2003) claimed, considers that every being in the world is only a “symbol”, a representation of a higher being, higher truth, eternal and divine¹⁴. Symbolism was not something new for Ukrainian Christian culture, and the interpretation of biblical events in the Baroque period was rather a poetic metaphor. Baroque art has always looked for a hidden, secret meaning in both real and natural events. The language of Baroque universality, the “universum of sanctity”, was used not only in large, magnificent cathedrals, but likewise in comprehensive sermons and other domains of spiritual life¹⁵.

The sign code (emblem, illustrated metaphor) created a universal way of communication, and due to this emblematic codification, the whole environment was perceived in the language of symbols. Symbolism and emblematics were prominent in a huge range of cultural productions: in poetry, in legends, in the design of the grand halls of public buildings, in applied art (on windows and dishes, on furniture and porcelain), on the title pages of books and even in such canonical art as icon painting. Iconographers saw hidden meanings in real events, objects and natural phenomena, and through them, the truths of Christian teachings could be revealed. As Professor Leonid Ushkalov wrote, at that time: “[...] the artistic image was thought [...] to be equal to the narrative text: “a picture is a mute book”, a thing like “the hieroglyphs of the Egyptians”, “a bookish writing for the letterless”¹⁶.

Reality, which, from the point of view of traditional iconography is legitimately depicted and “localized on a certain ontological boundary: between the

⁸ Tetyana Panyok, *Slobozhans'ka ikona XVII-poch. XIX st.* (Kharkiv: FO-P “Ivanova”, 2008), 145.

⁹ Natalya Yakovenko, *Paralelnyy sviit. Doslidzhennya z istoriyi uyavlen' ta idey v Ukrayini XVI-XVII st.* (Kyiv: Krytyka, 2002), 296-330; Natalya Yakovenko, “Symvol ‘Bohokhranymoho hrada’ u kyivskiy propagandi 1620-1640-x rokiv”, *Mediaevalia Ucrainica: mental'nist' ta istoriya idey.* 4 (1995): 52-75.

¹⁰ Peter G. Fomin, *Ocherki po istorii khristianskoy ikonopisi* (Khar'kov: Yeparkhial'naya tipogr., 1916); Peter G. Fomin, *Tserkovnyye drevnosti Khar'kovskogo kraya: Istorikoarkheologicheskiy ocherk* (Khar'kov Yeparkhial'naya tipografiya, 1916); Filaret (Gumilevsky, Dmytro), *Istoriko-statisticheskoye opisaneye Khar'kovskoy yeparkhii: V 5 t.* (Khar'kov: Universitetskaya tip., 1857-1858); Vasily Narbekov, *Yuzhnorusskoye religioznoye iskusstvo XVII-XVIII st.* (Kazan', 1903).

¹¹ 1709/Kharkiv governor's board. Central State Archives of Ukraine, Kyiv; 1725/ Kharkiv Regimental Chancellery. Central State Archives of Ukraine, Kyiv; 1975/Okhlytyrka Spiritual Board. Central State Archives of Ukraine, Kyiv; 1989/Izium Spiritual Board. Central State Archives of Ukraine, Kyiv; 2004/Sumy Spiritual Board. Central State Archives of Ukraine, Kyiv.

¹² “Church Inventory of the Akhtyr Cathedral of the Intercession and All Its Property”, 1838, description 2, file 92, 745, Sumy regional archive, Sumy.

¹³ “Dimensional Drawings and Descriptions of the Churches of Slobozhanshchyna “, n.d., description 1, file 1224, 278/ Personal Archive of Stefan Taranushenko.

¹⁴ Chizhevsky, *Ukrayins'ke literaturne baroko*, 245.

¹⁵ Chizhevsky, *Ukrayins'ke literaturne baroko*, 245.

¹⁶ Ushkalov, *Sviit ukrayins'koho baroko*, 9.

immanent and the transcendent, between nature and grace, between the visible and the invisible”, makes it possible to render the divine visible and understandable¹⁷.

The influence of the Baroque emblem on post-Byzantine icon-painting of the 17-18th centuries was conditioned by the universal norms of the poetics of the culture of the time. This manifested itself firstly in the composition of the fundamentally new symbolic form of the icon, and secondly, in the symbols passing into iconography from emblem books, Catholic and Protestant engravings and Baroque religious painting¹⁸.

It is symptomatic that the activity of the Kyiv Lavra icon painting workshops and the Kyiv-Mohyla Academy (1701) were of particular importance in the formation of the new style program of Ukrainian art. It should be noted that in the 17th century Kyiv became a prominent centre of Orthodox theological thought, so the Kyiv-Pechersk Lavra workshops actively introduced novel ideas into the art of iconography, influencing its development in different regions of Ukraine, including Slobozhanshchyna¹⁹.

Quoting the *Konsthistorisk tidskrift*, the “Baroque was a projective concept from the start, emerging in dialectic interplay, as a system of oppositions, in critical discourse”²⁰. It should be noted that the Baroque picture of the world since the Middle Ages was theocentric. The ideal of Baroque man is man serving God, expressing God’s all-presence. Man is thought of as a symbol, a token, a shadow of an absolute idea. Throughout the Orthodox world, with the advent of the Baroque period, a fundamentally new symbolic form of the prayer image spreads: the Christian saint, whose representation is supported by an emblem and verbal instructions (text, *motto*).

