

THE VITAE OF ST. NICHOLAS AND HIS  
HAGIOGRAPHICAL ICONS IN RUSSIA  
PART II

by

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Chapter VII

The Scenes from the Life of St. Nicholas. Their Iconography  
and Textual Sources.

All of the scenes encountered during the research of the hagiographical icons of the saint in Russia will be described in this chapter. Where possible, the origins of the compositional formulae are indicated and the literary sources of particular representations are shown, supported by quotes from Old Russian manuscripts. The quotes enable one to see the relationship between the illustrations and the textual sources. The description of each scene is preceded by the selection of inscriptions found on researched monuments. References to the illustrations (included in the appendix) appear in the text.

The following forty-four scenes from the life of St. Nicholas are analyzed (the numbers indicate on which icon(s) the particular scene appears):

1. The Birth of St. Nicholas: 1-37, 39-43, 45-48, 50-55, 57-62, 65-68, 70-72, 74-78, 80-82, 84.
2. Nicholas Refuses to Take Milk on Wednesdays and Fridays: 9, 15, 17-19, 24-26, 29-30, 33, 35-37, 41, 62, 65, 68.
3. The Baptism of St. Nicholas: 9, 12, 16, 18-19, 21, 24, 29-30, 33, 36-37, 39-41, 43, 45-48, 50-53, 57-60, 65-68, 70-72, 74, 76-78, 80-82, 84.
4. Nicholas Heals a Woman with a Withered Arm: 6, 12, 33, 36-37, 40-41, 43, 45, 48, 52, 66-67, 70-72, 74, 76-82, 84.



5. The Schooling of Nicholas: 1-11, 13-22, 24-26, 28-33, 35-43, 45-52, 55, 61-68, 70-74, 76-82, 84, VII.
6. The Story of the Three Maidens (Praxis de tribus filiabus): 17, 22, 25-26, 33, 40 (two scenes), 45, 59, 70, 79-82.
7. Nicholas Fells the Cypress of Plakoma: 1-3, 5-8, 10-14, 16-18, 20-23, 25-26, 28-29, 31-33, 35-37, 39-40, 42-46, 50-52, 55, 61-62, 65-66, 70, 72, 76, 82, III, V.
8. Nicholas Charms a Dragon: 12.
9. Nicholas Draws Water from the Mountain: 12.
10. Nicholas Celebrates Mass: 3, 40.
11. Nicholas Builds the Church of St. Simeon: 38, 49, 63-64, 73.
12. Sea Miracles (The Jerusalem Journey, the Grain-ship Miracle and Praxis de nautis): 1-3, 6, 8-11, 13-15, 17-23, 25-28, 29 (two scenes), 31-35, 37-39, 40 (two scenes?), 41-42, 46-47, 49-52, 55-56, 60-63, 65-66, 69, 73, 75-77, 80 (four scenes), 82 (five scenes), IV, IX.
13. Church Doors Open Before Nicholas: 45, 82.
14. The Miracle with a Stone: 45.
15. Nicholas Multiplies Bread and Wine: 6, 45.
16. Nicholas has a Vision of the Church of the Virgin: V.
17. Nicholas Gives a Child to a Childless Couple: 45.
18. The Appearance of Archangel Michael to Nicholas: 22, 45.
19. Nicholas Heals Demoniacs: 2, 9-14, 17, 23, 26-28, 31, 34, 36-37, 39-42, 43 (two scenes), 44, 50-51, 54-55, 57-58, 60-61, 64-65, 71-72, 75, 78, 82, I, V.
20. Nicholas Charms a Devil: 40 (two scenes).

21. Nicholas is Consecrated Deacon, Priest, and Bishop: a) Deacon: 1-8, 10-17, 19-22, 26, 28-29, 31-33, 36-37, 40-43, 46-48, 50-51, 56, 61, 65-66, 70-72, 74, 76-78, 80, 82, 84, XI-XII;
- b) Priest: 1-4, 6, 8, 11-12, 14-16, 18, 22, 24, 26, 28, 30-33, 36-37, 40-43, 47, 57, 70-71, 77, 81-82;
- c) Bishop: 1, 3-5, 8, 10-11, 13-14, 16-28, 30-35, 37, 39-40, 42-43, 45-48, 51, 53-58, 60-61, 65-67, 70-72, 74-78, 80, 82, 84.
22. Nicholas with Paul of Rhodos and Theodore of Ashkelon: 22
23. Nicholas is Imprisoned: 80, 82.
24. Nicholas Destroys the Temple of Artemis: 80?, X.
25. Nicholas at the First Ecumenical Council: 1, 2 (two scenes), 22 (two scenes), 45, 80, 82.
26. The Story of the Three Generals (Praxis de Stratelatis): a) Nicholas saves three men from execution: 2-9, 10-22, 24-26, 28-33, 35-43, 46, 49-52, 55-56, 61, 63-67, 71, 73-74, 76-82, 84;
- b) Nicholas appears to the three generals in prison: 1-2, 5-25, 27, 29-37, 39-43, 46-48, 50-51, 53-55, 57-58, 60-62, 65-66, 71, 74-78, 80, 82, II, IV-V;
- c) Nicholas appears to Constantine in a dream: 1-3, 5-8, 10-21, 23, 25-29, 31-37, 40-43, 46-48, 50-61, 63-67, 70-72, 75-78, 80-81, 84, XII;
- d) Nicholas appears to Ablabius in a dream: 2-4, 6-7, 10, 12, 15, 32, 37-39, 49, 51, 73, 77, 80;
- e) The three generals come before Constantine: 15, 45, 80;
- f) The three generals thank St. Nicholas: 15.
27. Angels Announce the Death of St. Nicholas: 40, 45, 71-72, 76, 80, 82.

28. The Death of St. Nicholas: 1-2, 4-14, 16, 20, 22-24, 30, 36-38, 40-41, 43, 48-49, 51, 55, 63-64, 66, 70-73, 76-77, 80-82, 84.
29. The Burial of St. Nicholas: 1, 7, 17-19, 21, 25-29, 31-35, 39-40, 42, 46, 50, 52-54, 56-62, 65, 74-76.
30. The Translation of the Relics of St. Nicholas: 1-2, 4, 7-8, 10-14, 17-21, 24-37, 39-42, 45 (two scenes), 46, 48, 51-52, 54-57, 61-62, 65-66, 70-71, 74-77, 81-82, 84.
31. Nicholas Saves Demetrios from Drowning (Thauma de Demetrio): 1-6, 8-13, 14 (two scenes), 15-24, 26-41, 43-47, 49-52, 55-59, 61, 63-66, 69-70, 72-75, 78-80, 82, 84, II, XII.
32. The Story of Basil (Thauma de Basilio): a) Nicholas takes Basil away from the Saracenes: 2, 5-6, 8, 10-11, 14, 16, 25, 32-33, 42, 55, 77;  
 b) Nicholas returns Basil to his parents: 1-2, 4-6, 8-14, 16-19, 21, 23-30, 32-33, 36-38, 40-43, 46-47, 49, 51-52, 55-57, 59-61, 63-66, 70-78, 80-82, 84, I, IV-V, VIII-IX.
33. Nicholas Saves Christopher from Execution (Thauma de presbytero): 23, 27, 53, 59-60, 75, 80, 82.
34. The Story of Peter (Thauma de Petro scholario): 15, 45, 76, 80, 82, V.
35. Nicholas Heals a Lame Man (Thauma de Nicolao claudo): 5, 51, 82.
36. The Saracene Miracle: 10?, 80, 82.
37. The Carpet Miracle (Thauma de stromate): a) Nicholas buys the carpet from the old man: 2, 7-8, 10-11, 13-16, 19, 23, 26, 31, 37, 40, 42-43, 57-58, 61, 77;  
 b) Nicholas returns the carpet: 1-2, 7-8, 10-13, 15-16, 19-20, 26, 31, 37, 40, 42-43, 57, 61, 77;  
 c) Nicholas buys and returns the carpet: 4, 18, 27, 29, 33, 39, 47, 51, 65-66, 75, 80, 82.

38. The Story of the Three Merchants (Thauma de tribus Christianis): 42 (three scenes), 43, 45 (two scenes), 55 (two scenes), 56, 70, 71?, 77 (three scenes), 80, 82, V.
39. The Story of the Patriarch (Thauma de patriarcha): 4, 45, 80 (three scenes), 81, 82 (two scenes), V-VI.
40. The Story of the Liberated Servant (Thauma de servo liberato): 40 (two scenes), 82.
41. The Story of the Monastery (Thauma de sepulcro): 80, 82.
42. The Kiev Miracle: 4, 8-9, 12, 20, 22, 37, 45, 70, 73, 80, 82, V.
43. The Polovtsian Miracle: 15 (two scenes), 43, 77 (two scenes), 82.
44. The Miracle with Stephen Decanski: 80 (two scenes).

1. The Birth of St. Nicholas.

Inscriptions: Rožestvo svjatago Nikoly na / . . . / gov/ . . . / (1);  
 Rožestvo svjatago Nikoly (3, 4, 66);  
 Svjatago Nikoly rožestvo (23);  
 / . . . / egda vsxote baba omyti ego  
 / . . . / sta na nočvax tri časy  
 (34);  
 Roženie svjatago Nikoly (76);  
 Rožestvo svjatago Nikoly čjudotvorca  
 (81).

In Byzantine art the Birth of Nicholas scene was based on an iconographic formula accepted for the representation of the Birth of the Virgin and the Birth of John the Baptist.<sup>1</sup> According to one scholar, in such a composition "the mother lies on a bed<sup>2</sup> while attendants bring her food. The child is bathed by a midwife in a basin nearby." (Šev-

Čenko, p. 203). In order to depict the Birth of Nicholas the painters moved the midwife just slightly away from the child, and through an expressive gesture of her hands indicated her surprise and astonishment caused by the saint's first miracle -- standing in the basin. This compositional scheme lost its clarity in the 14th century because the artists were too much influenced by the traditional Birth of the Virgin compositions. From these compositions they borrowed and introduced in the Nicholas scene a figure of a second midwife, and frequently depicted the child being supported in the basin by one of the women, or even held in one's arms. Thus "the elements which differentiated the Birth of Nicholas from the Birth of the Virgin were at first neglected, then finally abandoned, and, with time, the two compositions became indistinguishable." (Ševčenko, p. 207).

In Russian icons a very similar phenomenon can be observed. Most icons either preserve the old, "correct" composition which emphasizes the child's miraculous deed (ill. 24-5), or show the child in the arms of a midwife (ill. 26-7). However, among the Russian icons we also find several unusual renditions of the subject.

In two instances (1, 22) the position of the bed and the mother is different than in all other icons. The mother's head is on the right side of the scene, and her

feet are on the left. It is possible that such a position of the bed was influenced by icons representing the Nativity and the Birth of John the Baptist, in which the position of the bier can vary.<sup>3</sup>

In one case(6) the painter developed the composition adding a small figure of the baby wrapped in white sheets and lying in a cradle near the mother's bed (ill. 28). Apparently this was a combination of certain Byzantine illustrations of the scene which presented only the mother and the baby in a cradle (Ševčenko, p. 207),<sup>4</sup> and the traditional representation of the bath miracle.

The icon from the collection of A.V. Morozov (7) presents only the mother and one attendant (probably the father), but neither a basin nor the child are depicted.<sup>5</sup>

On the icon from Meletovo (22) the painter represented only the mother and the child standing in the basin, but he did not show any midwives.

The famous icon from Kolomna (14) encloses the scene of the birth in an architectural frame (ill. 29). Such an attempt by the painter to be "realistic" is unusual for the Russian icons. The composition could have been based on some Byzantine example, or even painted by a Greek. A confirmation of this assumption can be found in the fact that one of the midwives depicted in this scene wears "typically Greek trousers."<sup>6</sup>

The number of attendants represented in Russian icons varies from none to three and in most cases includes a male figure which may be interpreted as the saint's father.

Only three Old Russian texts describe the birth of St. Nicholas and his bath miracle. The Vita Nicolai Sionitae says: "Egda bo rodisja i načaša ego omyvati v nočvax (v sosude, iže be na to ustroen)                    sta na nogu svoeju prost do dvoju času."<sup>7</sup> In Slovo poxvalno we read: "Jakože egda omyti xotjašči i položiša v lekan', i vsta prost 2 časa stoja na nogu svoju." (Leonid, Žitie, p. 102). Finally, in redaction B of the Synaxarion: "Egda že rodisja, omyti ego xotjašči baba položi i v noč'vax i stoja na nogu 3 časy."<sup>8</sup> We have already seen that these three texts are closely related. This explains the similarities; it is interesting, however, that in the third fragment Nicholas is said to have stood erect for three, not two hours. This change probably took place under the influence of folklore and under the impact of associating the saint with the Holy Trinity. In the 17th century Dmitrij Rostovskij in his Vita of St. Nicholas explained that by standing in the basin for three hours the saint expressed his future dedication to the Trinity.

What was the relation of Russian representations of the birth to these literary texts? In most cases we cannot even be sure that the painters knew the story about the

saint's first miracle because they give their scenes a standard title "The Birth of St. Nicholas." I believe that this title is placed on icons more to differentiate the Birth of Nicholas from the Birth of the Virgin<sup>9</sup> than to indicate any literary source. In only two instances can one speak about the painter's knowledge of a particular text or a group of texts. The icon from Kievec (4) develops the scene of the birth by an inclusion in the upper right corner of another small scene in which the father hands a wrapped baby to a monk. This shows that the painter had in mind the texts based on the Vita Nicolai Sionitae (all these texts mention that Nicholas' uncle, a monk, having learned about the miracle of the bath, named the child Nicholas), not the other sources (the Vita per Metaphrasten or redactions A and C of the Synaxarion do not tell about the event). Only the painter of icon No. 34 in his inscription used the text of redaction B of the Synaxarion, (note the similarity in wording), abbreviating it slightly but retaining the same characteristic change of two hours into three. However, the painter's knowledge of this particular text did not affect the iconography of the scene which remained standard.

Therefore, the conclusion can be drawn that for the illustration of this scene the painters did not have to know the literary texts. The compositions were similar



regardless of whether the painter knew all the texts describing the birth of St. Nicholas, only one text, or no text at all.

2. Nicholas Refuses to Take Milk on Wednesdays and Fridays.

Inscriptions: Svjat / . . . / ija v pjatok mleka (15);  
Svjatyj Nikolae ne priim mleka v sredu i v pjanicu (sic) (17);  
Svjatyj Nikola v sredu bo i v pjatok edinoju pričaščašesja mleku (40).

According to Ševčenko, "there is not a single reference to this event in any Byzantine cycle . . . The artists had no model which combined the suckling motif with the birth formula; so, rather than add a separate episode to their cycle, they chose to ignore the miracle altogether." (pp. 204-5).

In Russian icons the suckling miracle was represented quite frequently (the earliest representation dates to the 14th century). Usually the composition consists of two figures: at the left Nicholas' mother sitting on a throne-like chair and holding the child on her knee or on her arm, and at the right the father approaching his family, expressing by the gestures of his hands wonder and surprise (ill. 30). The baby sometimes sits with outstretched arms as if saying that it is quite natural for a pious Christian to

fast on Wednesdays and Fridays.

The only notable variations in this basic composition can be observed on icons from the Novgorod Museum (15) and from the Tret'jakov Gallery (36). On the first, both characters, mother and father (the latter may be a monk) are seated. On the second, a large part of the background is occupied by the icon hillocks (ill. 31), while all other icons have an architectural background.

The compositional scheme for the suckling miracle probably originated in Russia. There are three possible sources of its iconography. One is the iconographic type of the Virgin Eleusa (Umilenie), the second the type of the Virgin Galactotrophusa (Mlekopitatel'nica, Virgo Lactans), and the third the iconography of the Birth of the Virgin. In the first two cases the Virgin holds the child in a manner which closely resembles the mother of Nicholas. If one considers the great popularity of the Virgin Eleusa type in Russia, it is probable that it was used as a source of the suckling miracle scene. This type of the Virgin was much better known than the Virgin Galactotrophusa type.<sup>10</sup> It was quite easy to diminish the figure of the Virgin and the child and to place them on the left side of the composition, adding on the right a figure of the father, resembling the figure of the Apostle Paul (particularly his iconographic type found in Deesis compositions). The third possibility is also tempting.

I found a 16th century Novgorod icon depicting the Birth of the Virgin,<sup>11</sup> on which the painter represented at the left the scene of the birth, but at the right placed Joachim and Anna sitting close to each other, admiring the child. These two figures are so amazingly similar to the figures of the mother and father of Nicholas on the suckling miracle scenes, that a hypothesis can be made that they were based on some common original.<sup>12</sup>

The literary sources of this miracle were the Vita per Metaphrasten and the Vita Nicolai Sionitae. According to the latter: "Jako be ešče mladenec' syj, desnago tokmo sesca i togo edinjoju d'n'm' pitajasja, v ustavnyj 9 čas d'ni mleka priimaše, v sredu i v pjatok ne priimaše." (Leonid, Žitie, p. 29). Metaphrastes is more restrained in his description: "Po vsja bo d'ni jako mladenec' ssati trebuvaše, eda že sreda ot d'nii ili pjatok dostignjaše, edinoju v kiiždo ot seju d'nii mleka pričšašesja, i tžde v večernee vremja . . ." (VMČD6, p. 132). The Vita Nicolai Sionitae maintains that Nicholas took milk only from the right breast, once a day, at nine o'clock, and on Wednesdays and Fridays he did not eat at all. Metaphrastes changes this unbelievable story, saying that the saint took the breast only once on Wednesdays and Fridays, but on other days he sucked as much as he wanted.

The author of an icon from the collection of Pavel Korin (40) indicated in his inscription that he knew the text of Metaphrastes (notice the use of the same expressions: "edinoju" and "pričaščašesja"), but his preference for this literary source did not affect in any way the standard composition of his picture.

### 3. The Baptism of St. Nicholas.

Inscriptions: Krešćenie svjatago Nikoly (51, 66, 72, 76).

In Byzantine art this event was not illustrated. Among the monuments surveyed by Sevcenko, only one contained the representation of the baptism (Podvrh, Yugoslavia, 1613-1614), but it was probably based on Russian compositions. In Russia the baptism scenes appeared in the 14th century. The standard composition is very simple and stable. On one side are the parents of the saint<sup>13</sup> (the mother slightly in front of the father), in the middle the baptismal font (baptistery), and on the other side a church official: a deacon, priest, or bishop.<sup>14</sup> The greatest variations can be observed in the position of the baby: the most common representation is that of the mother holding Nicholas in her arms, but sometimes the child is shown standing in the baptistery, or being held above the font by a church official (48, 72, 76). Myslivec thought that the variant which presents

Nicholas standing in the baptistery reflects a transposition of the bath miracle into the baptism scene (p. 59). Apparently some painters decided that since Nicholas stood in the basin after his birth, he could and should have repeated the miracle during the baptism.

Myslivec noted that since "no Greek text mentions the baptism at all, one has to look for an explanation in some later Russian texts . . ." (p. 59). Our study of the Old Russian literary monuments did not reveal any texts which would describe the event. The only plausible explanation of the inclusion of this scene in the Nicholas cycle is the great importance of the baptism in the life of the Russian people. Baptism was the first step toward the Kingdom of God; through the sacrament a man became a Christian. And the painters probably reasoned that the saint had to be baptized in order to become a Christian and a saint.

The iconographical sources of this scene are unclear. It is possible that the scene of the Purification, known also as the Presentation of Christ in the Temple (Sretenie),<sup>15</sup> served as an example: it depicted Joseph and Mary approaching Symeon with the child Jesus in their hands. A little change of the posture of Symeon and an addition of a baptistery between the figures would result in a creation of a composition quite similar to this, representing the baptism of Nicholas.

4. Nicholas Heals a Woman With a Withered Arm.

Inscriptions: Svjatago Nikoly <sup>Ÿ</sup>čjudo (6);  
 Svjatyj Nikola isceljae suxorukuju <sup>Ÿ</sup>ženu  
 (66);  
 Svjatyj Nikola isceli <sup>Ÿ</sup>ženu su / . . . /  
 (72);  
 Svjatyj Nikolae <sup>Ÿ</sup>čjudotvorec isceli  
 suxorukuju <sup>Ÿ</sup>ženu na puti (81).

This is still another scene which does not appear in Byzantine monuments while in Russian works it is quite common. The origins of its iconography are obscure, although I believe that it has been based on the iconography of the Schooling of Nicholas (see the discussion of the next scene). This can be confirmed by the presence in the earliest icons (6, 12) of a figure of the teacher in this composition. The teacher sits at the right in both scenes: on the icon from Ozerevo (6), in the middle, we see Nicholas facing the teacher, and behind the saint a standing woman with a withered arm (ill. 32); on the icon from the Ugrešskij monastery (12) the composition is slightly different: we still see the teacher, but he occupies less space, the saint is at the left, followed by his father, and the figure of a woman is in the middle. She is kneeling in front of the approaching Nicholas. This composition was soon superseded by a new one, which became a standard representation: the figure of the woman had been moved to the right at the expense of the teacher who disappeared from the picture. Nicholas occupied

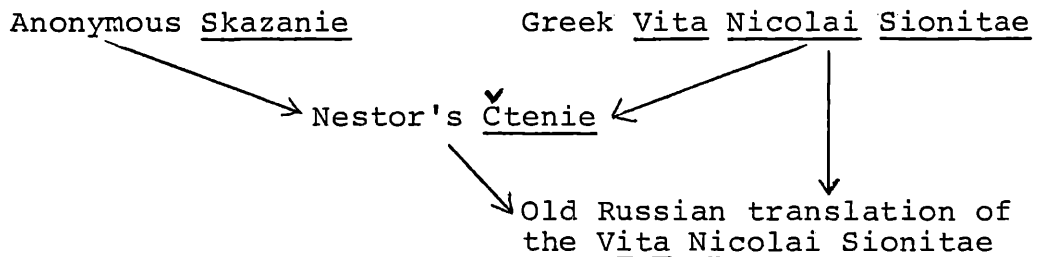
the center, and on the left were his parents (sometimes only his father: 41, 43, 52, 67, 74, 76, 78, 79). In this canonical composition (ill. 33) of most interest is the figure of the sick woman: she is often dressed in a bright red garment and either kneels or half-stands in front of Nicholas; her one hand is sometimes hidden in a sleeve of her dress (36, 52). The figure of the woman could have been borrowed from two popular icon compositions: the Raising of Lazarus or the Descent into Hell. In the first composition one of the sisters of the dead man, lying on the ground in a pose resembling the pose of a woman on icon No. 12, wears a bright red dress (see Lazarev, Novgorodskaja, ill. 33). In the second composition the similarity between the pose of Eve, stretching her hand towards Christ, and the pose of the woman with a withered arm on the majority of the scenes of healing, is even greater (see Lazarev, Moskovskaja, ill. 72). Characteristically, Eve is also often clad in a bright red garment. Since these two compositions were among the most popular and oldest scenes illustrating the events from the life of Christ (in iconostases they were placed in the feast or holiday row of icons -- prazdničnyj rjad), their influence on other, new compositions (like that of healing of a woman by Nicholas) is quite possible.

Only the Vita Nicolai Sionitae describes the event:  
 "Idušcu že emu (se slugami) na učen'e kniž'noe, i srete i

Žena iz vesi, imenom' (imja ej) Nona, imušči jej (u sebe) suxu ruku, i znamena ju siloju Svjatago Duxa, i poide cela (zdrava)." (Leonid, Žitie, pp. 28-9; variants in the parentheses: VMČD6, p. 12). As mentioned before, the Greek original featured a woman with a withered leg. The change of the leg into an arm is difficult to explain. Myslivec put forth a conjecture that "we are dealing here with an inspiration by local Slavonic texts which changed this detail of the Greek original." (p. 59). I believe that the change occurred under the impact of a miracle described in hagiographical works about the first Russian saints, Boris and Gleb.<sup>16</sup> This miracle, entitled "Čjudo . . . o Žene suxoruce" or "Čjudo . . . svjatyx strastoter'pec' Borisa i Gleba svjatago otca našego Nikoly, Mir'skago Čjudotvorca", is a story of a woman who on a feast day of St. Nicholas, instead of going to the church of the saint, had been working at home. According to the version recorded by Nestor, suddenly three horsemen (Boris, Gleb, and Nicholas) appeared to her, and after learning why she did not go to the church, they destroyed her house, and the oldest one (Nicholas) took her by the hand and paralyzed her entire body. Only three years later had she recovered enough to be able to explain what had happened to her; her hand, however, was still withered. Finally, after continuous prayers to the Russian martyred princes, she was healed. The following diagram may help to explain



the influence of this story on the youthful miracle of St. Nicholas:



Nestor based his Ctenie on a legend recorded in the anonymous Skazanie. He not only reworked it considerably (changing its social and political implications into a standard Christian didactic vita with miracles), but also inserted the name of Nicholas into two miracle stories. Apparently the fame of the Wonderworker was at that time growing rapidly in the Kievan Duchy, and Nestor, who undoubtedly knew the Greek lives of the saint, decided to insert the name of Nicholas in the miracles of Boris and Gleb in order to spread the cult and veneration of the saint even farther. The popularity of Nestor's Ctenie was so great that when the translator of the Greek Vita Nicolai Sionitae (the translation might have been done in the Kiev Monastery of the Caves where Nestor's works were well known) encountered in the Vita the miracle performed by the saint on a woman with a withered leg, he associated both miracles, because the object of the miracles (a woman) and the illness (a withered extremity) were the same; thus he changed the

leg from the Greek original into an arm. If this hypothesis is correct, it may in the future (when the necessary research is completed) shed some light on the history of the translation of the Vita Nicolai Sionitae, and can help in understanding Nestor's Weltanschauung and his literary horizons (it is tempting to ascribe to the famous chronicler the translation of the Vita; the change of the leg into an arm would then be even more natural).

Whatever the case may be, in Russian texts of the Vita Nicolai Sionitae we find a miracle performed by the saint on a woman with a withered arm, and this miracle is illustrated.

Only one literary source, the redaction B of the Synaxarion, describes a different miracle: "Egda že predan byst učitisja gramote, idyj k didaskalu stvori čjudo nekoej vdovici dast' prozreti, slepa bo be okom." (VMČD6, pp. 1-2). I was not able to find a source of this unusual version. Surprisingly, on icon No. 78 this miracle is depicted. On the left is Nicholas' father, in the middle the saint blessing with his right hand, and on the right a kneeling woman. Nicholas touches her eye with his hand and restores her sight.<sup>17</sup>

##### 5. The Schooling of St. Nicholas.

Inscriptions: Svjatago Nikolu da / . . . / na  
/ . . . / cenie kramoty (3);

Svjatog / . . . / olu dajute / . . . /  
 gramote (6);  
 Svjatago Nikolu privedoša ot'c' mati na  
 učenie k gramote (8);  
 Svjatago Nikolu prived / . . . / gramote  
 (13);  
 Svjatago Nikolu daju / . . . / te ucit'  
 (15);  
 Svjatago Nikolu dajut v naučenie gramote  
 (17);  
 Svjatago Nikolu ot'c' daet' gramote učiti  
 (21);  
 Svjatyj Nikolae dan byst' na učen'e  
 gramote (38);  
 Učenie gramoty svjatago Nikoly (51);  
 Privedenie svjatago Nikoly k gramote (66);  
 V naučenie gramote svjatago Nikoly (72,  
 VII).

