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Ural Old Believer Icon-painting: Origin, Development, Stylistic Features (Historiographical aspects)

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The present article is devoted to the analysis of research points of view on a set of questions in the field of Old Russian icon-painting traditions of the Ural study. Special attention in the analysis was paid to the source and methodological basis of the research. Thus, we came to the conclusion that development of a complex approach is necessary for effective solving of the problem.

Keywords: icon painting, old belief, «Nevian School of icon painting».

Icon painting craft was mentioned for the first time by A.V. Komarov in 19 century: «Icon painting is the craft of three families in Nevian factory and there are no other places it could be seen. This craft appeared about 100 years ago and was obviously transported by old believers who migrated to Ural, especially during famine» (Komarov, 1889, 113). D.N. Mamin-Sibiryak also mentioned about famous icon-painters in the Ural area in his publicistic sketches in 1880-1890 (Mamin-Sibiryak, 1947, 260). But works of A.V. Komarov and D.N. Mamin-Sibiryak were not supposed to investigate the old believer icon-painting as a scientific problem.

The situation has not changed greatly after the revolution. The attempt to focus art collectors' and connoisseurs' interest on the Ural old believer icon-painting was made by S. Dulong in his report at the meeting of «The Ural Society of Natural Science Fans» (USNSF). But when this society

was closed down in 1929, all efforts to explore Ural icon-painting were ceased.

Art learning of old Russian icon painting in Russia began in 1960s and in 1970s in the Ural region. In 1970s Ekaterinburg local history museum organized summer historically – domestic expeditions (which included exploring of icon-painting works) to Sverdlovsk region, particularly to Talizky, Kuvshinsky, Krasnoufimsky, Shalinsky, Nizhnetagilsky and other areas. Thus, we can name 1970s -1980s as the period of scientific materials collection.

The period between the late 1980s and the early 1990s was the first stage of scientific exploring of Ural old believer icon-painting. This stage is characterized by the beginning of scientific apprehension of collected data, generation of first conceptions, introduction of «Nevian School of icon painting» notion for scientific use (Golynez, 1988, 31-44). The main problem of that period was the problem of stylistic sources of Ural old

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believer icon-painting revealing (Trofimova, 2009, 153-156). But the main feature of first research was hypothetical because of lack of early Ural icons and documents.

The beginning of the new stage of research work began in the middle of 1990s and it is characterized by the increasing number of the explored icons and collected data. It helped the scientists involved to make their knowledge about the Ural old believer icon-painting more profound, accurate and concrete. Alongside the problem of its stylistic sources there were set some others about: the time of formation and inner evolution of «Nevian School of icon painting», the part of Nevian School in Ural icon-painting, existence of other centers of icon-painting in this area (Golynez, 1995, 74). The most active discussion of these questions was during the post soviet period.

This scientific article is supposed to carry out the analysis of research points of view on the problem of formation period and internal evolution of «Nevian School of icon painting» on the Ural mining territory and its stylistic sources.

It is worth mentioning, that the modern historical science and art learning are identifying old believer icon-painting with Nevian School of icon painting on the basis of chapel agreement. It is known that the Ural became one of the centers of old belief after the church split in 1653-1656. The migration of old believers greatly raised after defeating Kerzhenc city in 1722. Tens of thousands of old believers, the majority of them were sophontiev's people, migrated to the East, especially to the Ural factories.

Because of repressions in 30s of the XIX century, «beglopopovcy» refused to accept the fugitive parsons of official church and initiated church services without parsons. This way sophontiev's agreement became chapel agreement.