Jan Białostocki, who addressed the question of the influence of the emblem on the composition of epitaph images, noted that the emblematic principle of both text and image comes from Luther’s requirement to include the fragments of Scripture in epitaph images, which in turn had a significant impact on all European religious art²¹.

In the literary and philosophical life of Ukraine in the Baroque period, there were Western European emblematic works (*Symbola et emblemata selecta*, *Sylva allegoriarum totius sacrae scripturae H. Lauretus*, *De symbolica Aegyptorum sapientia* by Nicolas Caussin, *Firmamentum symbolicum*, *Maria sol mysticus* by Maximilianus Sandaeus, *Piae animae desideria versibus et symbolis* by Herman Hugo, etc.), as well as independent ones, for instance, the panegyric by Krshchonovycha to Lazar Baranovich (Chernigiv, 18th century), notes called *Ifika-Iyeropolitika* (Kyevo-Pecherska Lavra, 1712), or the poems by Yoan Velychkovskiy, among others²². Throughout Ukraine, such collections were well known and had a significant influence on both icon painting and Ukrainian folk art.

The emblematic icons had clearly defined compositional components²³. The classical emblem was triadic: motto (inscription), picture (*pictura*) and caption (*subscriptio*). This traditional form, which was common in Catholic and Protestant works, had a great influence on the monuments of Orthodox iconography of Greece, Russia, Bulgaria, Serbia, Romania, and, undoubtedly, Ukraine²⁴.

4. Analysis of the emblematic icon *The Holy Family, Putivl, region of Sumy*

The icon “Holy Family” from Putivl, in the Sumy region (Fig. 1), demonstrates an artistic device inherent to emblematic Baroque thinking: the icon illustrates a story from the life of Christ, and the text on top of the icon explains the content of the painted. The content of the symbols in this sacred subject cannot be deciphered by a simple effort of the mind, but must be “lived into”. The artistic will of the unknown icon-painter seeks to overcome the chasm between the “earthly essence” and the “divine”, as well as the “special”. The semantic structure of the icon is layered. At first glance, the artist shows the Holy Family in everyday work: Joseph is making something, Christ the Child, in a long chiton and red himation, is sweeping the floor, and the Mother of God is engaged in sewing. The interior of the room is equipped with a loom and carpentry tools. The icon-painter, knowing

¹⁷ Averintsev, *Sofia-Logos*, 547.

¹⁸ Oleg Tarasov, “Emblematika v ikonopisi barokko XVII-XVIII vekov. Slavyanovedeniye”, *Slavonic Studies*, no. 4 (1998): 24.

¹⁹ Panyok, *Slobozhans'ka ikona XVII-poch. XIX st.*, 145.

²⁰ Editorial, “The Baroque and the Performative”, *Journal of Art History* 81 no. 1 (2012): 1, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/00233609.2012.664406>.

²¹ Jan Białostocki, *Symbols and images in the world of art* (Warsaw, 1982), 28. Significantly, the fundamental difference between an emblem and a symbol is independence, that is, the presence of its own compositional space (most often it is a round or slightly elongated medallion), independent of the composition of the entire work, in which it can be placed as a detail.

²² *Ifika-Iyeropolitika ili filosofiya nravouchitel'naya* (Kiev: Type. Kiev-Pechersk Lavra, 1712); Jan Tesing and Ilya Kopievsky, *Symbola et emblemata selecta* (Amsterdam: Heinrich Wetstein’s printing house, 1715); Hieronymus Lauretus, *Sylva allegoriarum totius sacrae scripturae. Barcinone* (1570); Ripon Cathedral Library XIII.F.4/q <http://surl.li/gmzne>; *Panehiryk Krshchonovycha Lazaru Baranovychu* (Chernyiv, 1685); Herman Hugo, *Piae animae desideria versibus et symbolis* (Antwerp, 1588-1629). See, also: Dmytro Čyževskiy, “Literarische Lesefrüchte. IV.”, *Zeitschrift Für Slavische Philologie* 13 nos. 1-2 (1936): 51-76, accessed August 30, 2023, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/24000222>; Nicolas Caussin, *De symbolica Aegyptorum sapientia* (Romain de Beauvais, 1681), Archive.org, accessed August 30, 2023, <https://archive.org/details/hin-wel-all-00000175-001>; *Sebastian'a a matre Dei Firmamentum symbolicum* (Lublina: Sumptibus Georgii Forsteri, 1652), Archive.org, accessed August 30, 2023, https://archive.org/details/gri_33125011057011; Maximilianus Sandaeus, *R.P. Maximiliani Sandaei e Societ. Jesu doct. theologi Maria sol-mysticus* (Coloniae Agrippinae: Johann Kinckius, 1636), accessed August 30, 2023, https://www.manuscriptorium.com/apps/index.php?direct=record&pid=NKCR_-NKCR_36_F_000091_32T4JZE-cs; Yoan Velychkovskiy, *Filosof's'kyy entsyklopedychnyy slovnyk* (hol. Redkol. Volodymyr Shynkaruk) (Kyyiv: Instytut filosofiyi imeni Hryhoriya Skovorody NAN Ukrainy: Abrys, 2002).