The scene of the Schooling of Nicholas was one of the most frequently illustrated scenes in the St. Nicholas cycle. Perhaps only the Birth of Nicholas, the scenes of his consecrations and episodes from the Praxis de stratelatis enjoyed greater popularity among the painters. The basic composition of the scene featured at the left a figure of the escorting parent, in the middle a figure of Nicholas, and at the right a teacher, sitting on a chair (*didaskalios thronos*). Noticing a significant number of new elements introduced into this basic composition over the centuries, Ševčenko believed that this was the result of the lack of a New Testament iconographical model for the scene. "New Testament iconography, the primary source of the Nicholas compositions, could provide the artist with no appropriate formula for the representation of this episode." (Ševčenko, p. 214). She tried to find

possible sources of this composition: the Presentation of the Virgin in the Temple, the First Steps of the Virgin, the Presentation of Moses to the Pharaoh, Hannah Bringing Samuel to Eli, and others, but rightly concluded that the "Nicholas composition derives from none of these . . . directly, but . . . they all go back to one common source." (p. 216).<sup>18</sup>

Regardless of the source which was responsible for the introduction of this scene in the Nicholas cycle, it became an almost obligatory part of every fresco or icon depicting the life of Nicholas and, as stated previously, probably exerted a certain influence on the composition of the scene of the Healing of the Woman with a Withered Arm. This influence is especially apparent in the icon from Ozerevo (6). The Schooling scene (which I consider primary) depicts at the left the mother and the father of the saint, in the middle Nicholas walking towards the teacher who sits at the right (ill. 34). In the scene of the Healing the painter simply eliminated the figure of the father and the halo around the teacher's head. But the figures of the woman and of the mother, as well as the figure of Nicholas, are exactly the same, as if they have been copied from each other (notice the characteristic position of the hands of both women). One could speculate that the painter knew the text of the Vita Nicolai Sionitae in which the names of Nicholas' mother and of the healed woman were the same

(Nonna), therefore he decided to depict them similarly. However, much better grounded is an assumption that he simply took the easiest way for his rendition of the Healing, and copied his own composition of the Schooling.

In her dissertation Ševčenko analyzed the changes in the composition of the scene, noticeable in the figure of the escorting parent, the figure of Nicholas, the figure of the teacher, and in the addition of other students. In most cases the conclusions drawn from the Byzantine works can be applied to the Russian icons. There are only a few minor differences.

In the Byzantine works it is the mother who most often escorts the child to school. In only four instances the father accompanies Nicholas, and on the fresco at Bojana we see both parents bringing the saint to a teacher. In Russian icons the most common is this last composition (ill. 35-6). The father alone appears quite often (ill. 37), but the mother alone is extremely rare (21). It is possible that this change in the "importance" of the escorting parent was caused by the literal understanding of the following fragment in the Vita Nicolai Sionitae: "I byvšju detišču 7-i let, i vsxotes-ta roditelja ego Božiiim' povelaniem' vdati i učiti svjatym knigam. Otcju že ego tužašču, nevedušču koemu ucitelju dati, detišče že Nikola svoemu učitelju imja naznamenaja slogami (rekše sklady)." (Leonid, Žitie, pp. 28-9). Notice that

both parents are mentioned first, and then it is the father who has the difficult task of finding a teacher. The mother alone is not mentioned at all. In other Russian texts we find a simple statement that Nicholas was given to a teacher: "Vzrastu že prikosnuvšusja, predan byst' na učenie gramote." (Metaphrastes: VMČD6, p. 132).

In Russian compositions the figure of Nicholas is also represented similarly to Byzantine works, but on several icons he does not seem to have a halo (4, 7, 8, 13, 21, 22, 45, 52, 61, 72). The writing tablet which appears in the 14th century in Byzantine works in Nicholas' hand is rarely present in Russian icons (13, 20, 35, 73) and may be substituted for by a scroll or a book.

In all Russian icons the teacher is an ecclesiastical person, usually a monk holding a staff in one hand and blessing with the other. He is often shown with a halo, as if the painters try to tell the viewer that whoever has been teaching the saint is a saint himself. Only in three icons (22, 48, 67) the composition of the scene is reversed and the teacher sits at the left.

The greatest changes in the composition of this scene occurred when the artists tried to develop the episode by changing it into a scene of Nicholas at school (not Nicholas being brought to school). One of the earliest Russian examples is found on an icon from the collection of I.S. Os-

trouxov (43). The scene is divided into two sections by a vertical column. On the left side we see Nicholas approaching the teacher, as in all standard compositions. However, the figure of the accompanying parent is missing. On the right side of the picture Nicholas sits behind a long bench-desk, reading a book. On the icon from the collection of E.E. Egorov (51), the standard composition is only slightly altered. At the left there is Nicholas, sitting on a bench and reading a book. Above the saint, in the background, are the parents, while the teacher sits at the right. The icon from the collection of N.P. Lixačev (48) presents another variant of the composition. The figures of the parents, and the figure of Nicholas walking towards the teacher are eliminated. Instead, the teacher sits at the left, and at the right there is a long bench on which four students sit with writing tablets (or books) in their hands. The first pupil (Nicholas) has a halo and pays close attention to the teacher, while the next student turns back and talks to the one sitting behind him. A very similar picture appears on the icon from the collection of D.V. Sirotkin (55). The teacher sits at the right, and at the left there is a long bench with three students sitting on it. The first student (Nicholas, with a halo and an inscription "Nikolae" above his head) hands a scroll to the teacher while the second student talks to the third (ill. 38). Almost exactly the same rend-

ering of the scene is on the icon from Toržok (39). On the plaque from Palex (79), the scene is divided into two parts: at the left a traditional representation of the father bringing Nicholas to the teacher, and at the right a monastery school (inside a building) with four students sitting at the table with open books or notebooks. Another icon from Palex (82) repeats this composition, omitting only the walls of the school building. On the icon from the private collection in Berlin (81) in the foreground we see the usual composition in which the parents bring Nicholas to the teacher, and in the background, slightly above this group, there is a school building with three students behind a desk.<sup>19</sup>

Ševčenko indicated that all these changes in the basic composition, especially the addition of the other pupils and the writing tablet in Nicholas' hands, could have been transported into Byzantine painting (and subsequently, as can be seen, into Russia) from the West, from the illustrations of the scene of Mary taking Christ to school (pp. 223-7). However, she was cautious to draw a final conclusion regarding the sources of those additions, and said that "only new evidence and further study will show" whether they were introduced in the East or borrowed from the West.

There is a possibility that these new details appeared in Russian icons primarily in connection with a certain "realistic" tendency in icon-painting of the 16th century. The



artists more and more freely included details from everyday life, from their surroundings, into the old, established, canonical compositions. Since monastery schools were quite numerous in 16th century Russia, it was only natural to include in icons a representation of such a school. Compositions of this kind, skillfully arranged, glorified the saint even more than the traditional ones, showing him among the other pupils as the only one dedicated to learning and serving God.

6. The Story of the Three Maidens (Praxis de tribus filiabus).

Inscriptions: Svjatyj Nikola nadeet tri dščeri (17).

The story of this charitable deed of Nicholas was one of the most beloved and popular in Byzantine literature devoted to the saint. Its illustration can be seen on the oldest preserved hagiographical icon of Nicholas. The primary composition was almost identical to the iconographical formula used for a representation of a vision or of a dream (Ševčenko, p. 254). The father sleeps on a bed and the saint appears on the far side of the bed (sometimes he is separated from it by a short wall), handing the poor man a bag of gold. This composition was employed up to the middle of the 14th century. As Ševčenko indicated, "this particular formula conveys really very little of the original story,

which may explain why before the mid 14th century the scene was infrequently included even in extensive Nicholas cycles. It had few elements to distinguish it from other similar compositions; furthermore, it could not adequately express one major feature of the narrative how Nicholas managed to get the money into the house without ever entering it. Some reform was evidently necessary." (pp. 254-5).

In the 14th century, in frescoes at St. Nicholas Orphanos in Salonica, a new rendition of the scene appeared. The author of the new composition introduced the figures of the three maidens sleeping in a bed, enclosed the family with four walls, and depicted Nicholas standing outside the walls and pushing a sack of gold through a window. "It is difficult to find anything similar to the play on interior versus exterior space and to the way in which Nicholas, by pushing his sack through the window, penetrates the barrier between the two. Here, for the first time, an episode described in the texts of the life of Nicholas has given birth to a composition all its own" -- writes Ševčenko (p. 256). This original composition, unparalleled in Byzantine art in its spatial complexity, "was never successfully imitated." (ibid., p. 258). However, the Salonica fresco firmly established the three daughters as an essential part of later representations of the miracle.

The iconographical sources of this fresco were complex. According to Ševčenko the iconography of the figures of the daughters and the father derived from Byzantine models, while the spatial organization of the composition and the relation between exterior and interior space was based on the Western (probably Italian) examples. Because for other painters this original rendering of the miracle was too difficult to follow, they "reverted to the older, simpler formula." In search for a successful composition some painters divided the episode into two scenes, adding a picture of the father thanking St. Nicholas for his help. Others showed the father wide awake, sitting on the bed or kneeling in front of the saint. Still others completely eliminated the father from their compositions (see Ševčenko, pp. 262-6).

In Russian icons the spatial complexity of the Salonica frescoes was never achieved. Among the icons illustrating the miracle the oldest is an icon from Northern Russia, dating to the end of the 14th -- beginning of the 15th century (17). At the left Nicholas hands a piece of gold (?) to the father who sits in a high tower, his body turned towards his daughters and his face towards the saint. The maidens are sleeping on the bed with the heads on the far right side of the composition. An interesting part of this picture is a wall extending from the tower to the bottom of the composition, and separating Nicholas from the family. There is no

spatial complexity characteristic of the Salonica fresco in this icon, but the viewer can clearly see that the saint gives his charity to the father through a window. A similar rendition of the event can be seen on icon No. 25. Here the bed with the three daughters occupies the foreground. Nicholas and the father are depicted in the background (above the daughters); the saint stands behind a wall and holds out his hand towards a window in a tower which separates him and the father. There is no clear border between the father and the daughters; possibly they are in the same room. The vertical wall of the first icon was changed here into a low horizontal wall, and the saint has been shown only up to his waist. The three girls became the most important part of the composition; the penetration of the interior space is less essential. On the icon from Meletovo (22) we see another compositional solution. All five figures are in one room: the daughters are sleeping on a bed at the left, the father stands in the middle and faces Nicholas, and the saint is on the right (he may be handing the father a sack of gold). The author of this icon did not even attempt to separate Nicholas from the family, and chose an easier way to illustrate the episode. Some other painters also selected less complex ways of representing the miracle. On the icon from Dmitrov (26) Nicholas stands at the left, and at the right there is a building (a tower) in which a figure of the father can be

distinguished. The daughters and their bed are eliminated from the composition. The scene resembles more an appearance of Nicholas to a prisoner than the representation of Praxis de tribus filiabus. A similar, simplified composition, repeated twice, appears on the icon from the collection of Pavel Korin (40). Its author depicted the miracle in two scenes. In the first, Nicholas stands at the right side of the picture and pushes his hand through a window in a simple, rectangular building; in the second, the saint is at the left and reaches through a window in a very similar building. Apparently the author of this icon was primarily interested in showing Nicholas perform his miraculous deed more than once; he did not try to invent a new composition, but simply reversed the one he knew.

Among other icons which represent this event, the icon from the National Gallery in Oslo (33) shows the daughters sleeping at the left, the father kneeling in the middle, and the saint standing at the right. In the background of the scene are buildings and walls. One of the walls just barely separates the bed with the maidens from the figure of the father, and he is still very much in the same room with the girls and the saint. The icon from Prikra (59) has Nicholas standing at the left, on the far side of the bed with the daughters, while the father stands near their heads behind the bed. On the plaque from Palex (79) we see a more compli-

cated rendition of the episode. The scene is divided into two sections which show two separate temporal fragments. In the middle there is a standing figure of Nicholas with a sack of gold in his outstretched hand, and at the right a fairy-tale-like pavilion in which the three daughters lie on the bed. The pavilion's left wall is just a decorative column, and the saint's hand is shown on the background of this column. No attempt is made to depict the penetration of the bed chamber from the outside. Behind Nicholas, in the left upper corner, we see the saint again, and at his feet the father thanks his benefactor (ill. 39). Similar compositions, with a pavilion containing the daughters, appears on icons Nos. 45, 80, 81, and 82. In all these icons Nicholas pushes the gold through a window in the pavilion, while the maidens sleep inside. The figure of the father can be seen only on icons Nos. 45 and 82. In the latter, the father crouches at the saint's feet in a pose of deep appreciation. Nicholas is dressed in a monk's cassock. Such a costume of the saint in the Praxis de tribus filiabus scene is extremely rare. In the chapter concerned with the literary sources it was said that the story of the three daughters circulated in Old Russian manuscripts in two versions: as a posthumous miracle and as a part of the Vita per Metaphrasten. According to the Greek hagiographer the miracle occurred soon after the death of Nicholas' parents, when the saint was a young

man, long before he was elected a bishop. The Palex icon then follows the Metaphrastian text (most probably the version of Dmitrij Rostovskij).

7. Nicholas Fells the Cypress of Plakoma.

Inscriptions: Svjatyj Nikola progonjaet' besi ot dreva (1);  
 Svjatyj Nikola posekae dub, besovoe žilišče (3);  
 Svjatyj Nikola posekaete drevo (sic) predo narodome (6);  
 Svjatyj Nikola izgna besa is kladezja (17);  
 Svjatyj Nikola povele seči drevo, besovskoe žilišče (39);  
 Svjatyj Nikola usekae drevo, izgonjae besa (50);  
 Svjatyj Nikolae izgonjaet' beov (sic) is kladezja (66).

The earliest Byzantine work depicting this miracle of St. Nicholas is the 12th-century Sinai icon. "At the right is a tree, looking nothing like a cypress . . . Nicholas is at the left, his body turned away from the tree, his arms raised, holding an axe with both hands. His head is turned back toward the tree, which he is evidently about to strike with the axe. Two mountain peaks are visible in the background." (Ševčenko, p. 272).

As was mentioned before, the event was described in the Vita Nicolai Sionitae. According to its Old Russian translation, Nicholas was visited by the inhabitants of the village of Plakoma who said: "Est' v našem sele drevo, ideže živet'

bes kumira nečistago i kazit' čeloveky i selo, na puti bo est', ne možem minuti ego . . . " When Nicholas arrived at the spot, he noticed an old scar on the tree. The villagers explained that "nekij ot prežnix pride posešči drevo s dvema sekirami i edinoju bradov'ju, i jako nača sešči, isxyti nečistyj bes sekiru iz ruki, i udari čeloveka togo, i pogrebenie ego pri koreni dreva est' sego." Nicholas prayed to God and ordered the villagers to start chopping the tree. "Trepet že prijat vsja stojaščaja s . . . Nikoloju, jako ni drznuti, ni zreti možaxu na drevo. Togda . . . vzem sečivo . . . Nikola znamenav udari semiždy, videv že nečistyj dux, jako Božiju vlast' imat' . . . vskriča nečistyj dux, glagolja: 'Gore mne . . . '" (Leonid, Žitie, pp. 34-5).

It is easy to see which fragment of the text is illustrated on the Sinai icon. The sources of the iconography of this scene are much more difficult to find. Ševčenko dismissed such obscure sources as the illustration of the well-known Prediction of John the Baptist: "Now is the axe laid to the root of the tree" (p. 275) or an image on a coin from Myra, depicting "a tree with . . . a goddess in the branches, threatened by two men with raised axes" (p. 276).<sup>20</sup>

Apparently the Roman scenes representing animal sacrifices are a closer parallel to our composition. In such scenes "the 'popa', or executioner, raises his axe with both hands for a full swing at the animal before him, his legs



apart and his body twisted in a contraposto very similar to that assumed by Nicholas. This Roman formula for an animal sacrifice was known in the Byzantine period . . . It is possible that the Nicholas figure derives from such a 'popa' image." (Ševčenko, p. 277).

In Byzantine painting the scene of Nicholas felling the cypress "underwent very few changes in subsequent centuries" (Ševčenko, p. 278). The most important was the decline of the contraposto in the figure of Nicholas. According to Ševčenko, it "should be ascribed to the gradual decline in artistic quality evident in some . . . later monuments. Nonetheless, we should keep in mind the possibility that the strong contraposto pose was intentionally avoided. Perhaps the vigorous physical effort displayed by Nicholas in the early works was considered inappropriate in later periods; the mere raising of his axe, it was thought, should have sufficient power to drive the demons to flight." (p. 280).

The representations of this miracle in Russian icons can be roughly divided into three groups. The largest repeats the composition known from the Sinai icon (2, 7, 8, 11, 12, 13, 14, 21, 22, 28, 31, 32, 42, 43, 50, 52, 55, 61). The second presents Nicholas as an observer, usually with one hand in blessing and the other holding a Gospel book. The chopping is performed by a man, whose figure closely re-

sembles the executioners on the scenes of animal sacrifices (1, 17, 23, 25, 26, 29, 35, 40, 46, 51, 65, 76, III). The third depicts not only the saint and the tree, but also the villagers present at the scene of the miracle (3, 6, 16, 33, 45, 82, III).

The most interesting feature of the majority of Russian representations of this scene is the presence in the composition of a well (it does not appear only on icons Nos. 3, 6, 7, 12, 13, 16, 22, and possibly 43). The well is sometimes rectangular (1, 2, 23) or round (11, 14, 31, 40), but most often hexagonal. The best theory as to why the well appeared in the scene of Nicholas felling the cypress, is that the Russian painters mixed in their works two miracles of the saint: the Plakoma miracle and the miracle with the well (cf. Myslivec, p. 72). This second miracle was described in the Vita Nicolai Sionitae immediately after the Plakoma miracle. The story narrates that after the expulsion of the devil from the cypress, Nicholas was asked by the inhabitants of another village to help them by exorcizing a devil from their well. "I pripadoša k rabu Božiju, glagoljušče . . . 'Zelo d'javol pakosti deet' nam. Imjaxu ubo staryj istočnik, izide žena počerpsti vody i nečistyj dux vverže ju vo istočnik, i umre. I bedno est' vsem nam i skotom našim, vzmuti bo sja voda ot togo časa i byst' kalna, i strax ny oderžit'. I niktože ne pristupaet ko istočniku

tomu, i umiraem s skotom svoim.'" (Leonid, Žitie, p. 37). Nicholas came, blessed the well and expelled the demon. I believe that the reason for linking these two miracles in one composition was the closeness of the stories in the Vita and the similarity of the subject -- exorcism of devils. Through the addition of one detail (the well) to the old compositional scheme, the artists were able to illustrate not one, but two miracles in one scene. Characteristically, in the inscriptions they emphasized either the Plakoma miracle (1, 3, 6, etc.) or the well miracle (17, 66).

Equally hard to explain is the presence in some Russian icons of the figure of the man with the axe.<sup>21</sup> One possibility is that the figure refers to that fragment of the text in which the villagers tell Nicholas about the man who tried to cut down the tree and was killed by the devil. In that case the scene would show two events distant in time. However, another hypothesis may be put forth. Perhaps the decline of the contraposto, mentioned by Sevchenko, ultimately led to the introduction of the helper of Nicholas into the standard composition. The man would carry the physical effort, while the saint would be an observer, giving his blessings to the holy endeavor.

After the emergence of this representation the painters had three compositional variants of the Plakoma miracle to

choose from, depending on their individual tastes and preferences. As can be seen, these three variants developed simultaneously and remained known through the centuries.

The Russian compositions in which the villagers are present are probably based on similar Byzantine compositions (see Ševčenko, pp. 273-5: frescoes at Megara and Bojana). The number of the observers varies from one, on the icon from Ozerevo (6) (ill. 40), to a large crowd on icons Nos. 45 and 82. Two villagers are depicted on the Ljuboni icon (3) (ill. 41), two or three on the icon from the Repnikov collection (16) (ill. 42), and three on the icon from the National Gallery in Oslo (33). On icon No. III, the observer is a cleric (deacon) with a Gospel book (ill. 43).

Only in a few instances the composition is reversed, showing Nicholas at the right, not left (32, 82, III). The reversal of the composition, however, never reflects the restriction of the space at the artists' disposal, as has been the case with some Byzantine works (see Ševčenko, p. 279), but rather is the painters' fancy.

Several more interesting details of the Russian compositions should be mentioned. On icon No. 52 Nicholas holds a sword instead of an axe (maybe under the influence of the Praxis de stratelatis scenes). In many icons Nicholas, or the man who cuts the tree, swings his axe at the well, not

at the tree which is shown in the background (17, 21, 28, 29, 31, 35, 40, 42, 45, 50, etc.) (ill. 44). On icons Nos. 46 and 82 there is no tree at all. In some icons the tree grows out from the well (ill. 45-7). The devils may be depicted escaping from the tree, from the well, or from both at the same time. Their number ranges from one to five or six. On several icons I could not distinguish any devils. The devils are usually schematically represented as black winged sprites with arms, legs and short tails.

The scene almost always shows the icon hillocks in the background. Only on a few icons (7, 8, 16, 22, and 23) are there no hillocks behind the saint and the tree. The last of those icons, from Radruž, gives an exceptionally interesting representation of the Plakoma miracle. Nicholas stands at the left, in front of a small building. In the middle is a well, resembling a box, and behind it a tree with a devil running away from its branches. At the right is a man holding an axe not on the side, as in the majority of the compositions, but in front of him (compare with No. 76). This representation is not only unique because it is the only one to show a building behind the saint, and a rare pose of the man with the axe, but mainly because it is the only Carpathian icon known to me which includes the scene of the felling of the cypress. The other icons from that region, apparently due to the limited number of scenes they

contain, do not depict the miracle. A similar elimination can be seen in icons of Nicholas Velikoreckij and Babaevskij.

8. Nicholas Charms a Dragon.

Inscription illegible.

The representation of this deed of St. Nicholas appears only on the icon from the Ugrešskij Monastery (12). At the left, in front of a tall building, we see a figure of an observer. In the middle is St. Nicholas with his hand extended in blessing, and at the right, on the ground, a dragon with wings and a snake-like body.

Among the texts devoted to the saint only redaction B of the Synaxarion includes a fragment in which the dragon is mentioned: "Zmija umertvi, ugnezdivšasja pod nekym' selom, pakosti dejušča . . ." (VMČD6, p. 2). In Chapter II it was indicated that this fragment was probably based on the Vita Nicolai Sionitae and the miracle of expelling a devil from the well, but under the influence of folklore the devil was changed into a dragon. This hypothesis should be accepted, especially when one compares the fragment from the Synaxarion with the following fragment from the Vita: "zelo d'javol pakosti deet' nam" (Leonid, Žitie, p. 37). The author of the icon used the text of the Synaxarion, thus enriching the cycle with an unique representation.

The iconography of this scene may be based on icons depicting St. George and the Dragon or St. Theodore and the Dragon,<sup>22</sup> although in our scene Nicholas is not riding a horse, nor is he actively engaged in a combat with the creature.

9. Nicholas Draws Water from the Mountain.<sup>23</sup>

Inscription illegible.

This unusual representation also appears on the icon from the Ugresskij Monastery (12). It precedes the scene of the charming of the dragon, and apparently also illustrates the text of redaction B of the Synaxarion. In this text we read that Nicholas "vodu ot zemlja molitvoju vozvede . . ." (VMCD6, p. 2). This short fragment is doubtlessly based on the story from the Vita Nicolai Sionitae, which describes how Nicholas found water hidden in the mountain called Caesar: "I potom glagolaša rabu Božiju klirici: 'Gospodi, est' u nas v gore Kesarii voda utaena . . .'" Nicholas prays to God for a revelation and goes to the mountain. There, at the place, "vzem motyku, otkopa malo, i dast' motyku edinomu ot klirik . . . I kopaše polutora lokti vglub', i v tj čas vskype voda . . ." (Leonid, Žitie, pp. 39-40).

The scene shows on the right side a monk, dressed in a brown cassock, standing in front of a church. At the left is a mountain with a river flowing down a slope. The figure

of the monk may be identified as Nicholas, praying to God, and the river at the left as the "hidden treasure of water" (skrovenoe skrovišče vody -- Leonid, Žitie, p. 40).

The analysis of the last two scenes allows one to assume that they were based on the text of the Synaxarion, but the painter also knew the Vita Nicolai Sionitae which supplied him with additional details (the mountain, the monk praying to God) for the composition.<sup>24</sup>

The iconography of the unique scene most probably comes from the representation of the Miracle of Archangel Michael at Chone. By changing the course of the river, the Archangel saved the pious monk Archippus when the devil wanted to sweep away his hut. The icons usually show the hut at the right, with Archippus in front of it. In the middle is the river, and at the left the Archangel. It would be sufficient to remove the Archangel and to change slightly the shape of the river to achieve the compositional formula which was employed in the Ugrešskij Monastery icon.<sup>25</sup>

#### 10. Nicholas Celebrates Mass.

Inscriptions: Služba svjatago Nikolaj (3);  
Svjatj Nikolaj služše Božestvennuju  
liturgiju.<sup>26</sup>

In hagiographical icons of St. Nicholas the representation of the saint celebrating mass was very rare. It appeared in only two Byzantine icons from Sinai: in a 12th-



13th century work and its 15th-century copy. In Russian icon painting only the icon from Ljuboni (3) adheres to this old compositional scheme. At the right there is an altar with a chalice and a Gospel book on it. Above the altar a ciborium supported by four columns can be seen. At the left Nicholas, in his bishop's robes, stands in front of the altar, holding a scroll. Behind the saint we see a deacon (ill. 48).

The iconographical formula used in this scene may go back to the scenes of the consecration of Nicholas, in which an altar, a ciborium, and a deacon are depicted. Much more difficult to find are the textual sources of this representation. Since no text devoted to the saint mentions the event, one can speculate that its first illustrator had reasoned that Nicholas, like all other bishops, must have celebrated mass and this celebration should be depicted for the greater glory of the saint.

The presence of the scene on an icon from the Novgorod region, and the closeness of this icon to the Byzantine work from Sinai, may serve as an interesting example of the cultural relations between Russia and Byzantium in the 13th-14th century.

In the 16th century the composition of this scene in Russian icons notably changed. In the new version of the composition (icon No. 40) Nicholas, with a Gospel book in

his hands, stands near the altar, while the deacon and the ciborium are eliminated and the background of the scene is occupied by a church. Before this new rendition of the event can be discussed, we have to analyze the following scene:

11. Nicholas Builds the Church of St. Simeon.

Inscriptions: Nikola sozda xram svjatago Simeona  
(38, 63).

Surprisingly, the composition of this scene is exactly the same as the composition of the second variant of the scene presenting the celebration of mass by Nicholas. Only the inscriptions on both representations allow one to determine which subject is actually illustrated. It is worth noting that these representations appeared at the same time in the 16th century (38, 40, 49, 63, 64, 73<sup>27</sup>).

It was mentioned before that there is no text which describes the celebration of mass by the saint. The search for the literary sources of the scene of the building of the church reveals a fragment of the Vita Nicolai Sionitae in which construction activities are described. According to the Old Russian text: "Videv ze prepodobnyj Nikola podvig i tscanie detisca i molenie, posla k prepodobnomu i blazennomu arxiepiskopu nasemu Nikole naznamenati v Fareii molitvennyj xram. Obescav ze prezderecennyj, vdasja, naznamenat' na tom meste molitvennyj xram, egoze xoscet naresci prepodobnyj arximandrit Nikola.