Research workers refer the beginning of Ural icon-painting to the beginning of Stephan Permsky's mission. Stephan Permsky was an icon painter: «We can trace the history of Ural icon-painting from 80s of the XIV century with the introduction of Christian enlightenment in the Ural area». But G.V. Golynez thinks that «we can talk about Ural icon-painting as it is, only when Tsar Peter the Great started his ruling. But dealing with the beginning of the XVIII century the researchers have to rely on documentary witnesses and legends only» (Golynez, 1988, 32). That's why up to the present time there is no unanimous opinion about time when the Ural icon-painting started. There is some agreement of research workers' opinion concerning the formation time of Nevian icon-painting school, although there is no unanimity about this problem in modern native historiography.

G.V. Golynez stated in the middle of 1990s that «The Ural old-believer icon painting school originated in 1720s, after migration of people («vygonok») from upper Volga river area, Kerzhenc city, Poland border areas («Vetka»), maritime area to Demidov's Ural (Golynez, 1995, 74: 2008, 68-84). The sources of scientific data were icon works and the method of research was art learning method, which includes iconographic analysis, composition analysis and coloristic analysis of icons.

The opinion of G.V. Golynez was supported by the research workers, such as G.I. Vzdornov (Vzdornov, 2005, 9), T.A. Runeva, V.I. Kolosnicin (Runeva et al., 2000, 361), G.I. Panteleeva (Panteleeva , 2003, 11) and the collectors Y.M. Ryazanov and L.D. Ryazanova (Ryazanov et al., 1999, 64). Followers of that point of view prove it by the earliest icon work «The Egypt Holy Mother» dated 1734.

At the beginning of 2000s this problem was solved another way. V.I. Baidin put in the science use the archive data from Perm, Sverdlovsk and

Tymen regions. The careful art analysis of these data helped to reconstruct biographies of first old-believer icon painters.

On the basis of mentioned above, he assumed that «old-believers icon painting school based in the Ural mining area (Nevian school), formed quite later, by the last quarter of XVIII century, when the third or fourth generation of local painters had already been working» (Baidin, 2002, 81). As research worker thinks, the processes of cultural self-identification of Ural-Siberian «beglopov's people» were crucial for Nevian School of icon-painting. On the other hand, there was isolation of Ural-Siberian «beglopov's people» from their colleagues in European part of Russia. This autonomy was saved, developed in the next decade and resulted in chapel agreement, which was the most popular on the Ural and Siberian territory» (Baidin, 2002, 79-80). E.V. Royzman and M.P. Borovik supported V.I. Baidin's opinion: «The majority of age-dated «nevia» icons started to appear after 1770, but rare early icons can be assumed as milestones of ural icon-painting craft» (Borovik, 2002, 19).

Consequently such followers as E.V. Royzman, M.P. Borovik, and V.I. Baidin suppose that document learning analysis is the most preferable method of icon painting art research. With the help of this method they dated formation of Nevian School painting by the last quarter of XVII century. E.V. Royzman, however, changed his mind some time later. In 2006, he thought: «In any case, Nevian School of icon painting was formed in the first half of XVIII century» (Interview with a member of State Duma E. Royzman). He supposed that historical processes played the main role in icon-painting formation, first of all he marked huge historical meaning of Demidov's factories which were potent religious centers in the Ural area and there was integration of two streams of

old-believers who migrated from the Volga and Maritime areas.

The process of the Ural old-believer icon painting development had irregular character; it was pointed out by A.V. Komarov in the end of the XIX century: «In old times, icon painting crafts flourished; there were about ten icon-painting workshops, but now there orders decreased so dramatically, that three workshops had no work» (Komarov, 1889, 113). Thus, emerging of evolution problem in the second half of the XX century (when the old-believer icon-painting appeared in researcher's field of study) was obvious. There were different opinions about this question. The milestone of contradictions was timing of Nevian icon-painting school flourishing that was called «golden» or «high» Neviansk.

G.V. Golynez dated «High Neviansk period by the second half of XVIII century – the first half XIX century. The author considers that art flourishing of the school «was stimulated by the industry and economics of the area development», concentration and cohesiveness of old-believing in the Ural area after defeat of priories in the European part of Russia, when «the chapel agreement played the cohesive role. They protected their ways of living, chapel ceremony, their care and eagerness supported the Ural icon-painting». Moreover, «Neviansk was the place where the best artist gathered in the second half of XVIII century – the first half of XIX century» (Golynez, 1997, 209).