²³ An emblematic icon is an icon that contains an emblem (an inset, conventionally symbolic representation of a certain theological or evangelical verse, concept, idea, etc., which is embodied in a graphic or plastic form, has a specific meaning) and an explanatory signature (often in verse) related to it. Usually, such emblems-images were in the lower part of the icon or on the side at the top. See as an example, the icon on Fig. 1.

²⁴ Tarasov, “Emblematika v ikonopisi barokko”, 25.

that the hut symbolizes the Old Covenant that Christ came into this world to change, depicts the interior of the room, following Christian symbolism, in a very simple manner. In contrast to traditional Ukrainian clothing, the characters are dressed in the European manner (short pants for Joseph, sandals, barefoot shoes, blue shirt, etc.).

In the background, some carpentry tools can be seen, among which are a nail remover, three nails, and a compass. Each of these objects symbolizes the future suffering of Christ: the nail remover, which was used to take the nails out of Jesus' hands, is a symbol of the Virgin Mary, the nails signifying the relationship between Christ's destiny and His suffering. In other works of art, the three nails also symbolize

the crucifixion of Christ or, alternatively, the Holy Trinity. Compasses do not have a direct bearing on Christianity and the crucifixion, but this symbol was quite common in the fine arts as far back as the Renaissance²⁵. As a tool, the compass was necessary for building a perfect circle, and it symbolized not only reasonable and balanced decisions, infinity, and eternity, but also God the Creator, "the architect of the universe"²⁶.

Examining this icon, we see its similarity to an engraving by Anthony Klauber's edition (Fig. 2).

The composition on the Slobozhanshchyna icon is returned in a mirror reflection and possesses several independent details in the reflection of the interior and the pose of the Virgin.



Figure 1. *Holy Family*, 18th century. Pechersk Monastery, Putivl, Sumy. Source: Yegor K. Redin, *Al'bon vystavki XII arkeologicheskogo s'yezda v g. Khar'kove* (Moskva: Tipolit. N. I. Grosman i G. A. Vendel'shteyn, 1903), fig. 45.



Figure 2. "A dolgozó Szent Család". Copperplate engraving depicting the working Holy Family, published in Anthony Anthony Klauber ed., *52 Engravings of the Virgin* (1750). Source: Hungarian National Digital Archive, accessed August 30, 2023. https://en.mandadb.hu/cikk/1130348/A_different_corona_Virgin_Mary_Queen_of_the_Pious_Schools

5. Ways of development of the iconography of the Immaculate Conception: space and semiotics of religious experience

Many 18th century Ukrainian icons are similar to compositions of emblems or even works of religious painting. Artworks by Bartolomé Esteban Murillo²⁷, Titian, Raphael and others were especially revered.

Some of these icons were, for instance, *The Unsleeping Eye* (Fig. 3), *The Virgin with the Lily* (Fig. 7), *The Virgin with the Christ Child and Elizabeth with John the Baptist* (Fig. 5), *Holy Family* (Fig. 1); *The Intercession* or *Our Lady of All Sorrowful Joys* (Fig. 11), which directly refers to Titian's painting *Madonna of Mercy* (Fig. 10), among many others.

²⁵ One of the most popular subjects in Renaissance painting, depicting God the Creator with a compass in his hands as the "architect of the Universe", symbolizes the infinity of time and space. The compass in combination with the square, the symbol of the earth, is an allegory of the connection between the earthly and the divine. Painters depicted a number of allegorical figures with compasses in hand. Two of the seven liberal arts, astronomy and geometry, measure the globe with a spherical compass. The compass is an attribute of personified divine qualities – Prudence and Justice, as well as allegorical figures of Maturity and Melancholy.

²⁶ Tetyana Panyok, "Ukrainian Baroque and European Context", *Bulletin of the National Academy of Management of Culture and Arts*, no. 3 (2018): 335-343.

²⁷ Marie-Sofie Lundström comments the following on the influence of Murillo on 19th century art: "[...] Contrasting those painters who have been acknowledged with those who have not reveals a development from a Murillo-centred admiration in the nineteenth century". It should be noted that it was in the 19th century that local historians began to actively study the roots of certain parts of the Slobozhanshchyna's icon and its similarity to European art. Marie-Sofie Lundström, "Från Murillo till El Greco. Spanska Mästare i finländsk allmän konsthistoria: Rötterna i 1800-talet och förvandlingen i det tidiga 1900-talet", *Konsthistorisk tidskrift. Journal of Art History* 70 no. 1-2 (2001): 93-101, <https://doi.org/10.1080/00233600152126072>.

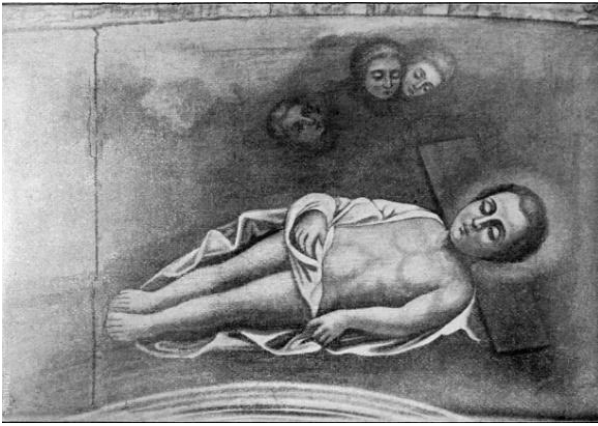


Figure 3. *Christ the Sleepless Eye*, 18th century. Izium, Kharkiv Region. Source: Yegor K. Redin. *Ikona Nedremannoe oko* (Kharkiv: Typolitography, 1902), 4.