Prišed na mesto, nareče v sozdanie slavnyj svjatyj Sion, i naznamena prežde oltar'." (VMČD6, p. 12). A careful reader will notice that this fragment tells about the building of the church of the Holy Sion, not St. Simeon, and that it is not St. Nicholas (at that time just a boy -- detišče) who blesses the altar and builds the church, but some archbishop Nicholas. The multitude of Nicholases in the Vita Nicolai Sionitae, and "an indiscriminate use of the third person pronoun (or adjective)"<sup>28</sup> in Greek, and subsequently in Russian, texts of the vita, confused many scholars.<sup>29</sup> It is obvious that the medieval reader of the Vita had exactly the same difficulty in distinguishing the saint who erected the church. More difficult to explain is the way in which the church of the Holy Sion became the church of St. Simeon. I believe that originally there existed an icon with an inscription which read "Nikola sozda xram svjatago Siona." When this icon was later copied, the copyist thought that the word "Siona" was an abbreviation of the name "Simeona", and he added two missing letters. Of course he did not link this representation to the appropriate fragment of the Vita Nicolai Sionitae, but mechanically reproduced the scene. It is significant that the name Simeon (Simon, Semen, Semion) was much more familiar for the Russians than the name Sion; hence the change seems quite natural.

Since a mass was part of every founding and consecrating of a church, the scenes of Nicholas celebrating mass and building the church of St. Simeon in the 16th century must have been considered illustrations of the same event, hence the similarity of the composition. Characteristically, the scene(s) appeared most often on icons of Nicholas Velikoreckij and Babaevskij (ill. 49), possibly as an allusion to the fact that on the spots where these icons had been found churches in honor of St. Nicholas were built, or on icons with unusually extensive selection of the border scenes, like icon No. 40.

The iconography of this representation derives most probably from the compositional formulae used in the scenes of Nicholas' consecration, especially from the 15th and 16th-century variants which often depict a church in the background.

## 12. Sea Miracles.

Inscriptions: Svjatyj Nikola ide v korabli postavlen (1, 10);  
 Svjatyj Nikola izbavlja / . . . / korab / . . . / na more ot p / . . . / (3);  
 Svjatyj Nikola izba / . . . / na more (6);  
 Svjatyj Nikola izbavi korabl' ot potopa (8, 17, 35);  
 Svjatyj Nikola izbavljae / . . . / i korab o potopa (15);  
 Svjatyj Nikola izbavi korabl' (21);  
 Svjatyj Nikola izbavi korabl' na more ot potopa (34);

Svjatyj Nikola izbavi korabl' ot  
 potopenija (51);  
 Svjatyj Nikola izbavi korabl' so dna  
 morja (62).

Among the stories describing St. Nicholas' protection of sailors and sea-travelers two, the so-called Jerusalem Journey and Praxis de nautis, were most often illustrated.<sup>30</sup>

The Jerusalem Journey, a story which narrated the saint's travel to the Holy Land, appeared first in the Vita Nicolai Sionitae and later was slightly reworked and incorporated into the Vita per Metaphrasten.

According to both texts the storm which caught the ship at sea was a result of the devil's plotting. "Se az videx dijavola obiduščago korabl' i xotjaščago blazniti ot pravago puti. Tako bo pride k korablju imea nož' obojudu ostr, jako obrezati vsja uža rabotajuščaja korablju i vvesti ny v glubiny utr', da pogibnem . . ." (Vita Nicolai Sionitae: Leonid, Žitie, p. 43. Vita per Metaprasten is much more concise: "Samogo bo, reče, videx lukavago, vlezša v korabl', i s čeloveky v glubine pogruziti.": VMČD6, p. 139).

Redaction B of the Synaxarion gives an even more expressive description: "Idyj že v Ierusalim, i diavol xotja sotvoriti pakost', vzdviže burju v mori i napolni korabl' vody, i uže xotjaše razdrati vetrilo, svjatyj že Nikola molitvoju more ukroti i diavola otgna, i korabl' sux stvori." (VMČD6, p. 2).

Ševčenko noted that the "crucial element" which enables one to determine that the illustrated event is the Jerusalem Journey, not Praxis de nautis, is the presence of devils in the composition (p. 290). When the devils are missing, the scene may as well represent the Praxis, however, the Jerusalem Journey scene is much more popular in Byzantine painting (p. 300).

In Russian icons these sea miracles are very common, but the scholar has the same difficulties in identifying them as he does in Byzantine works. There are two more important factors helpful in determining which event is represented, not mentioned by Sevcenko. The first is the placement of the scene on the icon. When it is positioned in the beginning of the cycle, immediately after the scenes of consecrations (in some instances it is then entitled "Nikola ide v korabli postavlen"), it belongs to early miracles and must represent the Jerusalem Journey.<sup>31</sup> When it is placed at the end or in the middle of the cycle, it probably represents Praxis de nautis. The second factor, closely related to the first, is the presence in some icons of two or more scenes depicting sea miracles. In those cases (29, 80, 82) the earliest one should be identified as the Jerusalem Journey.

A close investigation of the sea miracle scenes led Ševčenko to the following observations: their iconography

depends on the representation of Christ stilling the waves on Lake Tiberias (p. 292); the shape of the vessel carrying the saint and the mariners has "little to do with actual development in seacraft" and depends rather on "how precisely the artist has rendered one basic ship form" (pp. 292-293); the ship is seldom shown in any visible danger (p. 294); Nicholas is "usually shown sitting in the stern, facing the group of sailors" (p. 296); and finally, "in the early works the scene takes place on the open sea with no trace of land", but in the 14th century a rocky shoreline is added on three or even four sides of the composition (p. 297).

On researched Russian icons the scenes with devils comprised only about one fourth of all sea miracle scenes, and appeared more often in the early works (1?, 2, 3, 6, 8, 11, 13, 15, etc.). Especially amusing is the representation on icon No. 15, where the devils hang on the yard of the sail with their heads down, like three bats (ill. 50). Such a large number of devils appears also on icons Nos. 2 and 6, while in other icons there are only one or two winged sprites. Devils may appear not only in the rigging of the ship, but under it (27, 68, 75).

The shape of the sail varies from triangular, with a yard at the top (3, 6, 11, 28, 31, 42) or the bottom (18, 9), and rectangular (8, 17, 22, 35, 40, 41, 56), to an x-

shaped (25, 32) or conical (60). Only a few scenes present more than one sail (25, 29 -- Praxis de nautis, 32, 50), while some do not show the sail at all (2, 13, 20, 21, 27, 29 -- Jerusalem Journey, 61, 65, 73).

Oars are rarely depicted. When they appear they cannot be considered steering oars, used for directing the ship, but rather resemble oars used in small rowboats. Only on icon No. 29 in both scenes, attached to the stern of the ship, one can see an object which possibly represents a large steering oar (ill. 51). On other icons it is either Nicholas who holds one (49, 56, 73) or two oars (32), or a sailor (8). Icon No. 14 shows two sailors and each of them has a short black oar.

The shape of the ship usually resembles a rowboat, and it is possible that in Russia rowboats were used as models for this representation. Only on later icons (80, 82) the ship is a real sea-sailing vessel. Occasionally the stern of the ship is raised (17, 25, 29, 33, 35, 40, 65), and in two instances (2, 11) the bow is decorated with a carving of a horse's head (ill. 52).<sup>32</sup>

In the earliest icons the saint is most often depicted in the middle of the ship (1, 2, 3, 6, 8, 11, 13, 14, 23). From the 15th century on he may sit either in the stern (17, 18, 19, 25, 27, 29, 35 etc.) or in the bow (20, 21, 26, 28, 31, 33, 42 etc.) and only rarely in the middle (61). On



icon No. 15 Nicholas stands outside the ship, relatively large in comparison with the ship and the sailors.<sup>33</sup>

Similar to Byzantine works, in Russian icons the ship does not appear to be in immediate danger. The painters indicate the storm by showing the waves in the form of white coils. The sailors rarely show any fear; sometimes they crouch inside the ship (20, 49, 73), but they do not attend to the ropes or try to avert the danger by praying for deliverance. On icon No. 6 only the broken mast and the devils tampering with the ropes indicate the peril (ill. 53).

Finally, the early icons show the scenes as taking place either on the open sea (1, 3, 6, 11, 14, 15) or framed by a shoreline on two sides (2, 13). Later, the shoreline encircles the whole composition, changing the sea into a lake. Especially expressive are such representations on icons Nos. 19, 23, 26, 28, 29, 31, 35, 40, 42, 51, 60, 75, and IV (ill. 54). In the 16th century open sea scenes appear again (32, 41, 55, 56, 61).

In conclusion, it should be said that Russian icons, compared with Byzantine works, present simplified compositions depicting sea miracles. The figures of the sailors, for instance, are almost never individualized; they form a cluster of bodies with only two or three faces shown. The details of the ship's rigging are also simplified or omitted.

Only two late icons (80, 82) give numerous and detailed compositions devoted to sea miracles. On the icon painted by Simon Spiridonov Xolmogorec (80), there are three sea-miracle scenes. The first one, preceding the scene of consecration of Nicholas as a bishop, is undoubtedly the Jerusalem Journey. The saint sits in the stern of a large ship, with three sails and a flag above the stern. The second scene shows in the right upper corner a ship with folded sails. Nicholas bends over a man who is sleeping on the deck of the ship. In the foreground, slightly to the right, the ship is depicted again, this time with a large sail. The ship is moving to the left, as the positions of the sail and two or three flags indicate. There are many sailors aboard; two of them point with their hands towards a city which is at the far left. In the middle of the left side the ship is shown for the third time, after its arrival in the city's port. A group of citizens meets the sailors in the harbor. A close analysis of this scene reveals that Xolmogorec depicted here neither the Jerusalem Journey, as some scholars believed,<sup>34</sup> nor Praxis de nautis. The scene represents another sea miracle of Nicholas, the so-called grainship miracle, or Thauma de navibus frumentariis in mari. According to the text of the story, when Myra once suffered from great famine, Nicholas appeared in a dream to the captain of a ship carrying grain, gave the captain three

gold pieces, and asked him to deliver the grain at Myra. When the captain awoke and found the gold, he went to Myra and sold all his grain with a large profit (Metaphrastes; see VMCD6, p. 147). Thus the top fragment of the scene shows the appearance of the saint to the captain, the foreground depicts the sailing to Myra, and the left side presents the arrival of the ship with its precious cargo in the famine-stricken city. This composition is unique in Russian painting. Apparently the miracle began to be represented only in the 17th century, but no rendering achieved the complexity and detailing of Simon's picture.

The third scene on Xolmogorec's icon depicts the Praxis de nautis. Nicholas sits in the stern of a large one-sail ship. There are several sailors showing their fear by expressive gestures of their raised hands (ill. 55). The background of this scene, as well as of most of the other scenes on this icon, consists of elaborate architectural forms and almost realistically rendered landscapes. These architectural details, baroque decorativeness and "realistic" landscapes are a trademark of Simon Xolmogorec and of the 17th-century Jaroslavian icon painting.

Simon depicted in his icon several more sea miracles. Most of them can be identified and they will be discussed later, under appropriate headings. The last two representations, however, are difficult to identify. I treat one of them as an illustration of the Thauma de tribus Christianis

(see below), while the second may depict either the Thauma de Artemide (otherwise unknown in Russian icon painting) or some other rarely shown miracle. I cannot see all the necessary details to make any other hypothesis in regard to this scene.

Almost as difficult to identify are several sea miracle scenes on the icon from Palex (82). The first two do not present problems in identification, since they depict the Jerusalem Journey. In the first scene Nicholas sits in the stern of a large ship with three sails, and faces a group of sailors who sit in the bow, praying to the saint. In the second, the composition is reversed, the ship sails in the opposite direction, with Nicholas still in the stern. However, there are some interesting new details. On the background of the top sail we can see a small figure holding to the mast. The same figure, dressed in a pink tunic, is represented again on the deck of the ship, kneeling in front of the saint. The sailors, who were seated in the first scene, now are standing and discuss something with great animation. An explanation of this representation is found in the text narrating the events which took place during the saint's Jerusalem Journey after the storm: "Ot burja že vetrenyja razgvozdisja krest ot dreva, na nemže jadro visit Na utrija že, videv unoša kresta gore visjašča na dreve, vozlez na drevo prigvozditi kresta, i prigvozdi i. Vzrevnovav že dijavol, sverže unošju dolu, i pade na odr

. . . i ležaše otrok jako mertv bez glasa . . . Blažennyj že rab Božij Nikola priblizisja k sveržennomu mertvecju i molisja o nem . . . i byst' mertvyj živ." (Leonid, Žitie, pp. 44-5, cf.: Metaphrastes, VMČD6, pp. 139-40). Thus, the small figure shown on the mast, and later kneeling in front of the saint, is Ammonios, a young boy who tried to repair the cross damaged by the storm, and fell down. A similar scene saw Myslivec (see pp. 78-9) on the icon from the Pečerskij monastery near Pskov.

The third scene on the Palex icon depicts the grainship miracle. At the right, at sea, there is a ship with four large and two small sails. The ship has no crew, but a close scrutiny allows one to notice that it is filled with grain. At the left, ashore, the citizens of Myra await the arrival of the ship and express their gratitude for their deliverance from the famine (ill. 56). It is easy to see how simple this scene is in comparison with the representation on icon No. 80.

The fourth scene probably shows the Praxis de nautis. The composition is quite simple: on the sea a large ship with one large and one small sail, and with raised bow carries Nicholas (in the stern) and a group of sailors. Since there are no details which would indicate otherwise, on the basis of the position of the scene in the cycle one may identify it as the Praxis de nautis.

The last two scenes present the same difficulty in finding their subjects as the last two scenes on icon No. 80 did. The first one, similarly, may be considered a representation of Thauma de tribus Christianis (see the discussion of the miracle below). The second one, however, cannot be identified.

### 13. Church Doors Open Before Nicholas.

Inscriptions illegible.

This miracle of the saint is illustrated on only two icons (45, 82).

On the icon from Boroviči (45) the scene shows at the left a church erected on the top of a rocky mountain, and Nicholas kneeling near the door of the church. At the right side a larger church is depicted, and the saint lies prostrated in front of its doors. According to the Vita Nicolai Sionitae, when Nicholas went to Jerusalem, he "pomolisja na svjatej Golgofe i poklonisja. I togda pomolisja, doide ideže ležaše čestnoe i vzljublnoe drevo kresta, i voleju Božieju otverzošasja dveri cerkvi, i prijaša raba Božija Nikolu . . ." (Leonid, Žitie, p. 48). Paraphrasing this fragment, Metaphrastes says: "Ottudu ubo otšed, k Xristovu grobu i k čestnej Golgofe abie priide . . . I tako k Božestvenomu drevu krestnomu noščiju priide, i sami ubo tomu cerkovnyja otvr'zošasja dveri . . ." (VMČD6, p. 140). Thus,

our scene apparently shows at the left Nicholas praying at the Golgotha mountain, and at the right the saint bowing in awe in front of the opened doors of the church of the Holy Cross.<sup>35</sup>

On the Palex icon (82) the scene is placed after the scene of saving Ammonios and before the scene of consecration of Nicholas as a bishop. In the left upper corner, Nicholas, dressed in a brown cassock of a monk and a black cowl, prays in front of the church doors. In the foreground and at the right we see the saint again, exorcizing a group of five people. Some of the people are possessed: their strange gestures indicate that they are not observers, but people in need of Nicholas' help.

This representation probably connects the miracle of the door with the scene of healings. According to Metaphrastes, these healings were performed by the saint after his sea voyage, on the way to Jerusalem: "I jakože pristaša na zemli, i mnogaja Gospod' s Nikoloju stvori iscelenia: slepiiii ubo vskore dragyj svet videša, i ini, zle stražuščei, ot održaščix ja zl razrešaxusja . . ." (VMCD6, p. 140).

The iconographical sources of these two scenes are unclear. The sick and the possessed come from scenes of healing demoniacs, but the figure of Nicholas praying in front of a church is a skillful coinage of two common motifs: a kneeling man and a church.

14. The Miracle with a Stone.

Inscription illegible. ( . . . / Nikoly / . . . /  
bratiju / . . . / kameni / . . . / )

In the Vita Nicolai Sionitae we read that when Nicholas went to Palestine, he asked Arthemas, one of the brothers in the monastery, to halt the construction activities at the site. Arthemas did not listen to the saint, and after the latter left, he gathered 75 workers and tried to remove a large stone which obstructed the progress of the building process. "I tružašesja ves' den' o edinom kameni, i ne mogoša oprovaliti ego, da sbudetsja slovo raba Božija Nikoly, jako že reče emu, čemu bez nego ne oproveržesja kamen' ni edin. I po prošestvii (sic) raba Božija Nikoly ot svjatyx mest, i prizva 12 muza, i šed oprovali kamen' . . . " (Leonid, Žitie, p. 51).

What enables us to attribute one of the scenes on the icon from Boroviči (45) as the illustration of this miracle of St. Nicholas are the remnants of the inscription, especially the word "kameni". The composition of the scene is symmetrical: at the left we see Arthemas<sup>36</sup> who directs the work of a large group of diggers with shovels and pick-axes. At the right it is Nicholas who directs the work, but the group of diggers is much smaller and the work



done seems more impressive. Instead of depicting a stone, the artist preferred to show the amount of digging accomplished by each group (ill. 57).

The source of the iconography of the diggers may be sought in the representations of the combat of two armies on miniatures and icons (notice the similarity in the impression given by the spikes, spears and pickaxes pointing upwards and in treatment of the group as a cluster of bodies with only front row of heads depicted with some detail and the rest indicated as simple semispheres),<sup>37</sup> but it was adapted specifically for the illustration of this miracle of Nicholas.

15. Nicholas Multiplies Bread and Wine.

Inscriptions: Svjatyj Nikola kormite bratiju (6).

The above inscription comes from the icon from Ozerovo and is placed in a scene illustrating an event described in the Vita Nicolai Sionitae under a title "O vine, ego že blagoslovi i umnoži." (Leonid, Žitie, pp. 40-1). According to the text, one day the clerics felt happy and wanted to celebrate. They requested wine from the saint, but, to their disappointment, Nicholas allocated just a little cup of wine for the occasion. When the clerics complained, the saint not only miraculously filled three pitchers with the amount allocated, but also made sure that

everyone had as much wine as needed. The clerics wondered at the miracle and decided never to doubt the saint's powers again.

The icon presents three clerics sitting behind a table on which there are several plates and three tall pitchers. Nicholas stands at the right and holds a leather skin bottle with wine (ill. 58).

On the icon from Boroviči (45) the painter depicted another miracle of multiplication, also related in the Vita Nicolai Sionitae ("O umnoženii xlebnyx ukruv"). Once, says the vita, more than 80 workers were employed at the monastery. When the time came to feed them, it was discovered that there was only one loaf of bread. Then Nicholas took the bread and distributed it to all the workers. The saint "vzem blagoslovi, i prelom', i položi pred narodom, i vsem nasytivšimsja, i izbytsja ot edinago xleba ukruvov 3 bljuda." (Leonid, Žitie, p. 56).<sup>38</sup>

The scene shows at the left a long table with a large number of men sitting along it on benches. The men are dressed in simple tunics, not in monk's cassocks, which proves that they are the workers mentioned in the text. Most of the men are eating (note the characteristic position of their hands near their mouths) while the figure at the right receives food from Nicholas who sits on a throne in front of the monastery building (ill. 59).

For the iconography of these scenes one should look at the representations of the Marriage at Cana and the Last Supper. The scene on icon No. 6 may be based on the illustrations of the Thauma de Basilio (to be discussed later).

16. Nicholas has a Vision of the Church of the Virgin.

Inscription illegible.

Another rarely illustrated scene can be found on the icon from the Pečerskij Monastery (V). It is based on the text from the Vita Nicolai Sionitae, according to which Nicholas had a vision of the Virgin showing him the future church he was to build for her: "I po postavlenii ego po trex letex, javisja emu Mati Boga našego Iisusa Xrista, kažjušči emu mesto i meru koliku sotvoriti emu cerkov' svjatyja Bogorodica." (Leonid, Žitie, p. 68).

The composition employs the formula of a vision or a dream: at the right Nicholas lies on bed, while the Virgin stands above him behind the bed and points toward a building at the left. This building should be identified as the future church which the saint will erect in the Virgin's honor.

17. Nicholas Gives a Child to a Childless Couple.

Inscription illegible.

In the Vita Nicolai Sionitae there are two short stories which describe in almost exactly the same way how Nicholas was visited by a childless couple, how he blessed them and predicted the birth of their son, and how a year later he baptized the child. These miracles are entitled "Jako molitvoju neplođnym plod darova" and "O Źene neplođnej i neraŹajuščeŹ let 30, ej Źe molitvoju plod darova, syna, ego Źe kresti" (Leonid, Źitie, pp. 52 and 72-3).

The representation of one of these miracles (the only scene of this kind in Russian icon painting) appears on icon No. 45. The scene is divided into two sections. In the first, at the left, Nicholas stands in his monk's robes in front of the couple and blesses them. In the second section, at the right, the saint wears his bishop's vestments. He receives the child from the father and is about to baptize it in a baptistery which separates him from the father. Two deacons stand behind Nicholas. In the background are buildings: in the first part of the scene a building which represents the monastery complex, and in the second a large church and a bellfry with two bells.

This representation must have been based on the scenes depicting the baptism of St. Nicholas.

18. The Appearance of Archangel Michael to Nicholas.

Inscriptions illegible.

The literary source of this scene is a fragment from the Vita Nicolai Sionitae which narrates how the Archangel appeared to Nicholas with three sickles and a warning that "prispe vremja Žatve po povelenu Gospoda Boga, i posla mja k tobe dati oružie Žatve." (Leonid, Žitie, p. 57). When the saint did not understand the vision and did not know who appeared to him, the Archangel came back "vo obraze voina" and explained that he is Michael, Nicholas' eternal servant, and that in forty days there would be a terrible plague in Myra and Lycia.

The representation of this event on the icon from Boroviči (45) shows both appearances of Michael to Nicholas in one scene. On the right side of the picture the saint rests on his bed, and the winged Archangel towers behind the bed on his white horse. On the left side of the composition Nicholas, dressed in a cassock and a cowl, listens to the Archangel who stands in front of him, dressed as a soldier.

On the icon from Meletovo (22) the scene of the appearance is rendered in a different, simpler way. At the left Nicholas, as a bishop, with his Gospel book, stands facing the Archangel, who also stands in a hieratic pose.

When one takes under consideration the position of this scene in the icon (it precedes the scene of Nicholas' death), one may assume that it was based on a fragment from the

Periodoi Nikolaou which told about the appearance of angels (Michael among them) to Nicholas just before his death: "I kak pervyj Mixail arxangel pokaza emu pečat' strašnago i presvjatago Božestva, uvidev že svjatyj Nikolae pečat' Božestva, i načal molitisja . . . "39

The iconographical sources of both representations are complex. The icon from Boroviči employs the vision-dream formula as a basis of the composition and enriches it by the addition of the Archangel on horseback. Similar portrayals of Michael can be seen on many Russian icons<sup>40</sup> and probably originated quite early. The icon from Meletovo uses another type of Michael's portrait, a standing figure, dressed as a warrior. This type of representation is even more common and older.<sup>41</sup> Finally, the positions of the remaining figures on both icons are traditional and may derive from so many sources (mainly from other scenes depicting the miracles of St. Nicholas) that the exact one cannot be pointed out.

#### 19. Nicholas Heals Demoniacs.

Inscriptions: Svjatyj Nikola izba / . . . / nečista  
/ . . . / (7);  
Svjatyj Nikola izbavi besnago (17);  
Svjatyj Nikola otgna besa ot čeloveka  
(34);  
Svjatyj Nikola izbavi muža besem  
mučima (39);  
Svjatyj Nikola izbavi besna (?) (50);  
Svjatyj Nikola isceli besnago (51).

The scenes of expelling devils from demoniacs are quite common in Russian icons. Their iconography is based on the representations of Christ healing the sick and exorcising the possessed. A constant element of all the scenes is the figure of Nicholas, depicted in a characteristic pose, with the Gospel in his left hand and with the right hand raised in blessing. The position of the saint varies: he may be shown at the left or the right side of the composition. Usually he heals one demoniac (ill. 60), but in a few instances more than one figure is being exorcized (2, 11, 82). The demoniac may be accompanied by other figures, the people who bring him to the saint (12, 17, 26, 28, etc.). Very often a successful exorcism is indicated by a black devil flying away from the mouth of the sick man.

Two distinctive variants of the composition appear in Russian icons. Icons which adhere to these variants differ only in details, otherwise remaining faithful to some common source.

The first variant can be seen on icons Nos. 28, 31, 42, 50 and 55. The event takes place on the background of a hilly landscape. Nicholas stands at the right, holding his Gospel and blessing. In front of the saint, at the left, a demoniac dressed only in a white loincloth and with his hand raised in an expressive gesture (the gesture may indicate his mental disorder) is being held from behind by a man who

wears a tunic and a cape. There are no devils escaping from the sick man's mouth. The same composition, but with buildings and walls instead of the landscape in the background, appears on icons Nos. 43 and 51.

The second variant is represented on icons Nos. 17, 27, 34, 54, 57, 60, 65 and 75. Nicholas, in his characteristic pose, stands at the left, blessing a figure which lies on a bed. A devil escapes from the patient. The demoniac is dressed in a loincloth, and his feet and hands are frequently tied up. The most interesting changes in this variant occur when the painters decide to add more figures to the scene. On icon No. 17 immediately behind the resting demoniac, almost as if lying on the bed, half figures of a man and a woman are depicted. They emerge from an opening in a large building in the background. This building, resembling a basilica, also reappears in most of the compositions of this variant (27, 54, 57, 65), together with another tall building or a column behind the saint. On icon No. 54 an opening in the large building accomodates only a bust of a man. On icon No. 57 the man stands outside, near the bed, and on icon No. 65 half outside, half inside the building, behind the bed. The figure of the man also appears in one icon from this variant (75) which shows in the background some different architectural forms: a large building with a shed roof (the man is seen through a window in the build-



ing's wall) occupies more than a half of the background, and at the far left is a tall and narrow tower. The architectural background is also different on icon No. 60 (two towers linked by a wall). Icon No. 78 shows no architecture at all.

Besides these two variants of the demoniac scene, united by common and reappearing elements, there are several representations which can be grouped together on the basis of the number of demoniacs or accompanying figures depicted. Particularly interesting are icons Nos. 2 and 11 which show three demoniacs. On the first icon, several men, dressed in tunics, stand together in a cluster, and only their heads indicate that there are three of them (ill. 61). In the second work, one man prostrates himself on the ground in front of the saint, and the other two stand behind with their hands in vivid gestures. The men are half-naked. In both scenes the devils run away from the exorcized people. On icon No. 2 the scene takes place in an architectural setting, and on icon No. 11 the background consists of characteristic hillocks.

In only two instances the exorcized person is a woman. On icon No. 13 the identification is made on the basis of the headdress of the damaged figure, while on icon No. 23 we can clearly see the woman, sitting on a stool in front of a building with a gabled roof, holding her right hand to her

cheek. Nicholas approaches from the left. Another architectural structure can be observed behind the saint.

Icon No. 41 also shows an unusual rendering of the scene. At the left is Nicholas, with his hand raised in blessing. At the right there is a bed, but the demoniac has just risen, healed, and faces the saint. A large devil escapes from the bedding. In the background are decorative architectural forms.

On icon No. 26 we see two men bringing a demoniac to the saint. They stand behind the sick man and hold him by his arms. One accompanying figure appears on icons Nos. 12, 40 (it may be another demoniac), and No. I (the demoniac is shown in long white pants).

The icon from Palex (82), besides the scene of the miraculous opening of the church doors, in which the healing of many demoniacs was represented, shows another scene in which Nicholas heals one man. The saint is at the right, extending his hand towards a man who lies on the ground. The man is dressed in a rich tunic and cape. In the background are characteristic Palex pavilions and dynamic hillocks.