As we can see, G.V. Golynez considered economic growth to be the main reason for art uprisal.

A.T. Runeva, V.I. Kolosnicin narrowed «Classic Neviansk» period having limited it to the end of XVIII century – the first half of XIX century, «when the Bogatyrevs line, the Chernobrovins line, the Anisimovs line worked, later it was the Filatovs, the Romanovs and the Kalashnikovs line» (Runeva et al., 2000, 361).

Thus, the authors found connection between the art uprisal and creative work of the lines that had formed before and had been working for many generations.

Managers of «Nevian Icon» museum E.V. Royzman and M.P. Borovik defended a different point of view, based on stylistic features of icons: «Nevian icon of XVIII century, dobogatyrevskaya in particular, is notable for a more advanced level of writing, true performance and, dare we say it, more chaste taste. «Nevian icon» as we call it «high Neviansk» did not step over XIX century line» (Royzman, 2002, 16). But in 2006 E.V. Royzman changed his mind and expanded the time boundaries of the period: «The period that we call «high Neviansk» is at least 70 years old. It has started to decline since 20s-30s of the XIX century» (Royzman, 2002, 16).

Thus, during that period two points of view in historical science about the period of Nevian old-believer icon painting formation were developed. G.V. Golynez, G.I. Vzdornov, T.A. Runeva, V.I. Kolosnicin, G.I. Panteleeva and collectors Y.M. Ryazanov, L.D. Ryazanova linked the process to the first half of XVIII century. V.I. Baidin, E.V. Royzman and M.P. Borovik attached it to the last quarter of XVIII century. The fiercest dispute was on period of Nevian School flourishing because the researchers had different reasons hierarchy.

T.A. Runeva, V.I. Kolosnicin, Y.M. Ryazanov, L.D. Ryazanova, E.V. Royzman and M.P. Borovik put art characteristics of icon in the first place, but G.V. Golynez judges from economic and religious reasons and then forms stylistic characteristics.

There are no disputes in scientific community about crisis period and decadence in the Ural icon painting. All researchers agreed on the point that since second half of XIX century there was «loss of creative power». As it is known, the process of economy reorientation to capitalist regime was on the way. The Ural lost his leading positions

in metal melting, changes in economic positions of factories took place and rich clients were lost. Thus there was a reduction in numbers of icon workshops, distribution of cheap mechanically typed icons, assimilation of old-believer style icon with various Ural icons and imported ones. G.V. Golynez thinks that Nevian icon painting experienced some revival at the turn of XIX and XX century. This revival was the result of the manifest dated October 17, 1905 which gave civil rights to the old believers. But Nevian School would never reach such high level as it did before. Some professionals had been working until 20s of XX century; this fact can be proved by the latest icon «God Almighty», dated April 2, 1919.

Researches agreed on stylistic features of the Ural icon. Coloristic specificity, as scientists think, is expressed in decorativeness, active using of red, green and gold palette: «Coloration of Nevian icons is notable for decorativeness, combination of favorite hues of red, «green and blue palette is rich» (Golynez, 1988, 35). V.I. Baidin, basing on the analysis of Apocalypse miniature, noted icon influence on miniatures style, «however gold background is typical for Nevian icon style» (Baidin 1994, 41). G.V. Golynez carried out coloristic analysis of icons and came to the conclusion that «Nevian artists used complete gold plating very often, sometimes too excessive» (Golynez, 1988, 35). One of the features was usage of mineral colors of industry production: «Nevian artists liked to use colors obtained from grinding of local minerals into paste, this method gave a special color effect to icons» (Ryazanov, 1991, 3). This features were also noted by N.A. Goncharova, T.A. Runeva, V.I. Gubkin and V.I. Kolosnicin (Goncharova et al., 1998, 7-12; Gubkin, 1988, 128-137; 1997, 227-231).