Figure 4. Bartolomé Esteban Murillo, *Toddler on the Cross*, ca. 1660, oil on canvas. Museo del Prado, Madrid. Source: Wikimedia Commons, accessed August 30, 2023. [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:El_Ni%C3%B1o_Jes%C3%BAs_dormido_sobre_la_cruz_de_Bartolom%C3%A9_Esteban_Murillo_\(Museo_del_Prado\).jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:El_Ni%C3%B1o_Jes%C3%BAs_dormido_sobre_la_cruz_de_Bartolom%C3%A9_Esteban_Murillo_(Museo_del_Prado).jpg)



Figure 5. *The Virgin with Christ the Child and Elizabeth with John the Baptist*, 18th century. Boromlya, Sumy. Source: Nikolay Sumtsov. *Iz istorii russkoy stariny* (Kharkov: Printing business, 1905), 11.



Figure 6. Bartolomé Esteban Murillo, *The Holy Family (The Virgin of Seville)*. Louvre, Paris. Source: Wikimedia Commons, accessed August 30, 2023. [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Bartolom%C3%A9_Esteban_Perez_Murillo_-_The_Holy_Family_\(The_Seville_Virgin\)_-_WGA16379.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Bartolom%C3%A9_Esteban_Perez_Murillo_-_The_Holy_Family_(The_Seville_Virgin)_-_WGA16379.jpg)



Figure 7. *Virgin Mary with Lily*, 18th century. Church of the Virgin, Zmiiv district, Kharkiv. Source: Yegor K. Redin, *Al'bom vystavki XII arkheologicheskogo s"yezda v g. Khar'kove* (Moskva: Tipolit. N. I. Grosman i G. A. Vendel'shteyn, 1903), fig. 26.

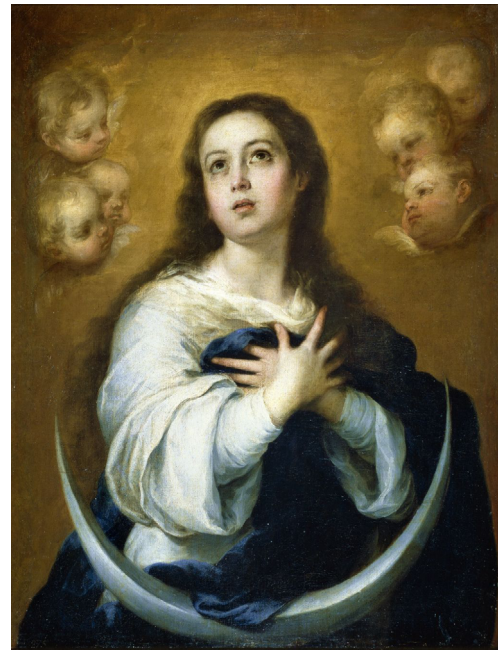


Figure 8. Bartolomé Esteban Murillo, *The Conception of the Virgin*, 18th century. Madrid, Museo del Prado. Source: Turkusowy domek, accessed August 30, 2023. <https://turkusowydomek.pl/p/83/3818/bartolome-esteban-murillo-niepokalane-poczenie-iii>



Figure 9. *Consolation of the Sufferers*, published in Anthony Klauber ed., *52 Engravings of the Virgin* (1750). Source: Todocoleccion, accessed August 30, 2023. <https://www.todocoleccion.net/arte-religioso/52-grabados-virgen-siglo-xviii-encuadernados-pergamino-klauber-x31620520>



Figure 10. Titian, *Madonna of Mercy*, 1573. Palazzo Pitti, Firenze. Source: Wikimedia Commons, accessed August 30, 2023. https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Titian_-_Madonna_of_Mercy,_1573.jpg



Figure 11. *The Mother of God - Joy to All Who Mourn*, late 18th century. Intercession Cathedral, Okhtyrka, Sumy. Source: photo by the author.

The pictorial analogies of Western Europe icons in the works of folk artists (which are sometimes called in art history literature as Low Baroque) of different regions of Ukraine, including Slobzhanshchyna, were perceived time and again by believers as a compositional and coloring tool, a kind of background to illustrate the theological thought or religious idea of the holy image.

The complex iconographic system that emerged from the interaction of image, inscription, and caption creates an emblematic form, resulting in “a metaphorical ‘mental image’ behind the visible image”²⁸. Explaining the symbolic mysterious world of the Bible and its indivisible “visible” and “invisible” nature projected on the biblical text, Skovoroda stated:

[...] The ancient wise men had their language; they represented their thoughts and images as words. The images were figures of heavenly and earthly creatures, for example, the sun meant truth, a ring or a serpent twisted in a ring – eternity; an anchor – approval or light... The image comprising a mystery was called... a cast-in, setting, as in a diamond ring, for example, a depicted vulture with the inscription: “The Newborn Will Soon Disappear”, or a sheaf of grass with the inscription: “All Flesh is Grass”²⁹.

Some of the symbols, like the “serpent”, the “Moon” (month), the “circle of peace”, etc., occurred in Skovoroda’s poetry and at the same time were used in Slobzhanshchyna iconography.