The variations in composition of the scene of healing demoniacs have their roots not in the lack of a strict iconographical formula (Christ's healings), but mainly in the absence of a particular text which would have served as a literary source of representations, and, to a certain extent,

restricted the variations. In the Vita per Metaphrasten only a few healings are mentioned, and in rather general terms, without details. On the contrary, in the Vita Nicolai Sionitae there are at least eleven miracles of healing demoniacs<sup>42</sup> and several stories of healing the sick. Finally, in the Periodoi Nikolaou we find two miracles of healing demoniacs, but also frequent mention of other miracles of healings.<sup>43</sup>

I think it would be an unjustified conjecture to try to argue that the representations which show a demoniac and two figures of a woman and a man behind him (like No. 17) illustrate some miracle in which a mother and a father are present during the exorcism, or that the scenes showing a demoniac and one accompanying figure illustrate a miracle in which the sick person is brought to the saint by a guardian. What we see on the scenes is rather a "collective" image of all these miracles, represented by the painter in his individual rendition. He may choose to follow some example (this leads to the appearance of the variants with the common elements), but he may also be independent and create his own composition, based on other scenes in the cycle, on the illustrations of exorcisms performed by other saints, and on his own ideas how such a miracle could have happened.

20. Nicholas Charms a Devil.

Inscriptions illegible.

Only one Russian icon, from the collection of Pavel Korin (40), includes the illustration of this miracle of St. Nicholas, in two scenes. The story which is depicted can be found in the Periodoi Nikolaou. Nicholas set out from Antioch to Rome, and before leaving prayed to God to grant him a safe trip to the city. "I kak skončal molitvu, i strel ego bes, vsjakim lixom ispolnen, i oči ego kak ogneny, a zuby ego kak zveriny, a vlasy na glave ego kak vel'bluž'i I reče emu sv. Nikolae: 'Ty kto esi, gde ideši?' I reče emu bes: 'Az esm' angel sveta, idu učiti ljudej vo pravdu.' I razgnevavsja sv. Nikolae, i em ego, i porinul pod noze svoi, i nača biti ego I sv. Nikolae, svjazav emu ruce i noze, znameniem kresta naznamenoval zemlju, i razstupisja zemlja na 60 i 5 laktij, i vrinul ego tamo, i opjat' naznamenoval krestom zemlju, i sstupisja zemlja, kak preže byla." (Ključevskij, pp. 455-6).

In the first scene, on the background of two mountains, at the left Nicholas stands with his Gospel book and looks at a strange creature (a devil) which stands at the right. The devil resembles an angel with large wings, but has a characteristic pointed hairy head and is completely black. Iconographically, this figure may derive from the representations of devils in other scenes of the Nicholas cycle, but

more probably from the compositions of the Last Judgement and the Apocalypse, in which the devils are much larger than in the Nicholas scenes.<sup>44</sup>

In the second scene, as far as can be distinguished on the reproduction, Nicholas appears again at the left, slightly bent forward and pointing down or making a sign of a cross over a black crevice in the ground. I cannot see the devil there, but it is quite possible that the crevice itself is in reality the upper part of the devil's body. The gesture of the saint, the similarity of the background, and the placement of this scene immediately after the one showing the meeting of Nicholas with the black demon, allows us to identify the illustration as a continuation of the miracle of charming a devil. Such an identification is confirmed by the presence of a very similar illustration of the miracle in the church of St. Nicholas at Popauți in Rumania (first half of the 16th century). Myslivec published two inscriptions from that church; the first read "Stvorisja diabol' jako angel i javisja svjatomu", and the second "Svjatyj zakloti diavola v zemlja (p. 77). In this connection a question comes to mind, how and in what direction the iconographic formula used for these two scenes was transferred from one country to the other. Unfortunately at this time the question must remain open. However, it is noteworthy that the Periodoi Nikolaou was known in the 16th

century not only in Russia, but in Rumania, and possibly in other Slavic countries as well.

21. Nicholas is Consecrated Deacon, Priest, and Bishop.

Inscriptions: Svjatago Nikolu postav / . . . / om (1);  
 / . . . / Nikolu stavjat' / . . . / akonom', Svjatago Nikolu stavjat' popom', / . . . / Ni / . . . / lus / . . . / lito / . . . / (3);  
 Svjatago / . . . / kolu stavjat' dejakonome, Svatago Nikolu stavjate popome (6);  
 / . . . / stavjat' v d'jakony, / . . . / stavjat' v popy, / . . . / stavjat' v mitropolity (8);  
 Svjatago Nikolu postavlja / . . . / d'kon / . . . /, Svjatago Ni / . . . / post / . . . / ju popom (15);  
 Svjatago Nikolu stavjat' v arxidiakony (?), Svatago Nikolu stavjat' vo arxie-piskopy (17);  
 Svjatago Nikolu postavljat' epispukop (sic) (21);  
 Postavlenie vo d'jakony svjatago Nikoly, Postavlenie svjatago Nikoly vo arxie-poskopy (57).

Following Myslivec (pp. 60-2) and Ševčenko (pp. 234-48), I will describe all three consecration scenes under one heading. Both art historians proved that the iconography of these scenes "should be related not to the Nicholas texts, which provide use with no relevant information, but to the consecration liturgy . . ." (Ševčenko, p. 236). An analysis of the consecration liturgy and of its rendering in Byzantine painting revealed that "the artists had at their disposal a large number of notifs, all of which have their

source in the actual liturgical ceremony. When assembled correctly, these could produce a faithful rendering of the rite of consecration. But the artists were forever juggling the motifs, omitting some here and there, or using elements peculiar to one consecration in the context of another." (Ševčenko, p. 247).

All of these representations (ill. 62-4) have in common a figure of Nicholas bowing (or kneeling) in front of a consecrating bishop. Nicholas is dressed in vestments appropriate for the particular consecration. The composition also includes another participating cleric (usually a deacon), an altar between Nicholas and the bishop, and a ciborium above the group (ciborium and altar indicate that the event took place inside the church, in the sanctuary).

Ševčenko demonstrated that among the Byzantine works those painted in Serbia and Macedonia were much more elaborate and detailed than the works purely Byzantine in origin or dependent on metropolitan art. These details included additional attending clerics (deacons, priests, bishops, cantors), their expressive gestures, the varying position of the officiating bishop (he might have been seated on a throne), the change in the position of Nicholas, the enlargement of the ciborium, etc.

When we compare the Russian representations of the consecrations with the Byzantine ones, we can easily notice

that the former are much simpler and almost never include any interesting or unusual details. The most original are the early compositions and they deserve a short description.

On the icon from Pavlovo (1) Nicholas is shown at the bottom of the picture. A long staircase leads from his feet to two other figures depicted at the top of the composition. One of these figures can be easily identified as a bishop or even a metropolitan, but the second, clad in red, is certainly not an ecclesiastical figure. I believe that this is the Emperor Constantine, and that the scene is a continuation of another representation on this icon, the scene of the First Ecumenical Council. On both scenes the Emperor is depicted in his royal red robes, and with a crown on his head. The staircase is also present in both scenes. If one accepts this hypothesis, then the scene of the consecration illustrates a fragment from the Periodoi Nikolaou in which the saint, after hitting Arius and being punished by the Council, is reinstated as a bishop due to the heavenly intervention of Christ and the Virgin: "I kak toe velikoe Čjudo uvidel car' i vsi svjati otci sbora togo, blagoslovili ego i ne snjali s nego svjatitel'skago sana ego, i sami sja blagoslovili u nego . . . I dlja togo Čjuda predivnago milostiju Gospoda našego Iisusa Xrista i Prečistoj Ego Materi tože on opjat' stal svjatitel'." (Ključevskij, p. 457).



The composition of this scene, as will be shown later, was based on the preceding scene of the First Ecumenical Council.

On the icon from Bol'shie Soli (2) there are two scenes of the consecration of Nicholas, into a deacon and into a priest. In both scenes only three persons participate in the ceremony (a deacon, Nicholas, and a bishop). The deacon is all but squeezed out of the composition by the figure of Nicholas (only the deacon's head is visible behind the saint's back). A very interesting feature of these two scenes is that the painter depicted them on a dark background which was supposed to convey the interior of a church, but this background resembles more a cave than an interior of a building. It is interesting that a very similar rendition can be seen on icons Nos. 11 and 12, there, however, the impression that the interior is a cave has been diminished by the representation of church domes at the top of each scene.

On the icon from Kievec (4), the officiating bishop is shown standing (in the deacon scene) or sitting (in the priest and bishop scenes) on a stepped podium. The number of steps increases in each scene from two to four, and may indicate, as in Byzantine art, a rank of the bishop: four steps (in our icon two) for a bishop, six (three) for an archbishop, and eight (four) for a metropolitan. However, the steps are depicted also in scenes of Schooling, Trans-

lation of the saint's relics, and Appearance of Nicholas to Constantine. It is possible that the painter was fond of this detail (he may have borrowed it from some Byzantine work) and used it whenever possible without realizing its meaning. The sitting bishop is also a rare iconographical formula (it comes sometimes with the stepped podium). In our icons it can be found on icons Nos. 8 (in the deacon and priest scenes), 50 (in the bishop scene), and 82 (in the priest and bishop scenes).

The rank of the attending church officials was apparently not very important (with the sole exception of the bishop who always led the ceremony). On Russian icons one can see not only additional deacons and priests, but also bishops and monks (43, 48, 50). On icon No. 33 in the bishop scene on the right side of the picture, just behind the officiating bishop, the painter depicted several young boys (subdeacons or altar boys) dressed in white tunics. A similar representation of one boy is found on icon No. 55.

Probably the most common distinguishing element of Russian scenes of the consecration of Nicholas is an open scroll which is being held by a deacon and a bishop above the saint's head (cf.: Myslivec, pp. 61-2). The scroll is present in a great majority of the scenes of consecration (ill. 65).

The altar and the ciborium are sometimes omitted, exactly like in Byzantine works, and the bishop who consecrates Nicholas is often depicted with a halo.

On the icon from Boroviči (45) the scene of the consecration of the saint into a bishop (shown in accordance with the standard consecration formula, but with a greater number of participants) is preceded by another, unusual one. This unusual scene, which can be entitled Nicholas has a Vision of the Holy Spirit, shows the event which led to the ordination of Nicholas. At the left Nicholas sleeps in a bed. In the middle of the scene, in the air, we see an altar, and nearby, between the bed and the altar, an angel reaching or pointing to the altar. At the right a group of bishops raises their hands in a gesture of prayer. The event is presented on the background of a church. Josef Myslivec, who had analyzed this scene (pp. 62-3) demonstrated that the representation of Nicholas, the angel, and the altar was based on the text of the Vita Nicolai Sionitae. According to this work, "Nikole Dux Svjatyj javisja vo sne, kaža emu prestol slvnyj, obraz iereesk, velja emu sestj na prestol, kaža emu prestol slavy." (VMČD6, p. 44, cf.: Leonid, Žitie, p. 67). In the Greek text Nicholas had a vision in which the Holy Spirit showed him a bishop's throne and ceremonial vestments. The Russian translator rendered the word "throne" with the word "prestol" which in Old Russian

meant also an altar. Thus the painter depicted in the air an altar, not a throne. According to Myslivec, the right side of the composition, the group of bishops, could have been included into the picture under the influence of the description of the miraculous election of Nicholas by the clerics in Myra, known from the Vita per Metaphrasten (p. 63). However, it is also possible that this group of bishops was added for purely compositional reasons or in order to make the representation more solemn and authoritative.

The Metaphrasten text served as a basis of the representation of the event on the icon from Meletovo (22). On the background of a church only two haloed figures are depicted: at the left an angel, and at the right a cleric. According to Antonova and Mneva, this scene should be entitled the Appearance of an Angel to One of the Priests in Myra with an Order to Elect Nicholas as Bishop.<sup>45</sup> The scene tries to illustrate the following fragment of the Vita:  
 Nekogda bo muževi tomu / stariišine cerkovnomu -- A.B. / Božestveno nekoe prišed videnie, povelevaa emu mnjašesja pri dverex cerkovnyx prišedšu stati; kotoryj ašče, reče, prežde vsex k cerkvi priidet, to est' moj podvizaem Duxom, i priimše togo, episkopom postavite: Nikola imja muževi tomu . . . " (VMCD6, p. 142).

The compositional formula of this representation most probably follows the iconography of the Annunciation, a very

popular subject, depicting at the left the Archangel Gabriel approaching the Virgin sitting or standing at the right.

22. Nicholas with Paul of Rhodos and Theodore of Ashkelon.

Inscription illegible.<sup>46</sup>

The representation of Nicholas, bent forward in a pose of contemplation or prayer, with Paul and Theodore standing behind him at the left, and with the whole composition shown on the background of a three-domed church, can be seen only on one Russian icon, from Meletovo (22).<sup>47</sup>

There are no Old Russian literary sources of this scene. However, in a Latin Vita ss. confessoris Nicolai, written by a Venetian patrician Justiniani (Leonardo Guistiniani, died 1446), we read that Nicholas "duos sibi quasi consiliarios adjungit, Paulum videlicet Rhodium et Theodorum Ascalonitam, viros in omni Graecia celebres." (I quote after Anrich, II, p. 178).<sup>48</sup> Justiniani based his work on Symeon Metaphrastes and some unknown Greek texts ("apud Graecos"). Although these Greek texts could have contained information about Paul of Rhodos and Theodore of Ashkelon, it is more probable that Justiniani used a local Venetian legend which linked Paul and Theodore with St. Nicholas.

According to Soviet scholars, the Meletovo icon dates to the 1460's (Antonova and Mneva, Katalog, I, p. 196). I suggest a slightly later date, the 1470's. It should be

remembered that in 1474 "Ivan III sent a special agent to Venice and repeatedly invited Italian architects and other masters to come to work for him in Moscow."<sup>49</sup> These Italian masters and members of the retinue of Ivan's wife Zoe, who accompanied her to Moscow, could have brought to Russia not only the Venetian legend, but even instructions on how it should be depicted. The legend could have reached Pskov in connection with frequent visits of Pskovian artists in the capital where they aided in the artistic development of the Kremlin.

The iconographic formula used for the representation of this event may be a variation of the consecration compositions, but it is also possible that it derives from some Western models.

### 23. Nicholas is Imprisoned.

Inscriptions illegible.

This illustration of an event from the life of St. Nicholas appears only on two late icons, Nos. 80 and 82. On the first, painted by Simon Xolmogorec, as far as can be distinguished on an imperfect reproduction, in a large prison cell, covered with a decorative roof, at the right St. Nicholas sits on a stool, dressed in his bishop's robes. Around the saint other imprisoned Christian sit and stand. Apparently the scene illustrates the following fragment of

the Vita per Metaphrasten: "Božestvenyj ubo Nikolae . . . jat byst' ot vladušćix gradu, rany i strogania, i uzy, i tmami inex muk osužden byv, i potom s inemi mnogimi xristiany temnici predan byst'. . . " (VMCD6, p. 144).<sup>50</sup> The scene can be identified as the imprisonment of the saint not only on the basis of the content of the representation (the miniaturization of the figures makes it difficult to notice all details), but also on the grounds of its position in the cycle. It follows the scene of the consecration of Nicholas into a bishop and precedes the scenes of destruction of the temple of Artemis and the First Ecumenical Council. This sequence of the scenes corresponds to the sequence of events described in the Vita per Metaphrasten (the correspondence of the scenes and the events described in the vita extends from the scene of schooling to the scene of death).

This sequence of the scenes and their adherence to the text of the Metaphrastian vita of the saint allows one to identify the scene which follows the consecration of Nicholas into a bishop on the Palex icon (82) as the imprisonment of the saint, despite the fact that it is based on different iconographic formula. On the background of a building in which prison bars can be seen sits Nicholas dressed in his brown cassock of a monk. At his left is a prison guard, and at his right three prisoners. The Palex icon also uses the

Vita per Metaphrastèn as a source of the scenes from the schooling to the death of the saint.

Iconographically, the scenes on icons Nos. 80 and 82 present a skillful coinage of motifs borrowed from other scenes of the cycle.

24. Nicholas Destroys the Temple of Artemis.

Inscriptions illegible.

The illustration of this miracle can be found frequently in the Balkan monuments, but does not appear in early Byzantine works. In Russia it was extremely rare, and was probably introduced into the cycle only in the 17th century. Among the icons researched one, a late plaque from the Museum of Icons in Recklinghausen (X), undoubtedly depicts this miracle, and another one, the work of Simon Xolmogorec, has a scene which can be identified as the illustration of the deed only hypothetically.

The plaque shows an interior of a pagan temple. In the middle of the temple Nicholas holds a statue of a goddess in his raised hands, ready to smash it to the ground. Another statue, already broken into pieces, lies on the floor, and the third, still intact, stands on its pedestal at the left. The statues are made of gold. To the right of Nicholas two supporting pillars of the temple are crumbling and falling down. Two large devils run away from the



pillars to the right, and one escapes above Nicholas' head (ill. 66).

The scene on Simon's icon represents Nicholas at the left, followed by a group of observers. To their right are several figures with their hands raised, throwing the idols to the ground. Some of the broken statues can be seen on the ground, in pieces.

It would be difficult to point out the sources of the iconography of these two representations, since there was no traditional iconography in the Byzantine period (see Sevcenko, p. 381). The second work can be compared to the Balkan monuments in some of which the saint is helped by other people, and there are no devils depicted. The first icon also may ultimately derive from those south Slavic representations, but because of its late origin it shows great changes in iconography.

Searching for the literary sources of these representations, I discovered a lengthy passage in the Vita per Metaphrasten which narrates the deeds of Nicholas after his release from prison. The saint immediately set out to fight the vestiges of paganism. At first he destroyed idols: "I diven pače slova vsem v dušax ležaše, poneže togda idol'skaa trebišča mnoga i ešče ostavša videv, i k tem mnogo besovskuju priležašča ljuboviju, i ne malo pogibajušča . . . , revnostiju že Božestvenoju razžeg si dušu i mužski stav, i vsja

tex mesta prošed, ideže ašče trebišče priključašesja, na zemlju ubo nizverg i v prax istončase." (VMČD6, p. 145). Very soon afterwards, inspired by a heavenly revelation, Nicholas decided "ni Artemidiny ne ostaviti cerkvi, no i k toj prirazitisja, i ravno s pervymi stvoriti, rekše do konca takožde razrušiti, bjaše bo ta ukrašena mnogo i veličestvom drugix prevyšē, i besom sladkoe žilišče. Ustremlenie bo emu vnide na besy pače neželi na cerkov', i mužeski na tu stav, ne tokmo, elikože stojaše nad zemleju, vse razori i nizverže, no i ot samyx osnovanii istorže, i vsja ubo eliko na vysotu vzvyšenaja cerkve zemli vdast', a eže na zemli sušče osnovanie, na vzdux metaše. Lukavii že besi, nikako že tr'peti svjatago prišestvia ne moguše, no begajuše i glasy ispuščaxu, i ot nego obidimom byti krepko vopijuše (VMČD6, p. 146).

It is quite possible that Simon illustrated the first fragment of this text, Nicholas' destruction of idols and temples dedicated to many pagan gods, but not Artemis. The author of the plaque clearly indicated that he illustrated a miracle in which the saint not only destroyed idols, but also destroyed the temple and expelled devils. The second fragment then must have been used as a source of this representation.

## 25. Nicholas at the First Ecumenical Council.

Inscriptions illegible.

Outside the Nicholas cycle the representation of the First Ecumenical Council was included among the pictures of the Seven Ecumenical Councils, a series of illustrations devoted to the seven epochal events in the history of the Orthodox Church. Such pictures may be found in Russian fresco and icon painting.<sup>51</sup> The basic composition, described in the icon-painting manuals,<sup>52</sup> consisted of the figure of the Emperor Constantine sitting on the throne at the top of a staircase, the figures of attending bishops sitting on both sides of the Emperor just below him, and the figure of Nicholas heading a group of haloed clerics and facing Arius leading a group of his followers, at the bottom. This canonical representation of the event was sometimes incorporated into the Nicholas cycle. One can see it on icons Nos. 45, 80, and 82. There are, however, three icons which make our iconographical investigation more interesting. Two of them (1 and 2) date to the end of the 13th--beginning of the 14th century, and one (22) to the third quarter of the 15th century.

On the icon from Pavlovo (1) on the top of the scene we see the Emperor and a bishop sitting on a stepped podium, under a flat roof supported by four columns. At their left there is a small group of bishops. At the bottom of the picture, on the left side Nicholas stands with his left hand

raised, and on the right side is Arius, holding his hands defensively near his chest. Behind Arius, one of his followers observes the encounter between the adversaries (ill. 67). As can be seen, this composition resembles the canonical one; the number of the figures is limited and the composition is simplified, but the main elements: the Emperor, the bishops, Nicholas, Arius, and the steps leading to the Emperor's throne, are present. It has been mentioned earlier that in the second scene the author of this icon depicts the reinstating of Nicholas as a bishop during the Council (see the discussion of the consecration scenes) using the same compositional elements.

The icon from Bol'sie Soli (2) also presents the event in two separate scenes. The first scene shows the Council, but the composition in this case is very simple and involves only three figures. In the middle, at the top of a staircase or stepped podium a bust of a bishop can be seen. At the right, on the throne, sits the Emperor. At the left, in front of Constantine, is Nicholas in his bishop's robes.<sup>53</sup> The figures are flanked by two tall buildings of rectangular shape. In the second scene the painter depicted the event which was loved so much by the Russians: the slap on Arius' face. Again, the composition is very simple: at the right Nicholas with his right hand raised and holding a strange oblong object, is accompanied by another bishop, and at the

left Arius and two of his followers run away from the indignant saint. The heretic bends forward and looks cowardly over his shoulder at Nicholas; behind Arius one can see the heads of his followers. The background of the scene consists of two tall buildings flanking the composition (ill. 68).

This representation of the Arius episode is unique in all Russian icons of Nicholas, and probably does not have a parallel in Byzantine art. Despite its simplicity, the composition is much more expressive than the canonical representations of the First Ecumenical Council, with their static and stiff array of figures.

A very unusual rendering of the events at the Council is presented on the icon from Meletovo (22). In one scene the artist depicted Christ giving to Nicholas his Gospel book, and in the second (separated from the first by four other scenes) the Virgin giving to the saint his omophorion. The compositions of both scenes are elementary. On the first we see Christ at the right, bent over an altar, facing Nicholas who stands at the left and holds a Gospel book in his left hand. In the background of the scene is a church. The second scene is based on the vision or dream formula. At the left Nicholas rests on his bed, and in the middle the Virgin looks at the saint from behind a low wall. At the right and left there are simple buildings. Since no omophorion in the

Virgin's hands is visible, it can be argued that the scene shows another miracle from the life of the saint, the appearance of the Virgin with a plea to erect a church in her honor,<sup>54</sup> which has been discussed earlier. The vision formula would be perfect for the latter miracle. However, if we accept the former attribution,<sup>55</sup> we must draw a conclusion that the author of this icon has not been concerned with the chronology of the events and may have used a variety of different iconographical sources, combining them in an erratic manner.

What were the literary sources of all these Russian representations? In Chapter II the most important texts describing the events at the Council were discussed. Three icons, Nos. 45, 80, and 82, which show a canonical rendering of the event, probably do not go back to any particular literary text and have been copied from the representation of the Council among the Seven Ecumenical Councils. It should be noted that these three icons are relatively late and give a very extensive selection of the saint's miracles; thus the inclusion of the scene of the Council in them is not surprising. Much more significant is the presence of the scenes illustrating the events at the council in early icons. Since the Old Russian version of the Periodoi Nikolaou, the "Neknižnoe Žitie", appeared in the beginning of the 15th century, it could have not been the source of the icons from

Pavlovo and Bol'shie Soli. Most probably they were based either on the legend which linked the appearances of the Virgin and Christ to Nicholas with the participation of the saint in the Council, or on some kind of icon-painting manual. The source of the scenes on icon No. 22 was either the "Neknižnoe žitie",<sup>56</sup> or Byzantine and Russian icons mentioned in Chapter II. Characteristically, these icons did not necessarily have to be hagiographical. Very often the saint's simple portrait (full figure, bust, or head and shoulders) was not surrounded by the border scenes representing the miracles and events from Nicholas' life, but had two small pictures on each side of the saint's head: at the left there was Christ with a Gospel book, and at the right the Virgin with an omophorion. Even if this composition in the beginning was to depict the ordination of Nicholas into a bishop (as the Vita Compilata attested), very soon the meaning of the representation changed. The painters began to consider it a subtle hint at the Arius episode, an allusion to the well known, but officially forbidden story. Therefore the representation of the Arius episode among the miracles of Nicholas, within the cycle of the border scenes, became extremely rare, while in the middle of the board, near the saint's head, it appeared very often. At least one third of the hagiographical icons of Nicholas researched in this work contained the images of Christ and the Virgin. If one takes

into consideration that non-hagiographical icons of the saint were even more numerous than hagiographical, and frequently included the images of Christ and the Virgin, the popularity of the story of Arius becomes much more apparent than any literary work (Povest' o bražnike, Avvakum, duxovnye stixi) is able to indicate.

26. The Story of the Three Generals (Praxis de stratelatis).

So far we were dealing mostly with single scenes depicting particular events and miracles performed by St. Nicholas. In the case of Praxis de stratelatis, the most frequently illustrated St. Nicholas story, we encounter not one or two, but several scenes devoted to specific fragments of the narrative. While only six Byzantine monuments represented the Praxis story in six scenes,<sup>57</sup> the others gave no less than three scenes. In Russian painting, however, the situation was a little different. Among the researched icons only one, from Novgorod (15), has six scenes illustrating the story of the three generals. Several works include four episodes (2, 6, 7, 10, 12, 32, 37, 51) or only one representation (45, 47, 59, 60, 70, 79), but the most common are the icons with two or three scenes.

The six scenes, found on so few works, depict the following fragments of the story: a) Nicholas saves three men from execution; b) The three generals in prison (Nicholas



appears to the three generals in prison); c) Nicholas appears to Constantine in a dream; d) Nicholas appears to Ablabius in a dream; e) The three generals come before Constantine; and f) The three generals thank St. Nicholas. Each of these scenes must be analyzed separately (after the title of each analyzed scene the appropriate inscriptions are given).

a) Nicholas Saves Three Men from Execution.

Inscriptions: Svjatyj Nikola izbavi tri muži ot naga meca (6);  
 Svjatyj Nikola izbavi tri muža ot smerti (8);  
 Svatyj Nikola izbav 3 muži ot naa (sic) meca (15);  
 Svjatyj Nikola izbavi tri muža ot meča (17);  
 Svjatyj Nikola izbavi tri muži (21);  
 Svjatyj Nikola izbavi trex mužej ot meča (51);  
 Svjatyj Nikolae izbavi trex mužej ot meča (66);  
 Svjatyj Nikolae čjudotvorec izbavi 3-x mužej ot meča (81).

The iconography of this scene, which shows the three men, an executioner with a sword, and the saint, derives from the scenes of martyrdom (Ševčenko, p. 314). Through a detailed analysis of Byzantine monuments, Ševčenko discovered that the number of figures in this composition never exceeds five, the three men are almost always blindfolded, and Nicholas almost always restrains the executioner by grasping the sword's blade. The men are either neatly lined up in a

row, or one of them is isolated, while the other two stand on the side, awaiting their turn to be beheaded. Their hands are usually tied in front of them. The executioner is most often depicted dressed in a short tunic or tunic and a cape, but sometimes he wears a full military costume. Finally, the figure of Nicholas is sometimes reduced to a mere bust emerging from behind a rocky hillside (see Ševčenko, pp. 313-8). Ševčenko also found out that the earliest compositions apparently depicted the men seminude, with their hands tied behind their backs, with one of them singled out for immediate execution. The executioner in these earliest compositions probably wore a military costume (pp. 312-3, 314-6).

It is interesting to apply these conclusions, made on the basis of Byzantine representations, to Russian compositions.