The common art features of the Ural old-believer icon painting were pointed out by L.D. Ryazanova: «We know about a lot of icons from

advanced to simple «of primitive painting style, which nevertheless can be united according to sainthood painting workmanship and unique colored hills» (Ryazanova, 1986, 148). All researchers pointed out colored hills as the main feature of this school (Ryazanov, 1991, 3). E.V. Royzman, taking into account results of exploring dated icons of XVIII century, singled out «common for all Nevian icons of XVIII century feature – «pozem» with flowers, this stylistic element sometimes can be seen in simplified form in «krasnoufimsk» style icons of XIX century» (Borovik, 2002, 19).

E.V. Royzman, G.I. Panteleeva, G.V. Golynez pointed out Ural nature views as attributes of the Ural old believer icon (Golynez, 2008, 68-84; Panteleeva, 1992, 132-137; Interview with member of State Duma E. Royzman, 2006).

There were singled out two types in personal painting. G.V. Golynez, taking into account the analysis of Bogatyrev's masterpieces, pointed out special Nevian style of personal painting, and described it as «lovely, chubby, with broadly placed, big and slightly popped eyes, swollen lids; short, straight and scarcely noticeable humped nose; roundish chin; waved line of slightly smiled lips with face features brought together vertically» (Golynez, 1997, 210; 2008, 68-84). Another «expressive» type more often can be seen in one-figure icon. T.A. Runeva and V.I. Kolosnicin suppose that the second type of sainthood prolonged Novgorod's traditions of XVII century. Novgorod style marked by «rough, graphical paint; sharp-cut nose, mouth, chin, cheekbones; eyes with heavy lower lid, arched eyebrow, superciliary ridges; wrinkle on the forehead, light entrance in whiteness» (Runeva et al., 2000, 361).

Besides, M.P. Borovik and E.V. Royzman traced evolution stages of «dobogatyrevskaya» icon formation and built logical circuit as follows:

1. «oval painting» dated by the beginning of XVIII century, characterized by north influence;

2. «White sainthood icons» dated by 30s – 50s of XVIII century and existed up to the beginning of XIX century.

3. «bold painting», the earliest example dated by 1762, it combines Moscow and north influence;

4. «krasnoufimsk painting» known from 80s of XVIII century, can be seen in different types until the beginning of XX century, differs from other types by more soft whitening of sainthoods, width and other dimensions desk ratio and absence of arks. (Royzman, 2002, 19)

Taking into consideration all mentioned above, we can state that the main distinguishing features of the Ural old-believer icon painting, particularly Nevian icon painting school are: intensive usage of gold and mineral colors, decorativeness of color scale, icon hills, «pozem», Ural area views and white style sainthood.

The most favorite icon images in old believer community, as researchers suppose, were images of Holy Virgin, iconographic type «Tenderness», also images of Nicolai Miracle Worker, Ilya Prophecy especially in «Ilya's fire ascension», Ioan Ancestor, Saint George, and Aleksandr Nevsky. Image of Panteleimon – Healer became famous in XIX century.

We should also say that in spite of conservatism of old believer community, their icon painting revealed spirits of the new times. That process was traced by G.V. Golynez, who singled out successive change of baroque, classicism and romanticism features in Nevian icon. The main guides of European style were sons of the Ukraine, «lived near «kerzhaki» people, Pole and Swede POWs, foreign specialists who worked in metallurgic factories. There were also channels with old believer centre of Poland, Romania and the Baltic states (Golynez, 1997, 211).