Following the spread in Ukraine of the Roman Catholic doctrine of the Immaculate Conception through Western European iconography, the understanding of Slobzhanshchyna icon-painters of the

Virgin’s new image began to alter. Despite the fact that in Ukrainian iconography the “Conception of the Holy Virgin” was represented mainly in historical and narrative form, in Slobzhanshchyna during the 18th century there was a parallel allegorical form of depicting the Immaculate Conception of the Virgin as a virgin standing on a half-moon. The style of the Slobzhanshchyna’s icon painters was influenced to a certain extent by Murillo, whose image of the Virgin Mary “acquires a cosmic dimension, modelled according to the apocalyptic vision of the “great sign”, that is, the Woman dressed in the sun, with the moon at her feet and a crown on the head composed of twelve stars (Rev. 12,1). In Slobzhanshchyna, artists quite often depicted Mary standing on a narrow sickle half-moon full-length or kneeling among the clouds, in icons such as *Akathist*, *Crowning of the Virgin* and a number of others.

Skovoroda also perceived the new image of the Virgin Mary and wrote enthusiastically about it in his poem “Melody. On the Image of the Conception of the Most-Pure Mother of God”:

But look! Here is the Virgin, her womb is pure!

An apple, a snake, the moon and a radiant light beneath
The apple is a carnal trap, snare and lure,
Which like a serpent, tempts us with cunning
and wonder³⁰.

This epigram interprets allegorically the emblematic image of the Virgin, which we see in the icons *Crowning of the Virgin* (Fig. 14-15), the *Akathists* (Fig. 12-13), *Virgin with Lily* (Fig. 7), in which the idea of the Immaculate Conception is expressed.

²⁸ Averintsev, “*Zametki k budushchey klassifikatsii tipov simvolov*”, 299.

²⁹ Hryhorii S. Skovoroda, *Tvory* (Kyiv: Oberehy, 2005), 423, 435; Panyok, *Slobzhans'ka ikona XVII-poch. XIX st.*, 81.

³⁰ Panyok, *Slobzhans'ka ikona XVII-poch. XIX st.*, 339.

Murillo's popularity in Slobozhanshchyna could have contributed to the presence of three paintings by this artist in the Pokrovsky Cathedral in Okhtyrka: *The Birth of Christ*, *The Adoration of the Magi*, *The Crucifixion*. However, according to the correspondence between the archpriest of the Pokrovsky

Cathedral, the consistory in Kharkiv and the Imperial Archaeological Society: "About the restoration of three paintings by E. Murillo" we know that the paintings were sent for restoration to the Rumyantsev Museum in Moscow and remained there until the revolution of 1917, and then disappeared³¹.



Figure 12. *Akathist of the Virgin*, 18th century. Lebedyn, Sumy. Source: photo by the author.



Figure 13. *The Virgin Mary*, ca. 18th century. Germany. Source: photo by the author



Figure 14. *Coronation of the Virgin*, engraving, unknown Bavarian master, 1600. Source: Museum of Fine Arts, Budapest, accessed August 30, 2023. <https://www.mfab.hu/artworks/the-coronation-of-the-virgin-2>



Figure 15. *Coronation of the Virgin*, 17th century. Kunye, Kharkiv. Source: Yegor K. Redin, *Al'bom vystavki XII arkeologicheskogo s"yezda v g. Khar'kove* (Moskva: Tipolit. N. I. Grosman i G. A. Vendel'shteyn, 1903), fig. 44.

³¹ *Pro restavratsiyu tr'okh kartyn E. Muril'o* (1910), r. F. 40. Kharkivs'ka dukhovna konsystoriya (opys 103, spr. 333). Derzhavnyy arkhiv Kharkivs'koyi oblasti, Kharkiv, Ukrainya. [On the Restoration of Three Paintings by E. Murillo, 1910. F. 40. Kharkiv Spiritual Consistory (description 103, file 333). State Archives of Kharkiv Region, Kharkiv, Ukraine].

Alexander Beletsky, examining the iconography of “Coronation of the Virgin”, noted that in Slobozhanshchyna there were not only borrowings from Murillo, but also from the paintings of Beato Angelico, Gentile da Fabriano, Pinturicchio and Raphael. The author wrote that “this image was also well represented at the exhibition of the XII Archaeological Congress (1902)”, where the number of such icons reached ten³².

6. Christological symbolic and allegorical icons: a “dialogue” between East and West

There is no doubt that the spread in the region of emblematic, symbolic images contributed to the changes in the worldview of the Baroque era. Thus, the spread of new symbolic compositions “Christ the Grapevine”, “Christ in the Cup”, and “Pelican” in Ukraine was promoted by the Uniate environment, which facilitated an active “dialogue” between the East and the West.

Ukraine’s border situation between Western Europe and the East influenced the definition of its Orthodox position, which was open in all territories to the perception of the European experience of Baroque religious art and its aesthetics. The European experience was understood as a continuity of Western culture from the ancient Greek, close to Eastern Slavic. In addition, the perception of artistic forms from the West was seen as a kind of opposition to the Turkish East, which at that time represented a threat to the Orthodox faith and its culture. In Slobozhanshchyna region, as in Ukrainian artistic culture as a whole, images of God the Father, the New Testament Trinity, the Immaculate Conception, and the Epiphany were developed around the correctness of the theological content, of which there were differences between theologians of the Eastern and Western Church.