On the icon from Meletovo (22) there are seven figures shown. At the left is St. Nicholas, with his right hand grasping the sword of the executioner. The executioner holds one of the prisoners by his shoulder, while two other men wait at the right. Behind them, on the background of a building, we can see two other figures, expressively gesturing in indignation. These two figures must represent the citizens of Myra who gathered at the place of the execution: "Prišed, obrete narod mnog, i deržašča spekulatar-

ja meč' . . . " (VMČD6, p. 91). As was mentioned before, the icon from Meletovo, which may be based on some Western models, includes many unusual compositions and violations of canonical iconographical formulae. It is interesting that on two Byzantine icons reflecting Western influences, Nicholas grabs the shoulder of the executioner (see Ševčenko, p. 313). It is quite possible that the author of the icon No. 22 had seen such representations and remembered the characteristic gesture, but applied it to another figure in the scene.

More than five figures also appear in this scene on icons Nos. 80 and 82. On the first, at the left there is a large group of observers, and on the second in the top left corner three women and at the right two men descend towards the place of the execution. As these icons are late and show the miniaturization of the compositions which is accompanied by overcrowding of the scenes, they cannot be indicative of the changes in the canonical representation. Therefore one can assume that the five-figure rule of Byzantine works holds also for Russian icons (at least till the middle of the 17th century).

While in Byzantine works the men are blindfolded, in Russian icons they are free to see what is happening. Only on icon No. 76 the man who is singled out to be executed first has his eyes covered.

Like in Byzantine monuments, in Russian icons Nicholas grasps the blade of the sword, stopping the execution. Only on icon No. 79 the saint seems to be blessing with his right hand. Perhaps the painter wanted to avoid the representation of a physical contact between the saint and the executioner, and preferred to show the moment of the saint's arrival at the spot.

Similar to Byzantine artists, the Russians have two ways of depicting the prisoners: the three men together (ill. 69-70) or one of them separated from the other two (ill. 71-2). Both formulae are used equally often. The hands of the men are in most cases tied in front (the executioner may hold the end of the rope). As far as can be distinguished, only on icon No. 2 their hands are bound behind their backs, which would reflect an early iconography; however, the executioner holds his sword in both hands, which, according to Ševčenko, was a latter addition (p. 313). On icon No. 46 only two prisoners can be noticed, one being executed, and one waiting at the left.

On a few icons the executioner is dressed in a military costume with a pointed helmet and armor (11, 13, 14, 49, 56, 73), on the others he wears a tunic (2, 12, 15, 22, 50) or a tunic and a cape (6, 17, 19, 21, 25, 26, 31, 33, 43, etc.). On icons Nos. 49 and 73 the executioner seems to give his sword to the saint, and on icon No. 78 he wears a strange

pointed hat, and his facial features are those of a Mongol or a Turk.<sup>58</sup>

On the majority of Russian works Nicholas appears on the right side of the composition, depicted in full figure. Only on icons Nos. 2, 6, 13, 22, 49, and 73 he is shown standing at the left, and only on icons Nos. 11, 14, 21, 26, 33, 43, 51, and 52 his bust can be seen behind a rocky hillside. This rocky background is predominant in Russian works. Only icon No. 22 presents the scene on the background of buildings, and icons Nos. 33, 55, and 80 combine the hills with elements of architecture.

On late icons (79, 81, 82) the executioner holds the man to be executed first by his hair.

b) Nicholas Appears to the Three Generals in Prison (The Three Generals in Prison).

Inscriptions: Svjatyj Nikola izbavi tri muži iz temnicy nepovinnny sut' (1);  
 Svjatyj Niko / . . . / izbavi tri muži is tem / . . . / nice (6);  
 Svjatyj Nikola javi trem mužam v temnici (8);  
 Javisja svjatyj Nikol / . . . / muži v temnici (15);  
 Svjatyj Nikola javi / . . . / mužem v temnici (17);  
 Svjatyj Nikola utešaet' tri muže vo temnici (34);  
 Svjatyj Nikola javisja trem mužam v temnice (35);  
 Svjatyj Nikola javisja trem mužem v temnice (51);  
 Svjatyj Nikolae javisja trem mužem v temnice (66);

Svjatyj Nikola izbavi tri muži ot tem-  
nicy i gor'kija smerti (62).

In Byzantine painting the earliest representation of this episode can be seen on an 11th century icon from Sinai. "The generals sit in what appears to be a vaulted room seen in cross-section . . . The three men sit in a row, their feet clamped between two parallel slats of wood, the 'stocks' . . . The generals are of three different ages, the one in the centre being the eldest, with a white beard." (Šev-čenko, p. 325). According to the art historian, the iconography of the scene "was not created on the basis of the Nicholas texts, but was adopted almost without change from a Biblical scene of similar content, namely, that of Joseph in prison with the baker and the butler . . ." (ibid., p. 325). During the centuries the composition underwent a very few changes. The most important one was an addition of the figure of Nicholas on the right side of the picture. The saint "was probably included simply to emphasize that he was the agent of the men's release" (ibid., p. 330).

In Russian icons this basic composition evolved in several directions. One small group of monuments presents only the three generals sitting in the prison cell, reminiscing of Nicholas' saving of the three innocent men at Myra (11, 13, 14, 15). Nicholas is not depicted, thus this group is

obviously based on the earliest compositional scheme. But even within this small group certain differences can be noticed. For instance, icon No. 13 shows only the busts of the generals, although it preserves the rule that the eldest man should be placed in the middle, between his two companions. Icon No. 15 shows the men sitting with their feet in stocks, but the general in the middle faces his friend at the left, not the viewer (ill. 73). Icon No. 14, instead of portraying the generals in heavy wooden stocks, shows their feet tied up with ropes or chains (ill. 74).

Another group of monuments expanded this primary composition by the addition of the figure of Nicholas, which frequently led to a change in the representation of the generals. The painters had less space to accommodate the prison building, therefore they either made it smaller, or taller and more narrow, squeezing the prisoners inside. Some painters, to be sure, were able to avoid this compositional difficulty by the selection of appropriate space on the panel. Icon No. 6 is one of the best examples of such a successful inclusion of the figure of Nicholas and preservation at the same time of the primary representation of the three generals in prison (ill. 75). On icon No. 48 the painter had even too much space for the scene (it was caused by his division of the wings of a triptych into 10 long and narrow horizontal stripes). Similarly good compositions can

be found on icons Nos. 23, 27 and II. On icon No. 7 we see not only the preservation of the oldest compositional model, but also the ingenuity of the painter. In the left top corner of the scene, above the prison building in which the three generals sit in their usual pose, the bust of Nicholas appears behind the structure.

Less successful renditions of the scene are more numerous. On icon No. 5 the prisoners are standing, and due to the lack of space the middle one is behind the other two, so that only his head and shoulders can be seen. On icon No. 8 the prison is covered with a pointed roof, and each prisoner is separated from one another by a column. This representation resembles more a reliquary with sculpted figures of bishops and saints, than a prison building. A similar composition appears on icon No. 41. An interesting interpretation of the scene gives icon No. 12. Nicholas stands almost in the middle of the picture and bends towards the left. At the left is a tall prison building with three unusually small windows through which one can hardly see the heads and upper bodies of the generals. Instead of the prisoners, Nicholas is the most important character in this composition (ill. 76).

The third group of monuments (17, 65, IV, etc.) attempts to show the volume of the prison building, depicting its front and side wall. In each of the walls there is an arch-



ed opening or window (on icon No. 32 the openings are rectangular). In the front window, larger and higher than the side one, two generals sit side by side, with their knees visible. The third general appears in the smaller window. Two steps lead to the building. Nicholas is on the right or on the left, slightly bent, holding his Gospel and pointing towards (or blessing) the prisoners (ill. 77). It is possible that these representations derive from an old formula used by the painter of the icon from Pavlovo (1). There, on the left side we see a small building with a gabled roof and the front and side wall. In the openings in the walls appear the generals: two in the front wall, and one in the side wall.

More often, however, the painters were unable to show the spatial complexity of the building and depicted only the front wall of the prison, but included the two characteristic arched windows, the first larger and the second smaller (19, 29, 35, 40, 43, 46, 51, 54). Another variant of this composition can be seen on icon No. 25. Nicholas is at the left, in his characteristic pose, holding the Gospel. At the right is the prison with two large steps leading to it, but it has only one large arched window, and the generals sit so close to each other that it is difficult to see how many of them are there: two or three. In a similar composition on icon No. 33 the men have just a little

more space.

In the 16th century still another variant of the scene became popular. The prisoners no longer sit in prison, but are outside, with their feet in stocks (ill. 78). A large dark window in the building is behind them. Nicholas usually approaches from the right (31, 42, 50, 53, 74, 76, V). The placement of the generals outside of the prison (sometimes a part of the body of one of the men is inside) may be connected with icon-painting practice of representing the events which took place inside the buildings, outside, on their background. The painters could also have reasoned that since the saint is so often depicted standing outside the prison, the generals may as well be there.

A very limited number of icons (92, 47, 55) gives a completely different illustration of the event. The saint is shown leading the generals out of prison. He holds the first man by his hand, while the other two men follow their companion. On icons Nos. 47 and 55 we can see the heavy prison doors wide open, and on the latter work the prisoners step out from large wooden stocks which resemble a trough. A similar representation is known from the fresco at Donja Kamenica in Yugoslavia (second quarter of the 14th century). Ševčenko is probably right in her explanation of the reasons for the appearance of such a composition. She believes that "the fact that the saint is shown himself set-

ting the generals free reflects a particularly literal interpretation of the message of the texts, namely, that Nicholas was responsible for the generals' deliverance" (p. 331).

From the 15th century on, in some compositions, bars can be distinguished on the prison's windows (27, 43, 54, 57, 76, 78, 80, 81, 82).

On two late icons we can observe a further enrichment of the scene. Simon Spiridonov Xolmogorec (80) in one scene illustrated not only the appearance of Nicholas to the three generals, but at the top of his representation depicted the appearances of the saint to Constantine and Ablabius. He also added the figures of the prison guards near the building. The guards are also shown on the Palex icon (82); the figure of the saint in this work appears inside the prison, behind bars.

c) Nicholas Appears to Constantine in a Dream.

Inscriptions: Svjatyj Nikola javisja carju Kostjantinu vo sne pro tri muži (1);  
 Svjatyj Nikola javisja / . . . /  
 tjantinu carju / . . . / mu / . . . /  
 is tem / . . . / (3);  
 Svjatyj Nikola javisja Kostjantinu carju / . . . / i tri muži s temnice (6);  
 Svjatyj Nikola javisja Konstantinu carju so Avlav'em vo sne (8);  
 Svjatyj Nikola javisja Kostjantiu carju vo s / . . . / (15);  
 Svjatyj Nikola javisja carju Kostjantinu v sne (17, 21);  
 Svjatyj Nikola javisja carju Kostjantinu vo sne, povele emu pustiti tri muže is temnice (34);

Svjatyj Nikola javisja vo sne carju  
 Kostan'tinu (35);  
 Svjatyj Nikola javisja carju Konstan-  
 tinu vo sne (51);  
 Svjatyj Nikolae javisja carju Konžstan-  
 tinu (sic) vo sne (66);  
 Svjatyj Nikolae čjudotvorec javisja car-  
 ju Konstantinu vo sne (81).

The iconography of this scene, according to Ševčenko, "can derive ultimately from any one of several Biblical dream scenes" (p. 338) which show a sleeping figure on a bed and another figure near the bed. Because in those scenes the image of a sleeping King approached by someone in his dream is rare" (p. 338), one has to look for parallels "in compositions which contain the image of a sick King, for a sick King is generally represented lying on his bed in much the same position as the sleeping Constantine . . . And when another figure attendant upon him is added, the formal similarity to our scene is striking. One such is the scene of David playing to the sick Saul . . ." (p. 340).

It is most probable that for the Nicholas scene the painters invented a composition which contained elements taken from the typical Biblical dream scene and from the scenes of the sleeping or sick King (see Ševčenko, p. 341).

On the earliest preserved Byzantine icon, from Sinai, in this scene "there are only the figures of Nicholas and Constantine, and an architectural backdrop. Constantine lies on his bed, his eyes closed, his head turned to one

side and resting on his right hand                      Behind the bed stands Nicholas, his right hand raised in speech. Behind and flanking the figures are two structures: a tower and a building with a gabled roof." (Ševčenko, pp. 337-8).

The majority of Russian icons strictly follows this iconographical formula (ill. 79-80). The only important difference is that on many icons Constantine does not rest his head on his hand (1, 2, 3, 4, 7, 8, 11, 13, 17, 19, 21, etc.).<sup>59</sup> The architectural background varies in details, but in most cases is based on two structures flanking the composition. On two icons (48 and 55) the figure of Nicholas is more dynamic. The saint reaches with his right hand towards Constantine's shoulder, as if to shake him and wake him up, and points with his left hand to some invisible distant object. This "realistic" gesture leaves no doubt that an indignant Nicholas is talking to the Emperor about the innocent prisoners, and orders him to release the men. On icon No. 48 we find one more interesting detail. Constantine is asleep, and his crown is placed on a "night table" near the bed.

Only a few icons present Constantine awake (3, 41, 49, 73), sitting on the bed or expressing surprise with his hands (ill. 81-2). Finally, only on icons Nos. 12, 19, 26, and 41 one or more of Constantine's guards are depicted. On icons Nos. 19 and 41 a guard stands outside the Emperor's

bed chamber, but on icon No. 12 one, and on icon No. 26 two guards are represented in the same room. On icon No. 71 we see a servant near Constantine's bed. It is interesting to note that neither the guards nor servants are mentioned in the texts, therefore they must be either an example of the painter's literal interpretation of the narrative (Constantine was surprised that Nicholas was able to enter his chambers: "Kto ubo ty esi, i kako v moju polatu vnide?": (VMČD6, p. 94), or are a borrowing from the representations of the sleeping Kings (see Ševčenko, p. 345).

d) Nicholas Appears to Ablabius in a Dream.

Inscriptions: Svjatyj Nikola javisja Avlaviju eparxu  
 glagolja otpusti sko / / tri  
 muži is temnici (3);  
 Svjatyj Nikola javisja vo sne Ovlaviju  
 / . . . / ti tri muži is temenice (6);  
 Svjatyj Nikola javisja Evlav'ju vo sne,  
 otpustita 3 muž nepovini sut' (15);  
 Nikolae javisja eparxu Evlaviju vo sne  
 (38);  
 Svjatyj Nikola javisja Ensarexu (sic)  
 vo sne (51).

The scene of Nicholas' appearance to Ablabius "repeats the formula used for representations of Nicholas appearing to Constantine virtually unchanged." (Ševčenko, p. 351). The only differences are in depicting Ablabius without a halo, while the Emperor was often haloed, and rarely with a head cover (icon No. 15), while Constantine usually wore a

crown (ill. 83-5) or a royal ceremonial cap, the so-called "šapka Monomaxa". The scene is also less often included in the cycle. The guards never appear in the Ablabius composition.

e) The Three Generals Come Before Constantine.

Inscriptions: Car' Kostjan'tin posylae dary svjatomu  
Niko / . . . / (15).

The iconography of this scene "is based on the established formula for an imperial audience. This formula, which derives from the scene of Herod interrogating the three Magi, was used for such compositions as Christ before Pilate, John the Baptist before Herod . . . and St. George before Diocletian. Of all of these, the closest to our scene is that of the Magi before Herod . . ." (Ševčenko, p. 362).

Although, as Ševčenko has shown, "a relatively small number of representations of this scene exists from any period" (p. 366), on the basis of the presence or absence of the gifts in the compositions, they may be divided into two groups: one depicting the generals being interrogated by the Emperor (no gifts), and another depicting Constantine giving the gifts to the generals to be delivered to their savior, Nicholas.

In Russian works the scene appears very seldom. Among the research icons only three include the scene (15, 45, 80). The closest to the old compositional canons is the representation on icon No. 15. Constantine sits at the left, on a square throne, and hands a Gospel book to the first of the three generals, who stand in line in front of him. Behind the Emperor is a palace guard or a servant, and the whole composition is shown on the backdrop of simple architectural forms (ill. 86). A more complicated composition is employed by the author of the icon from Boroviči (45). Constantine is at the right, standing on a pedestal, and handing a Gospel to the three generals at the left. Behind the Emperor, as well as behind the generals, one can see many figures of observers. The architectural setting is also developed. On the icon of Simon Xolmogorec (80), Constantine sits on a throne at the right, and to his left stand the generals and a large group of observers. It is impossible to distinguish any gifts in the Emperor's hands, thus icons Nos. 15 and 45 represent Constantine giving the men gifts for Nicholas, and icon No. 80 possibly Constantine interrogating the generals.

f) The Three Generals Thank St. Nicholas.

Inscription: Svjatyj Nikola priimle dary (15).



When one compares the representation of this scene on icon No. 15 to the previous one, the similarities are easy to notice. On the left the three generals stand in a line before Nicholas who sits in front of a building. The first general holds a Gospel book which he received from Constantine, and hands it to the saint (ill. 87).

Although the iconographical formulae in both scenes are almost exactly the same, Ševčenko suggests that this scene is based not on the scenes depicting the imperial audience, but on the scene of the three magi approaching the Virgin and bringing her gifts (p. 372). As can be seen, the representation is extremely rare in Russian painting, appearing only on icon No. 15.

In conclusion, several interesting observations may be made in regard to Russian icons which include scenes from the Praxis de stratelatis. The icons with four illustrations show all scenes but the last two. The icons with three scenes eliminate not only the last two, but also the appearance of Nicholas to Ablabius. The Carpathian icons, which usually depict only two scenes, select the appearance of Nicholas to Constantine and the appearance of the saint to the three generals in prison. Other icons with only two scenes almost always include the scene of the saving from execution, and most often the appearance to Constantine, but sometimes instead of the latter they put the appearance to

Ablabius (4, 38) or the appearance to the three men (24, 30, 74, 82). Another interesting feature of Russian icons is that the scenes of the Praxis are rarely placed in chronological order (3, 34, 47, 54, 58, 80, 81, 82). In most cases the scene of the saving from execution is in the middle or in the end of the cycle, and the three men saved by Nicholas are depicted as the three generals, not the three men from Myra. Quite often the painters insert between the scenes illustrating the Praxis other representations: on icon No. 7, for example, the scenes of Nicholas' appearances to Constantine and Ablabius are followed by two scenes illustrating the carpet miracle and a scene of the healing of a demoniac. Only after these three scenes appears the continuation of the Praxis: the appearance of the saint to the three generals in prison, and, as a final illustration, the saving of the three men from the sword. The same phenomenon can be seen on icons Nos. 25, 37, 38, 49, 51, 55, 63, 64, and 73 (cf. Myslivec, p. 66).

It is virtually impossible to determine the literary sources of particular representations of the Praxis. As was shown in the chapter devoted to the texts, the Russians knew the story in two long, full versions (the original Praxis and the redaction of Metaphrastes) and in five short versions (three redaction of the Synaxarion, an excerpt from the Slovo poxvalno, and an excerpt from the Thauma de Basilio).

Only two long versions described the story with all the details. This enables one to assume that the author of the icon from Novgorod (15) knew one of these long versions, and could illustrate the narrative in six scenes (even he, however, committed a chronological error placing the scene of the execution in the end of the story, and the scene of the appearance of the saint to Constantine after the scene of his appearance to Ablabius). The other painters did not leave us any indication of which text they used. Perhaps the best theory is that most of the artists have not used any particular text, but simply copied the scenes, following an established tradition of illustrating the story.

27. Angels Announce the Death of St. Nicholas.

Inscriptions illegible

On several Russian icons (40, 45, 71, 72, 76, 80, and 82) in the scene which precedes the saint's death (or in the death scene itself) we can notice the representation of an angel or several angels. On icon No. 40 at the left is Nicholas, standing at the backdrop of a landscape. An angel approaches from the right side. Iconographically, this scene resembles the scene of the appearance of Archangel Michael to the saint on the icon from Meletovo (22), but Antonova suggests that it is an appearance of an angel (Drevnerusskoe, p. 78: "Angel izveščaet Nikolu o ego smerti").

On the icon from Boroviči (45), on the left side of the scene Nicholas lies on the bier, and above him stand three haloed angels. On the right side, on the background of a church, Nicholas is shown again lying in an open sarcophagus, while a group of church officials stands at the far right.

On icon No. 71 Nicholas lies on the bier and behind the bed are two angels. The angel at the left may be carrying Nicholas' soul, wrapped in white sheets. There are no deacons or bishops represented on this scene.

A similar illustration appears on icon No. 72. In the foreground we see the open sarcophagus with the body of the saint. In the middle of the scene, behind the sarcophagus, one angel embraces Nicholas, and another stands with the saint's soul in his hands. At the left is a bishop, and at the right a deacon. In the background a church and other buildings are visible.

Icon No. 76 shows a sarcophagus with the saint's body being embraced by an angel with large wings, at the left a deacon with a censer, and at the right a bishop with a Gospel book; in the background is a church with three cupolas.

Simon Xolmogorec depicted the bier of Nicholas surrounded by five haloed angels, but did not show any deacons or bishops, and placed the scene within a single room presented in cross-section.

Finally, the author of the Palex icon (82), gave the most elaborate representation. The saint lies on the bier in the middle of the scene. Behind the bier an angel embraces Nicholas' body, while in front, in the foreground, a kneeling figure of a woman can be seen. To the right of the bier is a large group of deacons and monks, and at the left a bishop followed by monks. The background consists of elaborate architectural forms.

It is very difficult to determine the literary source of these representations. The appearance of angels to the saint before his death is mentioned in the Vita Nicolai Sionitae and in the Periodoi Nikolaou. The latter text, which was based on the Vita Nicolai Sionitae, describes the event in greatest detail, but it is doubtful that the painters have illustrated it in these scenes (with the exception of the icon from the collection of Pavel Korin (40) which includes another scene based on this particular text). It is most probable that they remembered the fragment from the Vita Nicolai Sionitae, but based their illustrations on the traditional iconography of the Assumption of the Virgin (Koimesis). Only icon No. 82 gives an indication that the painter actually illustrated the Vita Nicolai Sionitae. The figure of a woman in front of the bier must represent the sick Eugenia, the last person healed by Nicholas. According to the text, when Nicholas was

already at his deathbed, "pride žena imenem' Evgenija . . .  
 imušči dux zol na nov mesjac', i pripadši ej, i znamena ju,  
 i molitvu sotvori nad neju na loži ležaše, i iscele žena  
 . . . " (Leonid, Žitie, p. 73).

28. The Death of St. Nicholas.

Inscriptions: Prestavlenie svjatago Nikoly (1, 66);  
 Uspenie svjatago Nikoly (6, 21);  
 Prestavlenie svjatago Nikoly čjudotvor-  
 ca (33, 60 81);  
 / . . . / nie svjatago Nikoly (76).

The scene of the death of St. Nicholas was illustrated in Russian icons according to a formula which Ševčenko called a "funeral composition" (p. 394). Such a composition depicted Nicholas lying on the bier and being attended by the representatives of the clergy (at least one bishop and one deacon). In Byzantine painting, especially in the 14th century, this composition began to resemble a "full liturgical ceremony, replete with the finest trappings of Paleologan society." (Ševčenko, p. 395). In Russian icons, however, the composition remains relatively simple: such details as candlesticks around the bier, or the figures of the Psaltai (cantors) are omitted, and the number of the participants in the ceremony is usually limited. The saint may be attended by a bishop and a deacon (1, 2, 49, 72, 74), by two bishops (41), by a bishop and two deacons (14, 51), or a deacon and two bishops (8). Sometimes more than two

or three figures are depicted. On icon No. 6 we see only two bishops and one deacon, but in the middle there is another figure crouching at the bier.<sup>61</sup> On icon No. 12 there is a bishop at the left, and behind the bier are several (barely distinguishable) figures of other participants. On icon No. 22 at the left there are two deacons and a bishop, and at the right another deacon. On icon No. 23 at the right a bishop leads a group of at least three people, and at the left at least five observers stand behind the bier. On icon No. 30 there are only three attendants, but one of them is a monk. The icon from the collection of I.S. Ostroukhov (43) shows one interesting detail, very common in Byzantine monuments, but infrequently represented in Russian icons: at the left one of the two deacons holds an open book. A bishop is in the middle, and another deacon at the far right. Between the bishop and this deacon there is a figure of undetermined rank. On the icon from the collection of N.P. Lixačev (48) a bishop (with a Gospel) is followed by a boy (subdeacon). The saint lies on the bier, and a barely distinguishable figure embraces his body.<sup>62</sup> At the right we see two deacons and a group of other attendants. A bellfry with two small and two large bells frames the composition at the far right.<sup>63</sup> On icon No. 55 at the left a bishop leads a deacon and several observers, and at the right two monks stand behind a deacon with a censer. On

icon No. 80 a large group of clergy, with at least two bishops, is lined up behind the bier of Nicholas. On icon No. 81 at the left are at least four figures headed by a bishop with a book, and at the right another, an even larger group, possibly including some deacons and monks. Finally, on icon No. 82 at the right a figure of a monk with a book, and at the left numerous other figures can be seen. Behind the bier of Nicholas, as far as can be distinguished, several monks kneel in prayer.

In all these compositions, except two, the body of the saint, dressed in bishop's vestments, with a Gospel book placed on his chest, is visible. The representations on icons Nos. 8 and 14 show the closed sarcophagus. Thus these two illustrations could be considered representations of the burial of St. Nicholas. However, as will be shown, there is another iconographical formula for the representation of the burial, which has been widely used in Russia.

It should be noted in conclusion that the early icons sometimes show a ciborium, or a bladachin supported on columns, over the bier (2, 4). Much more common is the architectural background depicting a church building, towers and walls.

#### 29. The Burial of St. Nicholas.

Inscriptions: Svjatyj Nikola položen vo grob (1);  
/ . . . / nie svjatago Nikoly (17);



Položenie vo grob' svjatago Nikoly (27);  
 Položenie v grob' svjatago Nikoly (34);  
 Položenie vo grob svjatago Nikoly (35);  
 Pogreben'e svjatago Nikoly čjudotvorca  
 (51);  
 Pogrebenie svjatago Nikoly (62, 76).

In the 14th-15th century a composition depicting the burial of St. Nicholas appeared in Russian icons. This composition was not based on the early Byzantine burial compositions which included in the scene the figures of two men lowering the body of the saint into the sarcophagus, and a figure of a bishop censing or blessing the body (see Ševčenko, p. 392). The Russian composition was a variation of the death scene, achieved through an important addition. In the middle of the scene, between the standard representations of a bishop and a deacon, the painters insert a figure of a man holding diagonally a lid of the sarcophagus. The lid covers the legs of the saint (ill. 88). Usually the saint's head is at the left, only icons Nos. 7, 50, and 56 reverse the composition.

Apparently the painters wanted by means of this expressive addition to illustrate the moment after the funeral, when the saint's body was placed in the coffin and the coffin was closed.

The most common representation of the burial includes only the figures of a bishop, a deacon, and the man putting down the lid (17, 19, 25, 27, 34, 54, 58, etc.). The same

composition with an additional observer was also well known (21, 35, 50, 52, 56, 57, 60). Icons Nos. 18, 31, and 32 included two additional observers, icon No. 26 -- three (one of them was a monk), icon No. 29 -- four, and icon No. 33 -- six.

The background of many of these representations is occupied by a large building resembling a basilica, or by a church with one or more cupolas. Sometimes additional architectural details are shown on either side of the scene.

Several icons place the burial scene after the scene of the translation of the saint's relics (to be discussed below). These icons (1, 11, 35, 40, 61, 62, 74) probably depicted the second burial of Nicholas, after his relics were transported to Bari and buried in a new church. Despite the fact that a different event was portrayed, the composition of the scene remained exactly the same. Only in a few cases (1, 40, 74) the painters used the death formula instead of the burial formula.