Assessment of art nature of the Ural old believer icon painting became ambiguous. V.I. Baidin described it as follows: «The Ural old believer icon is framed in culture phenomenon known as «primitive» or «the third culture» which is functioning together and in interaction with scientific-artistic professionalism and non-professional folklore. «Primitive» occurs and develops in city and city area in the end of XVII –the beginning of XX century. In specific Russian social-economical conditions we should add trade and mining settlements to the nurturing city area «soil» of «the third culture» (Baidin, 1992, 19). In this context, a basis for this conclusion was the V.N. Prokofiev’s conception about three levels of art culture of the New and the Newest time (Prokofiev, 1983, 6-28).

G.V. Golynez agreed with the fact that it is possible to consider the Ural old-believer icon as the «primitive», but she specified it: «It is necessary to take into consideration the nature of the Ural culture which unlike the capital culture possesses primitive characteristics. In that very culture, the old believer icon, having kept mediaeval traditions, turned out to be more professional and was the example of great artistry» (Golynez, 1995, 74; 2008, 68-84).

Thus, researchers identify art nature of the Ural old believer icon painting as the high level of ‘primitivism’. V.N. Prokofiev wrote about its multilevelness as follows: «The whole spectrum of primitive forms, overflowing into each other: coming nearer to high culture level or to folklore is in between these opposite borderlines (non-professional folklore and scientific-artistic professionalism – N.T.)» (Prokofiev, 1983, 6-28).

In spite of unprofessional nature of the Ural old believer icon painting, researchers highly appreciate its art features. G.V. Golynez defined its meaning and role as follows: «Studying of Nevian School proves that it is an important phenomenon in native art history that enriches

our knowledge about the new time icon painting. It rose to eminence in artistry in its best days» (Golynez, 1997, 213). V.G. Puzko pointed out that «such provincial centers can give a complete idea about cultural and historical meaning of old-believer icon as a whole» (Puzko, 2005, 369-376).

We can conclude that the problems of formation time and inner development of the Ural old believer icon painting are urgent nowadays. The role of Nevian school in the Ural icon-painting and existence of other icon painting centers in the Ural area are still undecided. Ya.A. Rusanov having analyzed the stylistic features of the South Ural icons came to the conclusion that: «Researching of Chelyabinsk prayer hall’s icons of old-believer artists work proves the opinion that there were icon workshops in the South Ural, which dealt with different orders» (Rusanov, 2008, 79-84; 2009, 75).

Alongside the problems mentioned above, there is a set of practical tasks for investigators. Firstly, conditions of storing of art monuments need to be carefully examined, because the ancient technology of icon painting changed in XVIII – XIX centuries, but materials used in the New time are not carefully studied. There is another problem – Nevian school restoration methods, which are being developed. G.V. Golynez indicated the way of the following research work: «Comparison of Nevian face original with surviving art works, surviving non-signed and non-dated icons with dated icons, the Ural region icon painting with painting of other regions». According to the author, «stylistic and iconographic experience, obtained by native science, should coexist with theological thought» (Golynez, 2008, 84).

In our opinion, complexity of the Ural old-believer icon painting research is not only in the lack of data or absence of earlier dated icons, the methods of research used by this

or that investigator were highly restrained. It proved that we need to apply the complex approach to get good scientific research results and clear idea of the situation studied. Art nature of Nevian school needs art review, but restitution of history of the Ural old-believer icon-painting development needs historical

methods of research, such as historical-comparative method and others which help to restore the real history of the subject, to show cause-effect links and natural laws of historical evolution and give individual and picturesque characteristics of historical events and personalities.(Kovalchenko, 2003, 184).

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**Уральское старообрядческое иконописание:
зарождение, эволюция, стилистические особенности
(историографический аспект)**

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В статье проведен анализ исследовательских позиций по ряду вопросов в области изучения древнерусских иконописных традиций Урала. При анализе исследований особое внимание было уделено их источниковой и методологической основам, что позволило прийти к выводу о необходимости разработки комплексного подхода для эффективного решения поставленных проблем.

Ключевые слов: иконопись, старообрядчество, «невьянская школа иконописи».