Thus, for example, new iconographic trends started to be noticeable in the 15th century Slobozhanshchyna iconography of the Trinity. The pictures from the icon of the village Ruska Lozova, in the vicinity of Kharkiv (Fig. 16) show a rather original interpretation of this subject: Abraham is depicted not among the three men in the form of angels who appeared to him, not even next to them, but in front of them, in the foreground. The master combines elements of new stylistics based on the Renaissance (depicting arched Italian architecture) with archaisms: the different scale of figures; reverse perspective; poses and gestures obey a given rhythm – moving from left to right.

Another illustration of the emblematic image can be considered in the icon *Christ of the Bounties of Immeasurable Abyss*, exhibited at the XII Archaeological Congress (1902), in the Church of the Archangel at the village of Babai, Kharkiv region. The poetic inscription at the bottom of the icon played the role of a kind of visual communication and not only encouraged viewers to contemplation, but also provided an opportunity to reassess life priorities, endowing with greater psychological depth the motif of the fight between good and evil (Fig. 17).

Iconographic parallels suggest that in this subject, a number of motifs known at that time in Western European art were combined.



Figure 16. *Old Testament Trinity*, 18th century. Ruska Lozova, Kharkiv. Source: Yegor K. Redin, *Al' bom vystavki XII arkheologicheskogo s'yezda v g. Khar'kove* (Moskva: Tipolit. N. I. Grosman i G. A. Vendel'shteyn, 1903), fig. 55.



Figure 17. *Christ of the Bounties of Immeasurable Abyss*, 18th century. Archangel Church, Babai, Kharkiv. Source: Yegor K. Redin, *Al' bom vystavki XII arkheologicheskogo s'yezda v g. Khar'kove* (Moskva: Tipolit. N. I. Grosman i G. A. Vendel'shteyn, 1903), fig. 43.

³² Alexander Beletsky, “Otdel tserkovnykh drevnostey na XIV arkheologicheskoy s'yezde v Chernigove”, in *Sbornik Khar'kovskogo istoriko-filologicheskogo obshchestva* (Kharkiv: Type. “Printing Business”, 1909).

The thematic focus of Ukrainian Baroque on the figure of Christ contributed to the fact that Christ became the main image of symbolic and allegorical icons³³. Baroque culture widely opened the door to imagination. Accordingly, at the end of the 17-18th centuries, such symbolic and allegorical subjects as “Christ the Vinedresser”, “Crucifix with a Vine”, “Little Bird of Pelican”, “Heart of Jesus”, “Lidless Eye” and many others were widespread in Slobozhanshchyna region.

The suffering of the Savior, which was seen by Ukrainian theologians as a model for anyone seeking the Kingdom of Heaven, became one of the main themes of the symbolic icons of Christological character. The established ideal God-Son caring for the well-being of believers was revealed in new images. One of these is the symbolic icon of the Pelican Bird, in which Christ is depicted in the image of the Pelican (Fig. 18).

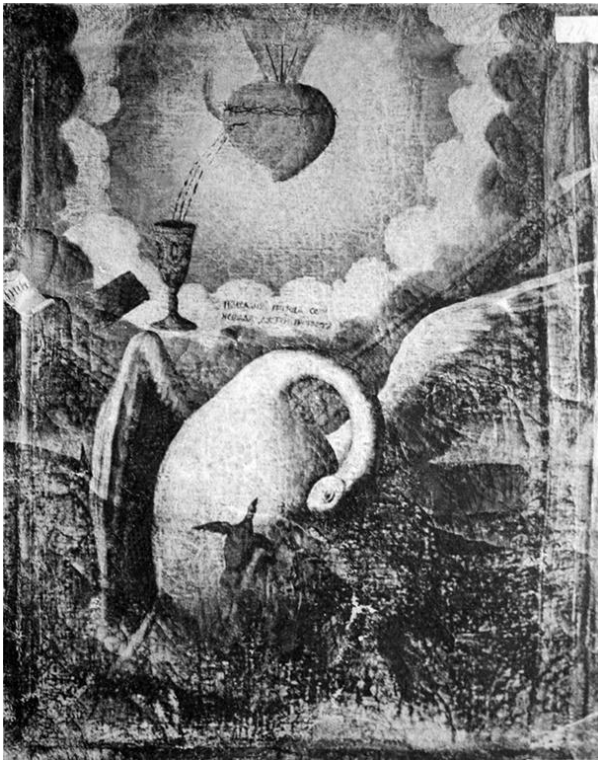


Figure 18. *Bird-Pelican*, 18th century. Iziium, Kharkiv. Source: Yegor K. Redin, *Al'born vystavki XII arkhеologicheskogo s"yezda v g. Khar'kove* (Moskva: Tipolit. N. I. Grosman i G. A. Vendel'shteyn, 1903), fig. 46.