### 30. The Translation of the Relics of St. Nicholas.

Inscriptions: Prenesenie moš<sup>č</sup>em svjatago Nikoly iz  
 Mir v Bar (1);  
 Prenesenie svjatago Nikoly (17);  
 Perenesenie moš<sup>č</sup>ej svjatago Nikoly  
 ot Mur v Bar grad (34);  
 Prinesenie moš<sup>č</sup>ej svjatago Nikoly iz  
 Mir v Bar grad (35);  
 Perenesenie moš<sup>č</sup>ej svjatago Nikoly (51);  
 Svjatago Nikololu nesut pogrebati (62);

Prenesenie moščeŭ svjatago Nikoly (66);  
 Prenesenie čestnyx moščeŭ iže vo svjatyx  
 otca našego Nikoly, arxiepiskopa Mir  
 Likijskix, čjudotvorca, ot Mir v Bar  
 grad (81);  
 Prinesenie čestnyx moščeŭ svjatago  
 Nikoly čudotvorca (82).

The translation of the relics of St. Nicholas, as we remember, was not acknowledged or celebrated by the Byzantines, hence the lack of Byzantine representations of the event. However, the Russian representations were based on existing Byzantine representations of similar events, namely, the translation of the body of John Chrysostom, or a Patriarch of Constantinople.<sup>65</sup> The translation formula called for the illustration of the sarcophagus or casket, carried by deacons towards a church or town with an open gate. The Russian artists remained very faithful to this canonical composition, although several icons, especially of an earlier date, presented only the deacons carrying the sarcophagus, but failed to depict the town (1, 7, 11, 13). The other enriched the composition by the addition of one of two figures waiting for the relics at the gates (2, 12, 14). From the end of the 14th -- beginning of the 15th century on, at the left of the scene are icon hillocks and at the right a characteristic pentagonal tower with small turrets. In the center of the tower a cupola with a cross on its top is sometimes placed (19, 21, 25, 29, 33, 41, 55). Such towers appear frequently in illustrated manuscripts and

represent walled cities.<sup>66</sup>

There are similar compositions which show the city of Bari as a tower or church of a different shape (18, 26, 32, 40, 56, 74). A common feature of many of these scenes is that the end of the sarcophagus is already inside the city (18, 19, 26, 32, 33, 40, 41, 55).

Another way to depict Bari can be seen on icons Nos. 28, 31, and 42. In the middle of the scene is a large church with a semicircular dome, and on either side of the church are two tall buildings. The casket is carried not by deacons, but by four men in colorful tunics.

Only in the 16th century compositions appear in which the sarcophagus is shown open and the body of Nicholas can be seen (45, 48, 54, 71, 74, 76, 81, 82, 84). This representation must have developed under the impact of the representations of the saint's death, in which, as a rule, the casket is open. In the same century some painters added a figure of a bishop following the group with the sarcophagus (29?, 32, 33, 48, 54, 55).

A totally different and unique rendering of the event is found on icon No. 45. The painter depicted the translation in two scenes. In the first, at the left, three ships with large white sails are at sea. In the middle ship, as far as can be seen in the reproduction, lies the body of the saint. At the right, ashore, the tall, but

simple church and the walls of Myra are shown. Within the walls of the city the body of the saint is represented again, lying at the foot of the church. A large group of people (probably the Barians) approaches the body. In the second scene, at the left, two ships near the shore, and at the right is an impressive city with high walls, towers, roofs and many windows in the buildings. In front of the walls several men (deacons?) carry an open casket with the body of the saint. They walk toward a group of people which stands in front of the gates to the city. In the foreground at the left there may be another group of people (the sick and the crippled?).<sup>67</sup>

One can find appropriate passages in the literary account of the translation which could have been in the mind of the painter during his work on these scenes: "I tu tako narjadiša muža blagogovejna bojaščisja Boga v trex korablex iti po svjatogo . . . I priidoša v Lukiju grad Mur'skyj, i pristaša v limene gradstem', svet že stvorše, vzeša oružija vnidoša v cerkov' svjatago Nikoly . . . I obretoša raku polnu mura, i . . . mošči ego vzjaša s radostiju, i nesoša i v korabl' svoj, i otpluša v more . . . Videvše že Barjane, jako priidoša s mošč'mi svjatago Nikoly ot Mur, i izidoša vsi gražane v sretenie ego, muži i ženy, ot mlada i do velika, s sveščami i tem'janom . . .

Another unique representation of the event appears on icon No. 82. It is a very large scene, filled with figures, architectural details and landscape. In the background we see characteristic Palex towns with decorative facades, fairy tale-like towers and roofs, ornamental gates and arches. In the middle of the composition are dynamic and expressive icon hillocks, constituting an immediate background for the procession which carries the body of the saint and for countless observers lined up along the path of the procession. The carriers are headed by a monk, probably an abbot, who holds an icon of St. Nicholas. He is followed by deacons and monks, also carrying procession icons of the Virgin and Christ on high poles. Four deacons in ornate robes support the heavy green sarcophagus with the body of the saint. Nicholas lies in the casket with the Gospel book placed on his chest. Around the sarcophagus are other figures of deacons and subdeacons with censers and candlesticks. Behind the carriers is another large group of people, led by a bishop, two young boys (subdeacons) and a deacon with a very large candlestick. Several other people (among them three monks) descend from the city at the left, and a man with a golden cross on a platter, who heads another group of citizens, descends towards the procession at the right. In the bottom right corner a sick man sits on the ground. This elaborate composition may illustrate

an equally detailed description of the arrival of the relics in the Synaxarion: "O nemže uvidevše, iže vo grade, s episkopy i svjaščenniki, inoki, so sveščami i fimijanom, i vsjakim ukrašeniem, i ves' pričet cerkovnyj, vsenarodne mužie s ženami i cjudy v sretenie svjatago telese, i sxodjat ot negože vsjak voзраст blagoslovenie togda priemše, mnogi bedny, xromy, slepy, gluxi, besny i različnymi nedugi oskorblenii nezavistnu isceleniju spodobišasja . .

. „69

31. Nicholas Saves Demetrios From Drowning (Thauma de Demetrio.

Inscriptions: Svjatyj Nikola izbavi Dmitrija iz dna morja (1, 8);  
 Svjatyj Nikola / . . . / bavljaet' / . . . / ri iz d / . . . / rja (3);  
 Svjatyj Nikola postavi Dmitra vo domu svoeme (6);  
 Svjatyj Nikola izbavi Dmitreja o potopa (15);  
 / . . . / Nikola izbavljaet' z dna morja (16);  
 Svjatyj Nikola izvede Dmitreja iz dna morja (17);  
 Svjatyj Nikola izja Dumitrija iz morja (23);  
 Svjatyj Nikola vozja čeloveka ot dna morja imenem Dmitrija (34);  
 / . . . / izbavi Dmitreja iz dna morja (39);  
 / . . . / Dmitre / . . . / morja (47);  
 Svjatyj Nikola izbavi Dmitrija ot potopa (51);  
 Svjatyj Nikola vynjal zo dna morja čeloveka imenem Demitrija (58);  
 Svjatyj Nikolae izvede Dmitrija is dna morja (66).

The miracle of saving Demetrios from drowning, rarely illustrated in Byzantine, but more frequently in Yugoslavian, post-Byzantine works, enjoyed great popularity in Russian icons. The most probable iconographical source of the scene were the representations of Christ walking on the waves ("Navicella") or the Miraculous draught of fishes. In these compositions Christ appeared standing on the waves or ashore, reaching with his hand towards Peter who was either partially submerged, or stood on the surface of the water. In the Demetrios composition these two figures are preserved, only instead of Christ we see St. Nicholas, and Demetrios takes the place of Peter. The saint stands either on the left or right side of the scene, holding a Gospel in his left hand and reaching with his right towards Demetrios, who is drowning. Only on icons Nos. 41, 50, and II the saint holds his Gospel in his right hand.<sup>70</sup> On one icon only (51) Demetrios cannot be seen, and the saint does not hold his hand out. On the icon from Borovici (45) not only the head of Demetrios, but also of several other sailors can be seen in the waves.<sup>71</sup>

Most icons present the scene as taking place in a lake, surrounded by a hilly landscape. In several cases (3, 16, 47, 56, 80, II) elements of architecture are shown on the side of the scene (ill. 89).



The boat usually resembles a flat crescent, but sometimes the painters attempt to show the volume of the boat or its inside part (3, 22, 23, 41, 49, 56, 57, 58, 72, 74, II, XII). In the majority of our examples the boat is turned over, floating on the surface. On icons Nos. 26, 47, 51, 55 and 78 the boat is sinking. In three instances the boat has a sail (22, 43, 57), and oars are rarely shown (14 -- two, 22 -- two small and two large, 23, 26, 31, 33, 49, 55, 57, 69, 74 and 80 -- one). Several works (16, 27, 35, 46, 59, 75)<sup>72</sup> do not depict the boat at all (ill. 90). It is quite possible that the painters departed from the canonical composition in order to convey the fragment of the story when Demetrios was at the bottom of the sea. The inscription on icon No. 16 ("Nikola izbavljaet' z dna morja") may confirm such a hypothesis, although it should be kept in mind that similar inscriptions appeared in the scenes which represented the boat.

Five icons deserve special attention. On the icon from Ozerevo (6) one sees a different composition, which may be entitled Demetrios in his house. In the middle of the scene Demetrios sits in the house which is surrounded by four figures: two at the right and two at the left (ill. 91). Since the figures at the left closely resemble the figures at the right, I assume that the painter depicted only two neighbors: before they broke into Demetrios'

house, and afterwards. Their gestures do not allow one to determine which group represents the earlier moment of the action.

The icon from Kolomna (14) shows the miracle in two scenes. The first is a standard representation of Nicholas pulling Demetrios out of the sea, with a boat and two oars floating on the surface. The second presents at the left a small narrow building with a gabled roof. In front of the building (that is, inside) sits Demetrios, holding an oar in his hands. Water is pouring down Demetrios' legs in two delicate coils. At the right, seven neighbors stand in poses showing surprise and puzzlement.

On the plaque from Palex (79) the painter combined these two scenes into one. On the left side of the composition Nicholas saves Demetrios from drowning. On the right side, ashore, Demetrios sits in his house, while the neighbors (two men and a woman), shown above, approach the house (ill. 92).

Simon Spiridonov Xolmogorec (80) illustrated the miracle in a very similar way. In the upper left corner of his composition Demetrios is in his house, and the neighbors are coming to investigate what is going on. Below, in the foreground, Nicholas saves the man from death in the abyss.

The scenes which depict the moment of the discovery of Demetrios in his house by his neighbors are probably based

on some Byzantine models, possibly on the fresco in Bojana. It should also be underlined that icons Nos. 6 and 14 (in the second scene) do not show the saint at all; this being faithful to the literary source, but unorthodox for a hagiographical icon.

Finally, icon No. 44 presents an unique innovation. There are only two scenes on this icon, and one of them illustrates Thauma de Demetrio. But instead of Nicholas, an angel pulls the man out of the waters (in the second scene an angel heals a demoniac). I believe that the author of this icon was a little suspicious of the saint's powers to be everywhere and help everyone, often at the same time. For him, a much better explanation was that Nicholas saved and helped through his "agents" -- angels.

32. The Story of Basil (Thauma de Basilio).

Inscriptions: Svjatyj Nikola / . . . / Vasil'ja  
 / . . . / rikova ot sracin i pos  
 / . . . / ru otca i materi (1);  
 / . . . / soroci / . . . /, Svjatyj  
 Nikola post / . . . / mater / . . . /  
 v domu (6);  
 Svjatyj Nikola vosxiti Vasilija, syna  
 Agrikova, ot carja soročinskago (8);  
 Svjatyj Nikola postavi Argikova (?)  
 syna pre / . . . / cem svoim ot  
 stračin (17);  
 Svjatyj Nikola postavi Agrikova / . . .  
 (19);  
 Svjatyj Nikola privede Vasilja ko otcu  
 svoemu (21);  
 Svjatyj Nikola pri / . . . / se / . .  
 . / (23);

Svjatyj Nikola prinese Agrikova syna  
 ot sracin i postavi ego na dvore  
 otčim (34);  
 Svjatyj Nikola izbavi ot stracyn Agri-  
 kova syna Vasil'ja (51);  
 Svjatyj Nikolae izbavi Vsil'ja Agriko  
 syna ot sracyn (66);  
 Svjatyj Nikolae Źjudotvorec izbavi  
 Agrikova syna ot sracyn (81);  
 Svjatyj Nikola izbavi syna Agrikova ot  
 knjazja stračinskago (VIII).

In Byzantine painting the story of Basil was rarely illustrated, and its iconography underwent several important changes. The earliest representation, in two scenes, can be seen on an icon from Sinai (12th-13th century). In the first scene, at the left, three Arabs (the Emir, wearing a crown, is in the middle) sit at the table,<sup>73</sup> feasting. At the right, Nicholas leads Basil away, holding him by his hand. In the second scene, at the right, three people: the mother, the father, and a guest sit solemnly at the round table. At the left, Nicholas stands behind Basil, with his hand on the boy's shoulder. Basil's hands are empty and he reaches towards his parents.

The iconography of the first scene probably derives from some Byzantine illustrated chronicle which depicts the events involving the Arabs, while the second scene is based on the formula used in the Marriage at Cana compositions (this accounts for the solemn figures of the parents and the guest). The figures of Nicholas and Basil "are also cliches: the artist used a common formula for

departure in the first scene, and for presentation in the second." (Ševčenko, pp. 410-1).

In subsequent centuries the following changes in this basic iconography can be observed: the figures of the parents are no longer solemn and rigid, but express emotions caused by the unexpected deliverance of their son; some monuments have only the scene representing the return of Basil, and then the figure of the guest is eliminated and the shape of the table is oblong; two Yugoslavian monuments give completely different renditions of the story.<sup>74</sup>

The Russian icons, though undoubtedly based on Byzantine works similar to the Sinai icon, nonetheless include certain interesting variations and new elements.

The earliest icons limit the number of figures in each scene to four. In the first scene, near the Emir sits his wife, wearing a crown, like her husband. Ševčenko thought that the figure of the Emir's wife at Ramaća could have been borrowed from some Western representation of the event (p. 417). If this hypothesis was correct, it would suggest that the earliest Russian icons were also influenced by Western iconography. Since it is rather unlikely that all the painters in Russia would follow a Western example, another hypothesis should be put forth. There probably existed earlier Byzantine works which depicted the Emir's wife, and they served as a source of Russian representations. This,

of course, does not exclude the possibility that these early Byzantine works borrowed the figure of the Arab queen from some Western source. Whatever is the origin of this representation, it is standard in Russian icon painting.<sup>75</sup>

It must be said, in this connection, that the illustration of this scene in Russian icons appears only when both scenes are represented. In all instances when the painters illustrate only one episode, they include the scene of the return of Basil.

In numerous Russian icons (1, 2, 6, 8, 11, 14, 17, 18, 23, 33, etc.) Basil holds a cup, goblet, or a glass in his hand (ill. 93-4), which is an illustration of the following words of the text: "I zrxaxut' otroka stojašča . . . i v ruce deržašče st'kljanicu vina polnu" and "No se nyne v Krite na večeri predstoljal esm' knjazju sračinskomu . . . Da nyne reče knjaz': 'Čerpli mi.' I se čerpax i xotex podati st'kljanicju siju polnu, i ne vede kto silen vnezaapu poxvati mja i st'kljanicju siju, jakože nyne deržju polnu . . ." (VMČD6, pp. 8 and 9). On icon No. 6 besides a cup in his right hand, Basil holds a towel in his left (ill 95).<sup>76</sup> The towel, lying on the table near Basil, appears also on icon No. 29.

In Russian works the table is almost always rectangular. Only in two 16th century icons it is round (33) or oblong (40).

A limited number of icons shows five figures in each scene (33, 49, 56, 74, 76, VIII), but it is obvious that they are not based on our primary iconographical formula, but reflect the development in icon-painting, characterized by an inclusion of more figures in particular compositions.

This development towards multi-figured compositions and detailed representations can be observed even better on icons Nos. 41, 55, 78, 80, 81, and 82. On the first two works we see the parents being accompanied by two guests (ill. 96), on icon No. 81 -- by three, on No. 78 -- by four or five, on No. 80 -- by seven, and on No. 82 -- by thirteen. Another addition to the compositions, which also reflects this trend towards miniaturization and attention to detail, appears in the 16th century. On icon No. 43 three dogs announce Basil's return to his house.<sup>77</sup> Dogs are depicted on icons Nos. 56, 71, 76, 82, V, and VIII. One of them sniffs at Basil's hand, as if trying to recognize the smell of his long absent master. In the works which depict dogs, the painters apparently wanted to emphasize the instrumental role of canines in the story; their barking alarmed the parents and resulted in the discovery of Basil in the courtyard (ill. 97-98).

On the icon from Liskowate (57) the father expressively points to his eyes, as if he wanted to say: "Vasilie, se nyne tja vižu istinoju, r'ci mi, ty li esi, ili sten' mi

sja toboju kažet'?" (VMČD6, p. 8). It is one of these rare representations in which we are able to determine which particular fragment, or even a sentence, of the literary source has been illustrated.

The most unusual representation of Thauma de Basilio appears on icon No. 25. In the first scene at the left the Emir sits on a stool, holding his feet on a square pedestal. In front of the Arab stands Basil (he may hold a tiny cup in his hand). In the second scene Basil is at the left, and at the right, behind the table, are his astounded parents. In neither scene Nicholas is represented. Such an unorthodox approach could have been a result of the painter's attempt to illustrate the words in which the boy explained to the father the means of his rescue: "I ne vede, kto silen vnezaapu poxvati mja . . . i ne vede jako na zemli stojax, tako bo mnjaxsja jako vetrom' nosim bex." (VMČD6, p. 9). Another possible explanation is that the painter wanted to indicate that nobody else, but Basil, could see the saint.

The three late icons, Nos. 80, 81, and 82, deserve a separate description. On the first we see a large room on the left side of the scene. Seven guests sit along the table in the room. The parents stand in the foreground. On the right side of the picture, in a smaller room (probably a courtyard), stand Basil and Nicholas.



On icon No. 81, in the foreground, Nicholas is at the left, behind Basil. At the right is a staircase and the father descends to the courtyard to greet his son, who still holds a cup in his hand. At the top of the composition, in the left corner, the painter depicted the feast: the mother talks to three guests who sit along the table.

On icon No. 82 in the right upper corner we see the feast in Agrik's house: the mother is at the left, talking to nine guests seated at the both sides of a long table. On the left side of the picture is a long staircase, ending in a building with a gabled roof. Through the door of this building exit four people, ready to step down the stairs. The rather is shown almost at the bottom of the staircase, anxious to greet his son, who, at the same time, is being sniffed by one of two dogs. Nicholas stands behind Basil, on the extreme right (ill. 97).

In these late icons the figure of Nicholas is much less important than it has been in early icons with only four figures in each scene.<sup>78</sup> The illustration of the return of Basil becomes a miniature, a genre picture in which details from every day life of the Russians can be noticed. For instance, on icon No. 82 Basil does not hold a cup, or a pitcher, but a flask. This may be explained only by the popularity of such flasks in Russia at that time. A similar flask in Basil's hands appears also on icon No. VIII, an

18th-century Northern work (ill. 98).<sup>79</sup>

33. Nicholas Saves Christopher From Execution (Thauma de presbytero).

Inscriptions: Svjatyj Nikola izbavi ot naga meča  
popa Kryštofora (23);  
Svjatyj Nikola izbavi čeloveka ot  
mečja (53).

The miracle of saving Christopher from the sword was a later addition to the cycle of the scenes illustrating the life and miracles of St. Nicholas. It was depicted infrequently, the earliest representations dating to the 15th century. Characteristically, the scene appears only in Carpathian icons and in late Russian icons with an unusually extensive repertory of scenes (80, 82).

The earliest example of the scene can be seen on icon No. 23. At the left stands St. Nicholas, grabbing the sword of the executioner with his right hand, and holding a Gospel in his left. The executioner is in the middle, while at the right the priest bends forward awaiting the blow. His hands are tied behind him. In the background are green hillocks. The awkward pose of the executioner is worth noting: he looks at Christopher, but his hands with the sword seem to grow out of his back. All other icons which include this scene present the executioner in a more natural and "correct" pose, with his right hand raised to strike

a blow, and his left holding his sheath (53, 60), the hair of the priest (27, 80, 82), or just resting on his hip (75). On icons Nos. 27, 60, 75, 80, and 82 Christopher's hands are tied in front.

It is easy to notice that the composition of these scenes derives from the standard representation of Nicholas saving three men from execution, especially from this variant which shows one man singled out for an immediate execution, while the other men stand on the side, waiting for their turn. However, while the Carpathian icons eliminate the figures of all participants in the event but Nicholas, the executioner, and the priest, the late Russian icons return to the old formula of three men.

On icon No. 80 the only element which differentiates the scenes of saving the three men and Christopher is the absence of spectators in the latter. The priest and two other condemned men kneel before the executioner. He holds Christopher by his hair and raises his right hand with a sword. Nicholas, who stands in front of the men, grabs the sword with his right hand.

On icon No. 82 the priest stands alone, being held by the executioner by his hair. Two other men, ready to be executed, stand at the left, and behind them a group of observers can be seen.

In this connection, the best identifying factor for these two late icons is the position of the scene in the cycle. As in both cases it appears in the second part of the cycle, and is preceded by another scene of execution within the story of the three generals, it should be identified as the saving of Christopher from the sword.

34. The Story of Peter (Thauma de Petro scholario).

Inscriptions: Svjatyj Nikola postavi Petra v Rimu  
(15);  
Izbavi muža iz temnici (V).

Thauma de Petro is another miracle which has not been depicted in Byzantine painting, while its representations in Russian icons are rare. The earliest scene devoted to the miracle was found on the 14th--15th century icon from Novgorod (15). The iconography of this scene is extremely simple: on the background of two buildings flanking the composition, and a wall connecting these buildings, we see at the left St. Nicholas standing with his Gospel book, and at the right Peter, in a short tunic, approaching the saint with his hands extended towards him (ill. 99). Such an elementary formula, with two figures facing each other, could not indicate clearly enough which fragment of the story was illustrated, and had the inscription been destroyed it would have left no indication what the scene represented. It is not surprising, therefore, that this composi-

tion did not become popular and widely accepted. For a hundred years the miracle with Peter was forgotten, and when it reappeared again in the middle of the 16th century it was illustrated according to another, more appropriate iconographic formula.

On the icon from Boroviči (45) for instance, at the right, in a room with an arched ceiling, there are three figures: in the corner a man sits on a small stool or pedestal, and at the left are two saints (they have halos). Behind the saints, on the extreme left is another figure, standing outside the room. The characteristic setting of the scene, with the dark background of the room, indicates quite well that the miracle takes place in prison. Thus, the man standing outside may be identified as a prison guard, and the figures inside as Nicholas, Simeon, and Peter. Peter sits in the corner while the saints stand in front of him. This iconographical formula, deriving from the scenes of the appearance of Nicholas to the three generals in prison, has two important distinguishing elements: the presence of two saints in the prison, and a single figure of a prisoner. Apparently this rendering satisfied the painters and they accepted it as the best way to represent the miracle. On icon No. 76, Peter sits at the left, in front of a prison building (the bars can be seen on the dark window in the background), while Nicholas and Simeon approach from the right, Nicholas talking to Simeon. The composition is flank-

ed at the right by another building with a black door. On icon No. 80 at the right, in a large and elaborate prison cell, Peter lies on the floor, while Nicholas and Simeon stand in front, possibly freeing him from his chains. At the left we see the saints again, standing in front of the prison building. In the top left corner of the scene is another representation, probably showing one of the first appearances of Nicholas to Peter.<sup>80</sup> Peter lies on the bed and the saint bows over the bed, standing behind, like in scenes of appearance to Constantine or Ablabius. Spiridonov succeeded in depicting at least three moments of the action: the first or second appearance of Nicholas to Peter in a dream, the arrival of Nicholas and Simeon in front of the prison, and the appearance of both saints to Peter in the prison. However, it is easy to see that this was achieved mostly by miniaturization of the composition, not by the introduction of a new iconography. Simon's composition, despite its ability to convey three separate moments of the story, was based on existing iconographical models combined in one representation.

On icon No. 82, on the right side of the picture we see the prison. Inside, on the right, Peter sits on a throne-like chair, and Nicholas with Simeon stand in front of him. On the left side of the scene Nicholas leads Peter out of the prison building. Behind them a fragment of a

mountainous landscape can be seen. Since I am unable to read the inscription, a possibility of a different interpretation of the scene must be indicated. The figure which sits on the throne may be the Pope. Then, the prison would have to be the Pope's palace, and the saint accompanying Nicholas, Peter, dressed in his monk's cassock and haloed. This hypothesis may be confirmed at this time only by the color of Peter's tunic. In the fragment showing Nicholas leading Peter out of the prison, the man wears an orange-red tunic. A tunic of the same hue can be noticed under the cassock of the haloed figure accompanying Nicholas, while the enthroned man is dressed in a golden robe.

Finally, on icon No. V we see a composition which, due to the damage, can be only hypothetically identified as the illustration of Thauma de Petro. At the left St. Nicholas leads a man with a halo towards a stately figure which sits on a throne on the right side of the scene. Although Myslivec (p. 81) believed that this scene represents Thauma de servo liberato, it is much more probable that we are dealing with an illustration of the appearance of Nicholas and Simeon to Peter in prison (notice the similarities in compositions).

The inscription to this scene indicates that the painter might have copied his composition from some model. Not knowing how to entitle the scene (a correct inscription

should have included Peter's name), he named it "Nicholas saves a man from prison", since the prison was the obvious place of the miracle.

35. Nicholas Heals a Lame Man (Thauma de Nicolao claudo).

Inscriptions: Svjatyj Nikola xromva<sup>81</sup> isceli (51).

On only two Russian icons are there scenes which can be identified with certainty as representations of this miracle of St. Nicholas. The most expressive rendering appears on icon No. 51. In the background there is a church with an icon of the saint in the middle. Under the icon is an altar. At the right we see one standing figure, while at the left the lame man holds the icon with his left hand and supports himself on the altar with the other. His legs are still weak and cannot hold his weight.

The painter illustrated the final episode of the story in this scene. The lame man recognized the saint in the icon and asked him to fulfill his promise and to heal his ailment: "I oboim ikonu svjatago Nikoly obema rukama svoima . . . I naččasjaemu žily prostirati i kosti, i sta prost na zemli." (VMČD6, p. 57).

The painter, lacking the Byzantine examples and canonical compositions, had to invent an appropriate formula for the scene. He successfully linked several common motifs: the church with an icon of St. Nicholas on the wall was



taken from the scenes illustrating the Kiev miracle (see below), the figure of the lame man from the scenes of healing demoniacs, and the altar from the scenes of the consecration of the saint. However, despite its compilative character, the composition has clarity and leaves no doubt what miracle is depicted. In this connection it is difficult to explain why this miracle was so rarely illustrated. The only other representation appears on the icon from Palex (82). At the left the lame man climbs the steps leading to a church, and St. Nicholas, who stands near the steps, advises him to go to the church. At the right, in the church, the lame man half kneels in front of an icon of the saint, while at least three people observe the miracle.

This icon shows two moments of the action: at the left the moment when the man "nač<sup>h</sup>a, polzaja po zemli, iti k svjatomu Nikole. Iduš<sup>h</sup>ju že emu po puti, javisja emu presvjatyj Nikolae" (VMČD6, p. 56), and at the right the fragment represented on icon No. 51.