The subject of the pelican was extremely widespread in Ukraine. It can be found in sewing and weaving on *sakos*, *panagias*, in gilding, enamel, on monstrances, on engravings of old books of Lviv print, such as the title page in the *Sluzhebnik* of 1691, in the *Irmologion*

of 1700, in the murals of Kyiv-Pechersk Lavra, etc. This symbol could sometimes be present in compositions of the Crucifixion and icons of the Mother of the God. Ukrainian art historian Natalya Kotsyubynska recalls that the pelican subject could be seen in the museum of the Kiev-Pechersk Lavra on the embroidered *sakkos* of Metropolitan Samuel Mislavsky of Kyiv and Galicia: “Above the left sleeve, in an embroidered gold frame, there is an image of a pelican with children, standing in a wreath of thorns in the place of a nest, amid a landscape with trees and houses”³⁴.

The pelican scene first appeared in Western Europe in Italy, in the mosaics of Basilica of St. Paul outside the city walls of Rome. However, in this example the pelican is not tearing his chest, but killing the serpent, symbolizing the victory of Christ over the devil³⁵. Only from the end of the 14th to the 15th century did the pelican begin to be depicted in canonical iconography tearing his chest as a symbol of the Eucharist³⁶. According to Vasily Narbekov, a similar composition is found in the frescoes of an unknown master of the Florentine Academy (1404) and in the murals of Fra Angelico in the Chapel of St. Mark in Florence³⁷. Also found in some ancient Gothic churches in France are the so-called “lutrin pelican”, wood-carved sheet music stands in the form of a bird tearing its own breast³⁸.

Narbekov noted that the composition *Bird Pelican* in the murals of the Kyiv-Pechersk Lavra (Fig. 19) was similar to the one in the frescoes by Fra Beato Angelico, from which he concluded a direct influence of Florentine frescoes on murals in Pechersk Lavra in Kyiv³⁹.



Figure 19. *Bird-Pelican*, 18th century. The Gate Church, Kyiv-Pechersk Lavra, Kyiv. Source: photo by the author.

How did the pelican bird subject arrive in Ukraine? The hypothesis here supported is that this subject

³³ Peter M. Daly, *Andreas Alciatus. Vol. I: The Latin Emblems; Vol. II: Emblems in Translation* (Toronto; Buffalo; London: University of Toronto Press, 1985).

³⁴ Natalya Kotsyubynska, “Pelikan v ukrayins'komu mystetstvi”, *Zapysky istorychno-filolohichnoho viddilu Ukrayins'koyi Akademiyi nauk*, no. 9 (1926): 232; Oleksa Novitsky, “Symbolic images on the rites of Kyiv old prints”, *NTS Notes. Proceedings of the historical and philosophical section* (1926): 141-145.

³⁵ Kotsyubynska, “Pelikan v ukrayins'komu mystetstvi”, 231-232.

³⁶ In iconography, the pelican represents a symbol of the Eucharist as a bird that loves its children. When the chicks grow up, they bite the pelican in the face. An exhausted bird kills its chicks. But, looking after them, on the third day he breaks his side, sheds his blood on the chicks, and they come to life.

³⁷ Narbekov, *Yuzhnorusskoye religioznoye iskusstvo XVII-XVIII st.*, 19.

³⁸ Kotsyubynska, “Pelikan v ukrayins'komu mystetstvi”, 233. See also: Svetlana Kurach and Olexandra Ostryakova eds., *Catalog of icons from the museum collection. XVII-early XX century. Chernihiv Regional Art Museum named after Hryhoriy Galagan* (Zhytomyr: LLC “505”, 2020), ill. 42.

³⁹ Narbekov, *Yuzhnorusskoye religioznoye iskusstvo XVII-XVIII st.*, 19.

spread because of the distribution of engravings. Print collections (Kunstabücher, kuzhbushky) of the Lavra painting workshop in Kyiv contained German and Italian engravings, which reproduced images of the pelican⁴⁰. According to Natalya Kotsyubynska, there were even images of pelican from the 16th century Vatican beds, which can be seen today in the collection of Lorenz (1898)⁴¹.

The descriptions of the “Pelican Bird” icons, presented at the XII Archaeological Congress (1902), suggest that in general, the Slobozhanshchyna iconography had a Western European origin, but it is undeniable that such regional differences as local plant motifs, images of angels around the cross and a nest in the crown of thorns with a pelican bird in the crossing place were newly introduced. Moreover, in the local interpretation there are different versions of the image of the bird, namely from swan to goose, which indicates a different level of artistic knowledge and training.

This diversity of iconography suggests that Slobozhanshchyna iconography, which during the 18th century willingly accepted the experience of Lavra iconographic workshops and trends in Western European art, rethought the existing composition schemes in their own way. The icon-painters of the Slobozhanshchyna region were well acquainted with the traditions of both Byzantine and Western European iconography, and composed their icons according to the peculiarities of their own understanding and purposes.

Pelican iconography became most widespread at the end of the 18th century, when the subject was commonly found in church murals or as a detail on iconostases, but more often as a separate icon. The composition over time became more complex: a pelican standing on a cross or under a cross, sometimes in a nest, with its wings open and its beak tearing at its chest. Blood gurgles from the wound, the chicks (mostly three) catch it and drink it, raising their heads up. Behind the cross there is a sponge and a spear, sometimes placed crosswise. Above the bird, there is almost always a fiery heart, often wearing a crown of thorns. Under the heart is a chalice, where blood flows from the wounds from the thorns, or simply from the heart.