On icon No. 72, at the left side of the composition is a man crouching in an awkward pose. Nicholas stands at the right and blesses the man. In the background are hillocks and trees (?). Myslivec thought that the scene depicted the miracle of healing the lame man, and he used as an argument the pose of the man which indicated clearly that he could not move his legs (p. 77). However, since

this unusual scene neither shows an icon of the saint, a church, nor any spectators, and includes also the figure of Nicholas, not required in the primary composition (No. 51), it is much more probable that it depicts the healing of a demoniac.<sup>82</sup>

36. The Saracene Miracle.

Inscriptions illegible.

The representation of this miracle can be found only in the most extensive cycles,<sup>83</sup> despite the great popularity of the story in Old Russian manuscripts. On icon No. 80 we find the illustration of this fragment of the story in which the Saracene describes what has happened to him: "Egda bex v temnice, slyšax edinogo straža moljaščasja svjatomu Nikole, načax i az molitisja . . . I javisja mi čelovek star, plešiv, v belax rizax . . . I reče mi: 'Počto zoveši Nikolu? Znaeši li ego?' I rex: 'Znaju ego, ibo slyšax ego velika pomošč'nika . . . ' I ne vem čto glagola, toliko slyšax, iže mi reče sracyn'sky: 'Dokude ti spati?' I vozbnuv, videx ženu i deti na odre domu svoego . . . "<sup>84</sup>

At the left, near the prison wall, a guard sits praying to St. Nicholas. At the right, in the prison, the Saracene lies on a cot, and the saint stands nearby, talking to the sleeping pagan. At the top of the composition, in the left corner, the Saracene wakes up on his bed, while his

wife (and children?) stand behind the bed, in a small room. This representation, like other scenes on Simon's icon, is a skillful coinage of common iconographical formulae.

On icon No. 82 the miracle is presented in a slightly different way. At the right the Saracene sits in a small cell, and receives food from a guard. At the left, in the background, we see an elaborate prison building with white bars near the ceiling, and in the foreground Nicholas leads the Saracene out of prison. Although the painter did not illustrate the story literally, but just indicated that the pagan was in prison and was freed by Nicholas, one can attribute the scene as the Saracene miracle on the basis of its position in the cycle. It is placed among the posthumous miracles of the saint in exactly the same spot as on the icon painted by Simon Xolmogorec: i.e., after the scene of saving Christopher from execution and before the story of the Patriarch.

37. The Carpet Miracle (Thauma de stromate).

Inscriptions: Svjatyj Nikola daet' kover žene  
vdovice (1);  
Čjudo svjatago Nikoly kako kupi  
kover u starca / . . . / vda  
/ . . . / 6 litr zlata, vzem kover  
/ . . . / donese v / . . . / m  
/ . . . / starca, / . . . / prin  
/ . . . / e kover / . . . / (2);  
Svjatyj Nikola kupi / . . . / (7);  
Svjatyj Nikola kupi kover u blag-  
overna muža,

Svjatyj Nikola prinese kover i vda  
 kover žene starceve (8);  
 Svjatyj Nikola kupil kover u pirsjan  
 / . . . / (10);<sup>85</sup>  
 Svjatyj Nikola kupi kover u star'ca,  
 Svjatyj Nikola kovr dae star'ceve žene  
 (15);  
 / . . . / ikola / . . . / t' zen / . .  
 . / (16);  
 Svjatyj Nikola kupi u starca kover,  
 Svjatyj Nikola dae starceve žene kover  
 (51);<sup>86</sup>  
 Svjatyj Nikola kupil kovr u muža (58);  
 Svjatyj Nikolae kupi kover,  
 Svjatyj Nikolae daet' žene ego kover  
 (66).

In Byzantine art the representation of the miracle of the carpet appeared only once, in a 13th century fresco at Bojana,<sup>87</sup> and later, in the post-Byzantine period, it could be found in a few Rumanian churches dating to the 16th and 17th century. In Russia, however, it was frequently illustrated. The earliest preserved representations are of the 13th--14th centuries.

The Russian artists had three ways of illustrating the miracle. The first called for the representation of the moment of buying the carpet and the moment of returning it, in two separate scenes. The second united these separate scenes into one. The third presented only one moment of action: the buying or returning of the carpet.

The first method, the most popular one, was employed already in the earliest icons (ill. 100-1). The third method was also used early (if one considers the scene at

Bojana as the primary composition, this rendering of the story may be the oldest), but the Russian artists did not resort to it very often. In the 15th century the second method appeared and in the next hundred years it became the most common, probably due to its "space-saving" qualities.

Despite the presence of three different ways of illustrating the miracle, its iconography was very stable. In a typical scene of buying the carpet Nicholas and the old man stand facing each other and holding the folded or unfolded<sup>88</sup> carpet. Only on icons Nos. 10, (ill. 102) 15, 16, and 23 the carpet is still in the old man's possession. The background of the scene usually consists of buildings and walls (on icons Nos. 8 and 10 they are absent), and only occasionally of elements of landscape (40, 82). In a typical scene of returning the carpet Nicholas faces the old man's wife. The woman is frequently depicted standing inside a building (2, 11, 29, 33, 43, 47, 51, 65, and 75). The saint either still has the carpet in his hand (ill. 103) ready to be handed to the woman (2, 7, 11, 13, 15, 16, 29), or has given it to her already and now both hold a piece of it.

On icon No. 58 the painter depicted not only the carpet between the saint and the old man, but also a purse of gold which Nicholas gives to the man.

In compositions which show both moments of the action in one scene, the arrangement of the figures may be as follows: the old man -- Nicholas -- Nicholas -- the woman (18), Nicholas -- the man -- the woman -- Nicholas (27, 47), or the man -- Nicholas -- the woman -- Nicholas (29, 33, 51, 65, 75). There is rarely a clear division between the figures in the middle; most often the dividing element is a wall of the building or a column.

On icon No. 80 three moments of the action are represented. At the bottom left, in a large building with a richly decorated roof, the old man discusses with his wife the way of obtaining money for the feast of Nicholas. They hold the unfolded carpet between them. At the right, on the top of the composition, Nicholas returns the carpet to the woman, and at the bottom he buys it from the old man. No other icon presents the moment of the conversation between the couple, but in this work, painted by Simon Spiridonov, its presence is not surprising (see his detailed representations of other miracles).

Finally, icon No. 82 shows a somewhat different scene. On the background of a hilly landscape the painter depicted a walled town, with several buildings. At the top right, standing among the icon hillocks, Nicholas buys the carpet from the impoverished man. At the left, in the foreground, Nicholas returns the carpet to the woman, who looks at the

saint from behind a wall or a fence.

38. The Story of the Three Merchants (Thauma de tribus Christianis).

Inscriptions: Svjatyj Nikolae izbavi trex kupcov ot potopa, oni že na dne morstem byša bliz ada, oni ž ograždeny byša jako stenami vokrug, i uzriša sebe pomoščnika skorago (43); Svjatyj Niko / . . . / izbavi trex ot kita (V); Čjudo svjatago Nikoly o trex družex, exaša po morju v korabli s nevernymi i vmetaša ix v more (VI).<sup>89</sup>

The miracle with the three merchants was never illustrated in Byzantine painting. In Russian icons it appeared late, in the 16th century, but soon developed into one of the most colorful and fascinating representations among the miracles of St. Nicholas.

Since it is difficult to determine which representation of the miracle in researched icons is the earliest, it is best to begin the description from one of the oldest and at the same time longest renderings of the story, on icon No. 42, from the Novgorod region, dating to 1551. The icon depicts the miracle in three separate scenes. The first scene shows a large boat with one sail in the middle. In the boat are several figures, but two men sitting in front are the most important because they push a man in red robes overboard, head first. At the bottom of

the scene, amidst the waves, two heads of drowning men can be seen.

This scene illustrates the beginning of the story of the three merchants: "Bežaše v korabli tom' vsi jazyci poganstii, no razve byša v nix tri čeloveka kristianska rodu, mnogo imenija imušča. Segó radi soveščáša na nix poganii izrinuti ix is korablja. Toj že nošči napadoša na nix, onem spjaščim, abie bezbožni jazyci izmetaše ja v more. Oni že brodjaše v mori . . . Edin že ot nix ne umejaše plavati na vode, da sego radi skoro utope . . ." (VMČD6, pp. 119-20).

In the second scene, at the right, two of the merchants sit on a stone in the middle of the sea and lament their lost friend. At the left, a large fish swims up to the stone and opens widely its jaws, allowing the third merchant to step out of the fish on the stone. The man carries a heavy sack on his back.

This scene illustrates the following fragment of the text: "Byvšju d'ni, sedosta na kameni . . . i pomyslista že o utopšem' družu svoem'. Sedjaščima že ima, vosply kit velik istrasen, i položi glavu svoju na kameni tom, i otverze usta svoja, i byst' aki propast' velika. Ona dva vozopista . . . mnja, jako požreti ja xoščet'. I se abie izyde izo ust kitovyx drug ix, nosja s soboju mešok tjažek." (VMČD6, p. 120).



The third scene presents the stone at the right, with the three men sitting on it, approaching a tower which is ashore, on the left side of the composition. The tower represents the city of Byzantium. In front of the tower two or three people dressed in rich clothes await the arrival of the stone. These people must be citizens or the courtiers of the Prince Vatapon. The text says: "Bežaje že dva d'ni, i byst' tretij den', uzreša že bereg i grad . . . I egda že priplyša ko bregu grada Vizantijskago . . . gražane vse stekšesja na byvšee čjudo i povedaša o nix Vataponu, knjazju svoemu." (VMČD6, p. 121).

The iconography of these wonderful scenes probably derives from the illustrations of the story of Jonah. In such representations there were at least three important elements which could have served as models for the Three Merchants Miracle: Jonah being thrown out of the ship, head first; Jonah being swallowed by a sea-monster; and Jonah in front of a city (Niniveh?), greeted by its inhabitants.<sup>90</sup> The author of icon No. 42, one of the first to depict this miracle of St. Nicholas, added some details to the Jonah formula in order to make it fit the Nicholas story. His additions consisted of the heads of the two drowning men at the bottom of the first scene, the stone with the merchants on it, and the sack on the shoulder of the man emerging from the fish. A very similar rendering (possibly a

copy of icon No. 42 or deriving from a common source) of the miracle, also in three separate scenes, can be seen on icon No. 77.<sup>91</sup>

The icon from the collection of D.V. Sirotkin in Niznij Novgorod (55) is surprisingly close to icon No. 42, however, it omits the third scene, the arrival of the three merchants in Byzantium, and in the first scene includes one more detail. At the very bottom, under the two heads of the men in the sea, one can notice a fragment of the floating stone; this is an illustration of the following sentence of the text: "A onem ešče plavajuščim, i abie vozrinusja kamen' velik iz dna morja i nača plavati pred nimi, aki gora velika." (VMČD6, p. 120). The second scene repeats exactly the composition of the second scene on icon No. 42, even the colors of the men's robes are the same: the two men on the stone wear green and yellow tunics, and the one emerging from the mouth of the fish wears red (ill. 104).

The author of the wings of a triptych (56), probably because of the limited space, united in one picture the second and third scenes from icon No. 42. At the right is a tower with a door leading to the city, and at the left the fish spits out the man in red clothes, while the two other men, one wearing yellow and one in greenish-blue tunic, sit on the stone. The painter eliminated the figures of the citizens of Byzantium waiting for the arrival

of the stone, but by the inclusion of the tower indicated clearly enough that he also had in mind the moment of the merchant's arrival at the city.

The icon from Boroviči (45) gives a unique rendering of the miracle. There are only two scenes, but they depict the entire story in great detail. In the first, the three scenes from icon No. 42 are combined into one representation: at the top the merchants are thrown out of the ship, in the middle two men sit on the stone and the third emerges from the fish with a sack over his shoulder,<sup>92</sup> and at the right the three men arrive on the stone at Byzantium and are greeted by a group of people. The second scene shows in the top left corner the prince, Vatapon, sitting on a throne, accompanied by a servant. At the right is a long table set for a feast. The three merchants stand in front of the table holding chalices in their hands, while the six pagans sit at the other side of the table. This part of the scene is divided from the bottom part by a long wall. Below, at the left, the pagans are being executed. They stand on a bridge, bending forward, their hands tied behind their backs, while executioners, ready to push the condemned men off the bridge into the water, stand behind them (ill. 105).<sup>93</sup>

This unusual composition translated into the language of painting the following fragments of the story: "Knjaz'

že Vatapon povelj sokrytisja im trem / the merchants -- A.B. / v domu svoem' i onex / the pagans -- A.B. / prizvati k sobe na obed. Sedjaščim že im na trapeze, na obeđe u knjazja, knjaz' že pošeptav edinomu ot slug svoix v uxo, rek: 'Poveli trem' onem vnesti pit'e vragom svoim.' Oni že tako stvoriša, vnesoša pitie v polatu vragom . . . Knjaz' že im reče: 'Dajte pitie gostem' sim.' I egda približišasja k nim s stekljanicami, poganii ze egda vozreša na nix, abie poleteša noži iz ruk ix, i sedoša, aki mertvi . . . Knjaz' že povele vmetati poganyja v more, rek: 'Da umret' smertiju neznajuščij Boga, juže beša ustroili znajuščim Boga, da vpadut v jamu, iže iskopaše ruce ix . . . " (VMČD6, pp. 121-2).

The sources of the iconography of this composition are complex. The figures of the condemned pagans waiting on the bridge for execution probably derive from the representations of the execution of heretics in Novgorod. They could have been borrowed from illustrated chronicles, particularly from the Licevoj Letopisnyj Svod (The Illustrated Compiled Chronicle), a work executed under the auspices of Makarius and containing more than 16 thousand miniatures. The rest of the figures, as well as the architectural backdrop, may derive from these chronicles or from manuscripts illustrating the life of St. Nicholas.

It should be noted that in all the icons described above the figure of Nicholas was not depicted in the scenes

illustrating the miracle with the three merchants. This was not surprising, since the text did not mention the saint's immediate involvement in the events. However, on the icon from the Ostrouxov collection (43), another variant of the composition appears. In a round lake, surrounded by icon hillocks, at the left we see a widely open mouth of a gigantic fish. One of the merchants emerges from the fish and steps on a round stone, occupied by his two friends. At the right stands St. Nicholas in his bishop's robes.

The addition of the figure of Nicholas, probably under the impact of other scenes in which he was depicted, changes the meaning of the scene. No longer are the merchants the most important part of the composition, and no longer is the representation a faithful rendering of the literary text. In this connection the inscription to the scene should be analyzed.

According to Antonova and Mneva (Katalog, II, p. 85) the inscription was renewed in the 19th century. I believe that the author of the icon inscribed the scene with the simple "Svjatyj Nikola izbavi trex kupcov ot potopa," which indicated quite well what miracle he illustrated. However, the 19th-century restorer did not know the story of the three merchants. Puzzled by the representation, he decided to describe in his inscription what he saw on the picture. Thus, he interpreted the fish as the open mouth of Hell, and

the stone as a wall on the bottom of the sea. Such an interpretation is not surprising, if one takes under consideration frequent representations of the open mouth of Hell in the compositions of the Last Judgement or the Vision of John Climacus, in which the sinners are falling into the gaping jaws of the monstrous head. It is surprising, however, that Antonova and Mneva agree with the restorer's inscription and interpretation, and do not point out the real meaning of the scene.

Almost exactly the same composition, with the figure of St. Nicholas standing at the right, the merchants on the stone in the middle, and the fish at the left, but with less landscape around the lake can be seen on icon No. V. The inscription to this scene also indicates that the painter did not know the text of the story very well. He writes: "Svjatyj Niko lae izbavi trex ot kita", while we know that the whale was sent by the saint to save the man who drowned.

The confusion in inscriptions shows that many painters, copying their compositions from other icons, did not have any idea which miracle they were illustrating, and tried to interpret the representations of their inscriptions, often committing significant mistakes. For a contemporary researcher these "misinterpreted" inscriptions are a proof of the lack of knowledge of the literary texts among many art-

ists.

Icons Nos. 71, 80, and 82 include representations which only hypothetically may be considered illustrations of Thauma de tribus Christianis. Icon No. 71 shows the three (?) men in the middle of the lake, and Nicholas at the left, in front of a tower. It is possible that the scene depicts the arrival of the merchants at Byzantium. However, the men are naked to the waist and apparently stand in the water, instead of sitting on the stone. On icons Nos. 80 and 82 in the middle of the sea is a sailboat, one man is being thrown overboard, and Nicholas rescues one drowning figure in exactly the same manner as in the scenes of saving Demetrios or the Patriarch (see below). The reasons for this change in iconography of the merchant miracle are unclear. Perhaps the story which described the fantastic miracle involving a fish and a floating stone, in the 17th century, the age of realistic tendencies, was considered improper, too naive, too fairy-tale-like to be depicted in the traditional way. Instead of showing the stone and the fish, the painters converted the composition into just another sea miracle, presenting Nicholas saving one of the merchants from drowning, with no hint at the fantastic elements of the story.

39. The Story of the Patriarch (Thauma de patriarcha).

Inscriptions: Svjatyj Niklae Čjudotvorec izbavi  
Afonasija ot potopa (81);

Svjatyj Nikolae izbavi patriarxa  
ot potopa (VI).

Thauma de patriarcha, a miracle story preserved only in Slavonic manuscripts, had not been illustrated in Byzantine painting<sup>94</sup> and in Russian icons appeared infrequently.

The earliest representation is a scene on the icon from Kievec (4). In a round lake a man dressed in a white cowl and a brown cape is drowning. He reaches with his right hand towards Nicholas. The saint, standing at the left, ashore, grabs the man's hand and pulls him out of the water. At the top left of the composition are icon hillocks and at the top right a simple tower.

The scene tries to illustrate the moment when Nicholas appears to the drowning Patriarch of Constantinople and saves him from the abyss. According to the Old Russian text: "Patriarxu že utapajuščju, i pomjanuv grex svoj, glagoljuščje: 'Svjatitelju velikij, arxiereju Mirskyj . . . izbavi mja ot glubiny morskya, ot naprasnyja smerti, ot gorkago časa . . . izmi mja ot glubiny seja.' I priide skoro na pomošč' svjatyj Nikolae, po morju xodja, jako po suxu, i priblizisja . . . im za ruku patriarxa . . ." (VMDC6, p. 69).

One look at the composition brings to mind the representations of the saving of Demetrios from drowning. The positions of the drowning man and the saint are in both scenes exactly the same. The scene with the Patriarch dif-



fers only in two details: Athanasius wears a white cowl, and there is no boat foundering in the sea. The similarity of both scenes must have limited the circulation of the Patriarch illustration, since it did not appear in Russian icons (in the monuments researched in this dissertation) before the second half of the 16th century. Characteristically, when it reappeared again, it was based on a completely new iconographical scheme.

This new rendering of the miracle can be seen on icons from Boroviči (45) and from the Pečerskij Monastery near Pskov (V). The icon from Boroviči shows the Patriarch in his white cowl, sitting at a table which is set for a feast. Near the table to the left of Athanasius, stands a man who can be identified as Theophanes. It is possible that he holds a jug with wine in his hands.<sup>95</sup> Above Theophanes, on the wall, hang three icons. At the extreme left a group of people, among them some clerics, approach the table. The background of the scene consists of buildings with windows, and walls. A very similar composition (possibly a copy) is found on icon No. V. The scene is extensively damaged, and its interpretation poses some difficulties. At the right one can distinguish the Patriarch sitting at the table. Near the table is Theophanes, holding something in his hands.<sup>96</sup> Above Theophanes the three icons hanging on the wall, and at the left at least one figure approaching the table, can

be seen.

Myslivec, who did not notice the representation on the icon from Boroviči and maintained that the Pečerski Monastery icon is the only one to depict the scene, thought that the painter represented not only the fragment of the story in which the Patriarch scourges Theophanes for having an icon of Nicholas, but also another, in which Theophanes prays to the icon for the miracle of the multiplication of wine. He even went so far as to identify the figure at the left as the cleric whom Theophanes asked to bless the icon (p. 80). The last part of this interpretation cannot be accepted, since Theophanes clearly does not pray to the icon, but serves the Patriarch at the table, and the person at the left may be any of the participants at the feast. However, on both icons the painters were able to allude to several moments of the action: to the three icons ordered by Theophanes, to the feast in which Athanasius and the clergy participated, and to the miracle of the multiplication of wine.

What is most significant in these new renderings of the story is that the old iconographical formula (saving from drowning) did not satisfy the painters and they invented a more suitable one, based on traditional motifs (the table set for the feast, for instance, could have been borrowed from the scenes of the return of Basil). The new

formula, nonetheless, was also not able to convey the story fully and extensively, since it abandoned the representation of the saving of Athanasius from drowning. A synthesis of these two representations became the ultimate goal of the artists.

In the end of the 17th century such a synthesis was achieved by Simon Xolmogorec (80). On his icon one can see three scenes illustrating the story. The first shows at the left the appearance of Nicholas to Theophanes in a dream. Nicholas bends over the bed and asks the man to order three icons from the painter Aggeus. At the bottom right we see Theophanes leaving his house and approaching the doors of the painter's studio. In the top right corner Simon placed a representation of Aggeus painting the icon of St. Nicholas. The second scene shows in the foreground a very detailed representation of the feast at the house of Theophanes. The Patriarch sits in the middle of the table, among numerous guests who drink wine from large chalices. At the bottom left Theophanes talks to a servant, apparently puzzled as to what to do about the wine. In the top left corner is the scene of greeting the Patriarch by Theophanes, and in the top right corner a scene of Theophanes praying to the icon of Nicholas (ill. 106). The third scene depicts a ship on the sea, and on the right side a scene of saving of Athanasius by the saint. The poses of the Patriarch and Nicholas

are traditional: Nicholas extends his hand to the man who drowns in the sea. In the background of the scene one can notice miniature buildings, towers, and walls, with some elements of landscape in the middle. As can be seen, the story is illustrated in great detail, although Simon again does not invent new iconographical formulae, but connects many common motifs and elaborates on details.

Another elaborate rendering of the story appears on icon No. 82. In the first scene, on the backdrop of buildings, towers and walls, Theophanes, standing at the extreme right, greets the clergy in his house. Above, on the wall, hang three icons, resembling a tympanum. At the left, as far as can be determined, the Patriarch criticizes Theophanes for his selection of Nicholas as the subject of the icon. In the left upper corner, the icon of the saint hangs above an altar, and Theophanes approaches it with his hands outstretched. In the second scene at the left is a foundering ship, and at the right a traditional representation of the saving of the Patriarch from drowning.

Such a complicated illustration of the story was far beyond the reach of less skillful painters. The author of icon No. 81 depicted the saint standing ashore, on the left side, holding the Patriarch by his hand. Athanasius is in the middle, and in the top right corner we see a boat with a sailor who spreads his hands in a gesture of amazement or

astonishment.

On icon No. VI in the top left corner a boat carries Athanasius and two sailors on either side of the Patriarch. In the foreground, at the right, Nicholas pulls the Head of the Church out of the water (ill. 107).

Thus, from the 14th to the 18th century the iconography of this miracle made a full circle, going through various stages and experiments. The experimentation was a result of the lack of canonical examples which would serve as models for the representation of the story. The search for an adequate rendering of the content of the story led some painters to miniaturization of the scenes and illustration of several temporal fragments of the text, and the others to a simple addition of the boat to the old iconographical formula used in the Demetrios miracle.

40. The Story of the Liberated Servant (Thauma de servo liberato).

Inscriptions illegible.

Among the researched icons only two were found which possibly include scene or scenes representing this miracle of St. Nicholas. In both instances the identification is purely hypothetical, since the quality of the reproductions does not allow one to see all the necessary details. On icon No. 40 the miracle may be represented in two scenes. In the

first we see a prison building, that is, a simple structure with a figure of a man sitting inside. At the left is St. Nicholas bending towards the building's window. In the second scene the background also consists of a building, but the saint bends over a bed occupied by a sleeping figure. Apparently the first scene depicts the appearance of the saint to the imprisoned servant boy, and the second his appearance to the boy's master, Epiphanius.<sup>97</sup> The iconography of both representations may be traced back to the other scenes from the cycle: the appearance to the boy in prison may derive from the scenes illustrating the Praxis de tribus filiabus (notice the similarity in the shape of the buildings and in the saint's pose), while the appearance to Epiphanius from the scenes illustrating the birth of Nicholas and his appearance to Constantine in a dream.

A similar rendering of the miracle appears on icon No. 82, only there both episodes are connected in one scene. At the right, on the background of a small chamber (the cellar in which the boy was imprisoned) we see the servant facing St. Nicholas, and at the left the saint appears to Epiphanius: the man rests on the bed in his chambers, while Nicholas, bent over the bed, orders him to release the servant from prison.

41. The Story of the Monastery (Thauma de sepulcro).

Inscriptions illegible.

Only two late icons represent this miracle. On icon No. 80, at the bottom right side of the scene are two figures: a boy, sitting on the ground, and a man, pointing towards a monastery shown above. At the top of the composition, inside the monastery walls, we see these two figures again, standing in the center and looking at an open grave (?) At the left there is a large group of monks, and at the right, in a small cell, one can notice an icon of St. Nicholas and possibly some monks praying to it. Only on the basis of these details the scene is identified as the illustration of the monastery miracle. The bottom part of the composition then shows the moment when the traveller meets the boy who claims to be looking for his father. The upper part of the scene depicts the moment when the grave was open and the gold was discovered. The scene of the praying to the icon of the saint may illustrate the thanks given by the monks of the monastery to the saint for their deliverance from need.

The composition on icon No. 82 is even more complicated, and it is identified as the illustration of the monastery miracle only on the basis of the presence in the scene of the buildings and walls of the monastery, figures of the monks, the angel (boy), and possibly the grave.

The most probable source of the iconography of these scenes were the 16th century illustrated manuscripts, and the icons which illustrated the miracles of wonderworking icons of the Virgin (of Vladimir, of Tixvin, of Tolga etc.). In these works the monasteries were quite often represented.<sup>98</sup>

#### 42. The Kiev Miracle.

Inscriptions: / . . . / svjatego / . . . / kako izbavi otroka  
ot potopenija i / . . . / Sofei v Kieve na  
polatex (45).

Since the Kiev miracle was written in Russia, it is not surprising that its illustrations can be found only in Russian icons and frescoes. The icon painters, lacking Byzantine compositional models, had to invent their own iconography to convey the miracle. We can trace the development of this iconography on the basis of surviving representations, despite the fact that they are not very numerous.

One of the earliest illustrations of the miracle appears on the icon from Kievec (4). The scene shows a large church with one dome, framed on the left side by a fragment of another architectural structure, and on the left by icon hillocks. At the left side of the church, in the middle of the wall, an icon of St. Nicholas can be seen. At the bottom of the scene, a stiff little figure in red clothes lies with hands raised upwards (ill. 108). It is easy to see that the painter wants to depict the moment of the story in which the child, miraculously saved by Nicholas from the river, is placed in the Cathedral under the icon of the saint. The sources of this iconography



are much more difficult to determine. The representation of St. Sophia may derive from many architectural forms in icon painting, and from early manuscript illuminations, but could have been a "realistic" portrait of the largest and most magnificent building in Kiev. The lying figure resembles a boy or a young adult rather than a child, and is proportionally larger than one might have expected. The raised hands should be probably identified as a sign of life which, the painter thought, would indicate clearly enough that the child was saved. I could not find any similar representation of a lying figure in Old Russian painting of that period; the pose is certainly different than the characteristic "hand under the chin" pose in dream and vision scenes. Even more surprising is the color of the child's clothes. Among the representations of this miracle this is the only icon in which the child is dressed in red. It is possible that the red color was used by the painter only for the purpose of differentiating the figure from the background and making it more visible.