7. Transmission of space and time in Slobozhanshchyna Baroque iconography

The images inspired by Western European art not only broadened the range of subjects, but also introduced new aspects into their interpretation, and this could not help but have an impact on the evolution of the artistic and imagistic system of Slobozhanshchyna icon painting. The dominance of the centuries-old Byzantine system, with its flat image-symbol solution and inverse perspective, was broken in Ukrainian icon painting by the

Western tradition that, being instilled into the art of Slobozhanshchyna, was accepted but reconsidered by the artists of the Baroque era. Of particular importance in icon painting of this period was the problem of interpreting movement, conveying the inner state of the saints depicted, and how they fit into their environment. The experience of Mannerism, which preceded the Baroque, served as the starting point for the depiction of such movements that preserved the iconic significance of the images. Moreover, they no longer had the rational weightiness of Renaissance iconography.

This mixed tradition may account for the peculiar character of Baroque icon painting: from the position of a modern artistic representation, all sorts of deformations, movements, breaks in the image, deviations from perspective, different scales of the figures, an unconventional technique in conveying space, etc., come to the fore. But behind all this we see the special symbolic language of Baroque painting, that particular system of conveying images that the icon-painter possessed: “On the screen there is the image symbol [...] and the images of the arts [...] differ from one another not because some are symbolic and others [...] naturalistic, but because, being equally non-naturalistic, they are symbols of things from different sides, different worldviews, different degrees of syntheticity. Different ways of depiction differ from each other not as a thing from its image, but – on the symbolic plane”⁴².

One of the urgent problems addressed by iconographers of the period was the problem of conveying space and time. As Alexander Shylo pointed out:

By its metaphysical nature the plane in medieval depiction is an element of ritualized reality. It is material, real and symbolic by itself, apart from the image it bears, which this symbolism reinforces... Overcoming illusory nature on this plane means including oneself into ritualized reality, crossing a certain border separating the ordinary reality from the ritualized one...⁴³.

Such ritualized reality can be observed in the icon of the *The Assumption of the Blessed Virgin*, from the town of Lebedyn (Fig. 20), now held in the NAMU in Kyiv, in which the events of “sacred history” are reproduced in timeless space. The characters move in slow motion; they are eternal, belonging not only to the past and the present, but also to the future. It is not by chance that the icon-painter encloses the composition in a circle, which is outlined below by the faithful ones who have come to worship the Mother of God, and above by the arched format of the icon. This work is built on the principle of continuity, and the spherical openness inherent in narrative works accentuates the development of the action in space.

⁴⁰ This opinion is confirmed by Olga Ryzhova, who notes that in Kyiv icon painting workshops there were both copies of paintings by Western European masters and a sufficient number of Western European book engravings, which in turn became models for painting icons. Olga Ryzhova, *Ikonopys u khudozhniy kul'turi Kyieva kintsya XVII-XVIII stolit'* (Kyiv: VPTS “Kyivskyy universytet”, 2020), 101, 103.

⁴¹ Nikolay F. Lorents, *Ornament vsekhn vremen i stiley: 100 tablits s ob'yasnitel'nykh tekstom* (St. Petersburg: AF Devrien, 1898), 15, Fig. 15, Tab. 61.

⁴² Florensky, *Izbrannyye trudy po iskusstvu*, 47.

⁴³ Alexander Shylo, *Kanon y plastycheskoe myshlenye v yskusstve srednykh vekov* (Kharkov: Novoe slovo, 2006), 78.



Figure 20. *The Assumption of the Blessed Virgin*, late 17th-beginning of 18th century. Lebedyn, Sumy region. Source: photo by the author.

Artistic tradition in the depiction of the Virgin has always been redefined because of the identification with the archetype of the loving and sacrificial Mother. Transmitting the purity of the spiritual world of the images, Slobozhanshchyna icon painters developed a broad scale of characters' emotion – they conveyed the depth of their religious feelings with the same power as poetry; expressing their meekness, melancholy and pathos.

8. Conclusions

The article has set out to demonstrate that in the stylistic evolution of icon painting in the Slobozhanshchyna region from the 17th to the 18th century, the most significant influence was exerted by the artistic productions of Western Baroque, with its allegorical, symbolic, and emblematic content, which resonated with the mindset and culture of Ukrainian society at that time. The geographical and cultural circumstances of Slobozhanshchyna, a region that served as a crossroads between the West and the East, facilitated the dissemination and acceptance between the artists of the region of a characteristically Western Baroque experience, which found its artistic expression in religious art and its aesthetics.

The text has studied how the images inspired by Western European art expanded the range of themes in Slobozhanshchyna icon painting, which in turn influenced the evolution of the region's artistic-image system. Additionally, European artworks also helped to increase the symbolic complexity of Slobozhanshchyna icons. The adoption of Western European iconographic motifs, which has been analysed in detail in relation to the Ukrainian icons of *Bird-Pelican*, *Christ the Sleepless Eye*, *Immaculate*

Conception, and *Madonna of Mercy* (in the Ukrainian Orthodox version, *Mother of God – Joy to All Who Mourn*), along with the incorporation of various socio-cultural aspects that could be deemed characteristically Western European, such as clothing, interior and architectural design, emblematic verses, or, within the field of iconography, of elements and motifs foreign to Orthodox iconography, like the crown of thorns, the compass, etc., illustrates how the synthesis of Orthodox Christian tradition with Western artistic forms took place in Slobozhanshchyna icon painting, resulting in a unique interweaving of archaisms and innovations in the iconography of the region.

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