On icon No. 12 this composition is further developed. On the right side we see the church with an icon of St. Nicholas in the middle. Under the icon, at the foot of the church, lies the child wrapped in white sheets. The mother kneels nearby, bent toward the child. The father, and a group of at least three observers, stand behind her at the left. In the background is a tower with a rounded roof.

One immediately notices that the composition of the scene from the Kievec icon was expanded through an addition of other figures. This new rendering depicted the moment of the recognition of the child

by its mother. But the most important change was the representation of the child as a baby, wrapped in white sheets, and the elimination of its raised hands. This iconography, deriving from the scenes of the Nativity, in which the Christ child lies in his crib wrapped in white, made the identification of the little figure as a baby much easier.

The 16th century brings another composition.<sup>99</sup> On icon No. 37 we see a dark boat carrying the parents who's raised hands express grief and despair. The baby, in a white wrap, floats in the water under the boat.

This composition illustrates the following fragment of the story: "I ešće že emu eduščju po rece po Dnepru, žena že ego deržaše detišče na ruce, i vzdremasja, ispusti detja v vođu, i utope."<sup>100</sup> The painter based his scene on other scenes from the cycle (characteristically, the boat is in the middle of a round blue lake surrounded by pink mountains; as has been shown, such a rendering of sea miracles is common in the 16th century); the gestures of astonishment, surprise, despair and grief (raised hands with palms pointing outwards) are very often used, and have been depicted, for example, in the Birth of Nicholas scenes.

Apparently both renderings of the miracle had a parallel development. On icon No. 45 these two renderings are united in one composition, but in addition, new details are introduced. In the left top corner the sailboat carries the parents. The father holds an oar and the mother looks at the child who slipped from her hands and fell in the water, head first. Just below the child we see St. Nicholas,

standing, holding the child in his arms. At the right side of the scene the painter depicted Kiev, with its walls and churches: on the extreme right is a large white church, and immediately to the left is a smaller one, possibly a part of the large church. The icon of St. Nicholas hangs on the wall of this smaller building. Under the icon, on an altar, lies the child. To the right of the altar is a group of people, possibly headed by the father, and on the left another group of people, most likely clergymen, with a metropolitan in front. The city of Kiev is enclosed by red brick walls, and a bridge leads to the gate in the wall (ill. 109).<sup>101</sup>

The author of this icon represented three moments of the action: the drowning of the child, the rescue of the child by St. Nicholas, and the discovery of the child in St. Sophia Cathedral. He combined two old iconographical formulae and added still another one, that of Nicholas holding a baby. This representation was probably based on the scenes of the baptism of Nicholas.

On icon No. V, as far as the damaged state of the work allows one to judge, at the left is a boat with two figures (father and mother) in it, while the child, wrapped in white sheets, drowns in the water below. At the right, on the ground, we can distinguish a church, with an icon of St. Nicholas on its wall. The child lies under the icon, and at right, near the child, stands another figure (possibly the father or the sacristan).

On the icon painted by Simon Xolmogorec (80), at the bottom we see the boat, with a sail, an oar, and at least four figures inside.

One of the passengers, a woman dressed in red (the mother), bends overboard trying to catch the baby, but it floats away down the river. At the top of the composition, on the right, in a large structure there is the icon of the saint and the child rests under it. One of the figures on the left, in a small vaulted chamber, prostrates itself in front of the altar and the icon: it is the mother, recognizable by her red garments.

Finally, the artist from Palex (82), depicted the boat at the left, with the parents inside, and the mother trying to catch the white-wrapped bundle floating in the water. At the right he painted the church with an icon of St. Nicholas, the child lying under the image, and the father kneeling in front of the altar. He also presented two groups of spectators on either side of the altar.

It is obvious that all these compositions employ similar motifs, slightly changing the gestures of the figures, or details of the architecture and landscape. Nonetheless, one sees that the painters have relative freedom in their compositions: they can change the positions of the parents, vary the shapes of the boat and the church, even include the figure of St. Nicholas. All these "freedoms" are a result of the late development of the iconographical formulae employed in this scene, and the lack of Byzantine established examples.

This freedom can be observed even more in two icons which possibly include a representation of the Kiev miracle (the identification is only hypothetical) based on completely different iconographical models. The first is the icon from Meletovo (22). In the analyzed scene the

painter shows an interior of the church. Outside (that is, inside), on the left Nicholas stands erect, blessing; on the right are three haloed figures: a child, a woman, and a man. The child is being held by the woman, while the man stands behind. It is not clear at all if this group of figures can be considered a portrait of the Kievan family happily reunited after their ordeal. The composition would fit much better as a representation of the miracle of giving a child to a childless couple, which, as we have seen, was described in the Vita Nicolai Sionitae, and ended with Nicholas blessing (baptizing) the child. The only features which speak against such an interpretation are the size of the child, unusually large for a one-year old, and the halos around their heads.

If one accepts the hypothesis that the Meletovo icon was based on some Western models, it is possible that the painter used an illustration of the Substituted Cup story for his rendering of the Kiev miracle. This kind of a borrowing would explain the size of the child in the Meletovo scene. However, since I was not able to find an appropriate Western representation, this theory may prove to be totally false.

On the veil from Zagorsk (73) we find a representation which is similarly difficult to interpret. On the background of a landscape with trees (a very unusual rendering), at the left stands Nicholas holding his hand on a shoulder of a boy. The boy kneels in front of a woman depicted in the middle. At the right is a figure of a man. The woman and the man have halos. Here again we are dealing with a representation which can be only hypothetically called the Kiev miracle.

It is similar to the Meletovo representation, but the boy is even larger, and kneels in front of the woman. The trees in the background also do not present any clue helpful for an identification of the scene; it is most probable that they are there for purely decorative purposes.

It is possible that the scene on the veil does not depict the Kiev miracle, but a miracle connected with the donor of the work. Among the scenes depicted on this veil eight are standard scenes appearing on icons of Nicholas Velikoreckij or Babaevskij. In three corners of the veil are representations of Gregory the Theologian, Mary Magdalene, and Alexius the God's Man. Our scene is in the fourth corner, on the bottom right. The representations of Gregory, Mary, and Alexius undoubtedly depict the patron saints of the donor and his family (the veil was donated by Alexius Mixailovič and Mary Miloslavskaja), thus the image in the fourth corner may also show an event related to the tsar. Perhaps the work was executed after the birth of one of Alexius sons; the importance of the birth of a male child to the tsar could have easily resulted in such a representation. This would also explain the halos around the heads of the woman and the man in our scene.

Finally, one of the scenes on icon No. 8 probably depicted the Kiev miracle, but suffered considerable damage in its bottom part. The preserved part shows a church with an icon of Nicholas on its wall. One can assume that under the icon there was a representation of the child lying in a similar pose to the child on icon No. 4.

#### 43. The Polovtsian Miracle.

Inscriptions: Poru / . . . / anija svjatomu Nikole ob sne  
 Sorocini',  
 Pr / . . . / Soroc / . . . / Nikole ž' / . . . /  
 (15).

Despite its Russian origin, the Polovtsian miracle was quite infrequently included among the illustrations of the miracle of Nicholas on Russian icons. The earliest representation, in two scenes, appeared on icon No. 15 from Novgorod. In the first scene, on the right, one can see a tall building (church) with an icon of St. Nicholas on its wall. In the middle of the scene are two figures: the man from Kiev, pointing towards the icon with his left hand, holds his right arm around the shoulders of the Polovtsian. The pagan slightly bends forward and looks at the icon, holding his hands out to the image (ill. 110). This scene renders visually the following fragment of the story: "Glagola emu gospodin ego: 'Xoščeš li, dam tja na poruku svjatomu Nikole' . . . I vede ego v cerkov', i pokaza emu ikonu svjatago Nikoly . . . I otvešča PolovčŃin, reče s radostiju: 'Xošćju, i vse ispolnju rečeneoe tobe mnoju . . . '" (VMCD6, p. 112).

The second scene shows the ending of the story. At the left is the same church with the icon of Nicholas, and at the right the Polovtsian falling on his knees in front of the icon. Above the pagan are two horses, the ransom he brought to the church (ill. 111). In the text we read: "Ne tokmo iskup prigna gospodinu, no i liše bojasja pobornika našego svjatago Nikoly. Egda že priexa vo grad ne exa prež na dvor, ideže be sidel, no exa k cerkvi svjatago Nikoly, ideže be dan na poruce." (VMCD6, p. 117).

The representation of horses in this scene can be compared to roughly contemporary representations of horses on the icon of Florus, Laurus, Blasius and Modestus in the Russian Museum (Lazarev, Novgorodskaja, ill. 44), but ultimately may derive from icons depicting St. George and the Dragon, St. Boris and Gleb, etc., or from illustrated chronicles.

Another illustration of the Polovtsian miracle appears on icon No. 43. Since the reproduction I have is not sufficiently clear, I depend for my description on Myslivec (p. 81). On the backdrop of a hilly landscape, at the right a group of horsemen can be seen, while another horse runs without its rider. In the middle of the picture stands Nicholas with his right hand raised, holding the Polovtsian by his hair with his left. The saint apparently has just pulled the pagan off his mount (that is why his horse runs free), and punishes him with a broom.

This composition illustrates another fragment of the text. After two appearances to the Polovtsian with a request to bring the ransom to Kiev, Nicholas appeared to the pagan for the third time during the meeting of the Cuman princes and noblemen, and punished him most cruelly. The text describes what happened in detail: "Nekoliže potom za malo d'nii priključisja sonmu byti knjazem' ix i velmožam, s"exavšimsja im mnogym i toj Polovčín, danyj na poruce . . . priexa tu že. Egda že sta na kone so družinoju, storže i s konja sila nevidima . . . Čjudno, bratia, bjaše videti mučenia ego: ovogda bjaše glavoju počten, ovogda že ot zemlja vosxiščen i razdražen o zemlju, ovogda že bjaše glava



ego mežju nogu ego, k tomu nevidimo, aki dubcy, b'jaše sila Božija."  
 (VMCD6, pp. 115-6).

Icon No. 82 uses basically the same composition and illustrates the same fragment of the text but adds some new details. At the top left we see a horseman on a gray horse, and at the right another one on a white horse. In the middle the saint pulls the Polovtsian from his horse, which is red, holding the man by his hair with his left hand and raising his right as if to strike a blow. Below, the Polovtsian lies on the ground and is being whipped by two angels standing on either side. The background consists of icon hillocks and a small architectural ensemble in the top right corner.

As can be seen, the author of this icon interpreted the words "sila Božija" as two angels helping Nicholas to punish the disobedient pagan. Nicholas just throws the man off his horse, but the messengers of God execute the "physical" punishment.

As far as can be seen on icon No. 77, one scene shows the punishment of the Polovtsian, and another the moment of bringing the ransom to Kiev.

It is most probable that these later representations of the miracle have been based on the miniatures illustrating the famous 16th century manuscript of the life of the saint (see Chapter III).

#### 44. The Miracle with Stephen Dečanski.

Inscriptions illegible.

The representation of this miracle of St. Nicholas was found only on icon No. 80. In the first scene the traditional formula for the appearance of the saint has been used: Stephen lies on the bed while Nicholas stands near the King showing him something in his hand. At the top left there is a miniature scene which may illustrate the moment of imprisonment or blinding of Stephen. The main representation corresponds to the following fragment of the narrative: "Nošči skončevajuščesja, snom tonkim ovijat byvaet / Stephen -- A.B. /. I zrit muža predstavša emu, svjaščennolepna videnia imušča, svjatitel'skoju odeždoju ukrašena sušča . . . nosjašča na desnoj svoej dlani obe ego izveržennya oči, i glagoljušča k nemu: 'Ne skorbi Stefane, se bo na dlani moej tvoi oči.' I so slovom pokazovaaše emu nosimoe. On že, jako mnjašesja glagola k nemu: 'I kto esi ty, gospodi moj, iže tolíkoe o mne priležanie tvorjai?' I javleisja: 'Az esm' Nikolae, Mir Likejskix episkop.'"<sup>102</sup>

In the second scene, on the background of a richly decorated building, Stephen sits on a throne and Nicholas stands at the left touching the King's eyes. This is an illustration of the appearance of Nicholas to Stephen in the monastery and his miraculous healing of the King. According to the text of the miracle, one evening, when the King was in the church and fell asleep, tired after a day of work, he saw "očima serdca svoego onaago božestvenago

muža, iže prežde tomu javl'šegosja, predstavša i rekša k nemu: 'Imaš li v pamjati, eže prežde rex ti . . . ne skorbeti, v moej bo ruce tvoja zenica, i six tebe pokazax?' On že v pamjati six prixodyti javljašesja i k nogama svjatitelju pripadati, i milovania prositi. I javleisja . . . jakože podavaaše videnie togo vzdvig i kerstnoe znamenie na lici stvori. Očiju ze krai prsnymi kosnuvsja, reče: 'Gospod' naš' Isus Xristos', iže slepago ot raždenia vočivvyj, i tvoima očima prvyy daruet zrak.' I ov ubo nevidim byst'." (Arkiv, p. 9).

Similar compositions of Stephen sitting on a throne, with Nicholas restoring his sight, were known in Serbian monuments (Myslivec, p. 84). They derived from such representations as the imperial audience (with the Emperor seated on the throne) or Christ Enthroned. It is possible that Simon Xolmogorec used one of the Serbian icons or frescoes as a model of his illustrations.

Notes

Chapter VII

1. Nancy Patterson Ševčenko, "Cycles of the Life of St. Nicholas in Byzantine Art," vol. I and II (illustrations), Diss. Columbia University, 1973, pp. 202-7; Josef Myslivec, "Život sv. Mikulaše v Byzantském umění," in his Dvě studie z dějin Byzantského umění, (Prague: Universum, 1948), p. 58.
2. The mother's head is usually on the left side of the composition, and her body stretches from left to right.
3. See, for example, M.V. Alpatov, Drevnerusskaja ikonopis', (Moskva: Iskusstvo, 1974), ill. 28, 29, 73, and 109; V.N. Lazarev, Stranicy istorii Novgorodskoj Živopisi: Dvustoronnie tabletki iz sobora sv. Sofii v Novgorode, (Moskva: Iskusstvo, 1977), ill. XXI.
4. This representation also derives from the Nativity and the Birth of the Virgin compositions.
5. The poor quality of the reproduction does not allow me to be completely sure that the child is not shown.
6. Konrad Onasch, Icons, (New York: A.S. Barnes and Company, 1963), p. 391.
7. Arximandrit Leonid, ed., "Žitie i čudesa sv. Nikolaja Mirlikijskogo i poxvala emu," PDPI, XXXIV, (Sankt-Peterburg, 1881), p. 28.
8. VMČD6, (Moskva: Arxeografičeskaja Kommissija, 1901), p. 1.
9. The iconography of the Birth of the Virgin affected not only the iconography of the Birth of Nicholas, but also the Birth compositions of other saints. See, for instance V.N. Lazarev, Moskovskaja škola ikonopisi, (Moskva: Iskusstvo, 1974), ill. 67 and 86; S.V. Jamščikov, Drevnerusskaja Živopis': Novye otkrytija, (Leningrad: Avrora, 1969), ill. 41; N.N. Voronin and V.V. Kostočkin, Troice-Sergieva Lavra: Xudožestvennyje pamjatniki, (Moskva: Iskusstvo, 1968), ill. 110.

10. For more details on the iconographical types of the Virgin see V.N. Lazarev, "Etjudy po ikonografii Bogomateri," in his Vizantijskaja Živopis', (Moskva: Nauka, 1971), pp. 275-329. This is a Russian version of V. Lasareff, "Studies in the Iconography of the Virgin," Art Bulletin, XX (1938), 26-65.
11. L. Bol'šakova and E. Kamenskaja, Gosudarstvennaja Tret'jakovskaja Galereja: Drevnerusskoe iskusstvo, (Moskva: Sovetskij Xudožnik, 1968), ill. 31.
12. For further details of the Birth of the Virgin iconography consult the monumental J. Lafontaine-Dosogne, Iconographie de l'enfance de la Vierge dans l'Empire Byzantine et en Occident, vol. I (Bruxelles, 1964), and II (Bruxelles, 1965).
13. Icon No. 48 has only the figure of the father shown on the background of a church. To his right are a bishop, who holds the child above the baptistery, and a deacon.
14. Icon No. 45 shows three deacons, icons Nos. 48 and 72 -- a bishop and a deacon, No. 77 -- two deacons, Nos. 81 and 82 -- a large group of church officials.
15. See, for example V.N. Lazarev, Novgorodskaja ikonopis', (Moskva: Iskusstvo, 1969), ill. 35 and 46.
16. I have in mind the so-called Čtenie o Žitii i o pogublenii blažennuju strastoterpca Borisa i Gleba, written by Nestor, and the so-called Skazanie i strast', i poxvala svjatuju mučeniku Borisa i Gleba, an anonymous work of slightly earlier origin. Both works, together with the texts from Synaxaria and texts of the masses in honor of the saints were published by D.I. Abramovič, Žitija svjatyx mučenikov Borisa i Gleba i služby im, (Petrograd, 1916). See also Ludolf Müller, "Studien zur altrussischen Legende der Heiligen Boris und Gleb," Zeitschrift für Slavische Philologie, 23 (1954), 25 (1956), 27 (1959), and 30 (1962).
17. When one keeps in mind the overall crude and primitive nature of this icon, it may be argued that the painter has attempted to depict the scene

of healing a woman with a withered arm, but his lack of skill makes the representation look like a healing of a blind woman.

18. This "common source" could have been any popular symmetrical composition in which the middle figure is flanked by two other figures, for instance the representation of the Deesis or the Transfiguration of Christ.
19. Myslivec mentions an icon from Tver' in which in this composition two students are depicted, and considers it the only representation with more than one student in Russian icon painting (p. 60). As we have seen, there are many icons which show more than one disciple.
20. The coin, dating to 238--244 A.D., may reflect an old Lycian myth later reworked into the story of Nicholas and the cypress of Plakoma; see Gustav Anrich, Hagios Nikolaos. Der heilige Nikolaus in der griechischen Kirche, vol. II (Leipzig and Berlin: Teubner, 1917), pp. 225-6; Ševčenko, pp. 276-7. It is also possible that the legend appeared as a reaction of the Church against the pagan practices of tree worship. In the sanctuary of Aesculapius at Cos it was forbidden to cut down the cypress trees; after the destruction of the temples of Diana-Artemis trees were venerated as a substitute for the goddess; see Sir James George Frazer, The Golden Bough: A study in Magic and Religion, abridged ed., (New York: Macmillan Publishing Comp. Inc., 1978), p. 128; Dmitrij Tschizewskij, Der hl. Nikolaus, (Recklinghausen: Verlag Aurel Bongers, 1957), p. 76.
21. Myslivec thought that the figure of the man with an axe was introduced in Russian icons only in the 16th century (p. 72). Our examples prove that it appeared in Russian works as early as the end of the 13th century.
22. See the illustrations in Lazarev, Novgorodskaja, ill. 17, 24, 41, and 65.
23. V.I. Antonova and N.E. Mneva entitle this scene "A Monk Prays in Front of a Spring (Drawing of Water)": Katalog drevnerusskoj Živopisi Tret'-jakov Galerei, vol. I, (Moskva: Nauka, 1963), p. 252.

24. Among the other scenes there is the illustration of the felling of the cypress of Plakoma, which confirms the supposition that the painter has known both texts.
25. See Kurt Weitzmann, The Icon: Holy Images -- Sixth to Fourteenth Century, (New York: George Braziller, 1978), ill. 22; V.I. Antonova, Drevnerusskoe iskusstvo v sobranii Pavla Korina, (Moskva: Iskusstvo, 1966), ill. 33.
26. Myslivec accompanies his discussion of the scene on the icon from the collection of Soldatenkov by this (much later in date) inscription (p. 63).
27. The veil No. 73 dates to the 17th century, and was donated by Alexei Mixailovič and his wife Marija Miloslavskaja.
28. Cyril Mango, Byzantium: The Empire of New Rome, (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1980), p. 236.
29. See Arximandrit Antonin, "Sv. Nikolaj, episkop pinarskij i arximandrit sionskij," TKDA, No. 6 (ijun'), 1869.
30. The representations of Thauma de Demetrio, Thauma de patriarcha, Thauma de tribus Christianis and the Kiev miracle, which will be discussed later, are not included here.
31. Except in icons with a distorted chronology of the scenes, as No. 27.
32. A horse was in Old Russia considered a symbol of water and sun. See S. Maslenitsyn, Kostroma, (Leningrad: Aurora, 1968), p. 38.
33. It is possible that such a position of Nicholas was supposed to indicate that the saint came to the ship walking on the waves.
34. For instance S.I. Maslenicyn, Jaroslavskaja ikonopis', (Moskva: Iskusstvo, 1973), ill. 57; M.A. Nekrasova, Palexskaja miniatjura, (Leningrad: Xudožnik RSFSR, 1978) p. 71.

35. È.S. Smirnova calls the scene "Vision of a Church" (Videnie xrama); "Ikona Nikoly iz Borovičej," SGRM, VII (1961), 53.
36. This may be the saint forbidding the diggers to continue their work.
37. See M.V. Alptaov, Sokrovišča russkogo iskustva XI-XVI vekov: Živopis', (Leningrad: Avrora, 1970), ill. 139, 141; V.G. Mirzoev, Byliny i letopisi: Pamjatniki ruskoj istoričeskoj mysl'i, (Moskva: Mysl', 1978), pp. 121, 136; A.N. Saxarov, Diplomatija drevnej Rusi: IX-pervaja polovina X v., (Moskva: Mysl', 1980), ill. between pp. 160-1.
38. Myslivec identifies this scene as the multiplication of wine, although he mentions the possibility of it being the multiplication of bread (p. 64).
39. V.O. Ključevskij, Drevnerusskie Žitija svjatyx kak istoričeskij istočnik, (Moskva, 1871), p. 458.
40. See, for example, M.V. Alpatov, Umetničko blago Rusije, (Beograd: Izdavački Zavod Jugoslavija, 1967), p. 132; Antonova, Drevnerusskoe, pp. 120-1, ill. 116.
41. V. Mašnina, Arxangel Mixail: Ikona "Axangel Mixail s dejanijami" iz Arxangel'skogo sobora Moskovskogo Kremlja, (Leningrad: Avrora, 1968), esp. ill. 1 and 24; Alpatov, Umetničko, pp. 4, 94.
42. In the Vita Nicolai Sionitae the following miracles describe the healings of demoniacs: Čjudo 4: O čelovece, ot nego že izgna dux nečist: Čjudo 9: Iže molitvoju isceli besnu i suxu; Čjudo 14: O anagnoste, iz nego že izgna besa; Čjudo 15: O pastuse, ego že isceli; Čjudo 16: O Zinone, ego že isceli ot nečistago besa; Čjudo 17: O Pavle četce, ego že ot besa izbavi; Čjudo 18: O Kir'jake, ot nego že molitvoju dux zol otgna: Čjudo 19: Čelovek imenem Mermis, ego že ot ljuta besa molitvoju izbavi; Čjudo 21: Otroka isceli, ot nečistago besa mucima; Čjudo 22: Ženu nekuju isceli, ot neja že otgna neprijaznennago besa; Čjudo 25: Čelovek besen imenem Lev, ot nego že svjatyj otgna duxa nečistago (Leonid, Žitie, pp. 42, 53-4, 63-6, 69-70, 71-2).



43. For example: "A kotorii nečistymi duxami održimi, i ot tex besi otbegali"; "Nečistye že dusi gde koli uslyšali svjatoe imja ego, ottole besi ot čelovek otbegali"; "bol'nyx isceljal i besy ot čelovek prognal" (Ključevskij, p. 456).
44. See Alpatov, Sokrovišča, ill. 137 and 194. In the 16th century large devils become more common.
45. "Javlenie angela odnomu iz iereev Likii s ukazaniem postavit' arxiepiskopom goroda Miry Nikolu": Katalog, I, p. 196.
46. Apparently Antonova and Mneva were able to read the inscription, since they name the scene according to it (po nadpisi): Katalog, I, p. 196.
47. The miracle was not illustrated in Byzantine painting.
48. In the 16th century Polish Jesuit Piotr Skarga in his Lives of Saints gave an exact translation of this fragment, quoting as his sources the works of Metaphrastes, Justiniani and Lipomanus: "Do pracy swej zacnych sobie towarzyszy obrał, Pawła z Rodos i Teodora Askalonitę, ludzi we wszystkiej Greoiji znanych . . . ": Żywoty świętych starego i nowego zakonu . . . przez ks. Piotra Skargę societatis Iesu przebrane, uczynione, i w język polski przełożone . . ., (Kraków: Wydawnictwo Księżąt Jezuitów, 1936), vol. IV, p. 387.
49. Nicholas V. Riasanovsky, A History of Russia, 2nd edn., (New York-London-Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1969), p. 141.
50. Compare with the fragment from redaction C of the Synaxarion: "Jat byst' starejšinami gradskimi, i jazvami i uzami obložen byv ot nix, i v temnicu vveržen byst' so inymi xristiany.": A. Ponomarev, Pamjatniki drevnej russoj cerkovno-učitel'noj literatury: Slavjano-russkij Prolog, vol. II, part I, (Sankt-Petersburg, 1896), p. 59.
51. See, for instance, Lazarev, Stranicy istorii, p. 37; Antonova, Drevnerusskoe, p. 115.
52. See Chapter III. Compare "Erminija ili nastavlenie v Živopisnom iskusstve sostavlennoe ieromon-

axom i Živopiscem Dionisiem Furnoagrafiotom," TKDA, No. 4 (aprel') 1868, 381-382.

53. The scene suffered considerable damage. This makes my attribution only hypothetical.
54. The gesture of the Virgin who points with her left hand towards a building which frames the scene at the right, may confirm such a theory.
55. I entitle this scene following Antonova and Mneva, Katalog, I, p. 196.
56. As we have already seen (the scenes of Nicholas with Paul and Theodore) this icon includes representations which cannot be paralleled in other Byzantine or Russian icons. It is possible that they were based on Western models. Thus, the source of the scenes described above could have been not the "Neknižnoe žitie", but some Western work.
57. Since no work contains more than six scenes, one can assume that this was the ultimate iconographical rendering of the story.
58. The representation of the executioner as a Mongol or Turk can be related to historical events in the 17th century, particularly to the war with Turkey and to the numerous Cossack uprisings. The atrocities of the Muslims could have been associated by the painter with this miracle of the saint.
59. "The gesture . . . is . . . a common Byzantine formula for the representation of either a sleeping or a sick figure. A reclining figure looks very much like a dead one, and must, by some means, be distinguished from a corpse. Dead men are shown lying with their hands alongside their bodies or crossed on their chest; hence, when a figure rests his head on his hand, or raises his body on one arm, he is endowed with a crucial sign of life." (Ševčenko, p. 341).
60. The inscription says "The Death of St. Nicholas", but the scene presents the burial of the saint (see below).
61. This may be Eugenia, the woman whom Nicholas healed before his death (see above), or some figure

added by the painter to better illustrate the grief of the Myrians after their bishop's demise.

62. This figure may have the same purpose as the figure on icon No. 6, but may also derive from the old formula for burial (see Ševčenko, p. 404), or from figures of angels discussed in previous scene.
63. The bells on the bellfry appear not only in the burial compositions (26, 29, 55), but also in some other scenes.
64. The scene is entitled "The Entombment of St. Nicholas", but it depicts the death of the saint. Apparently the painters often had difficulty in selecting the appropriate composition for their scene. Sometimes they wanted to depict the death scene and used the burial formula (see note 60), and sometimes, when they thought they represented the burial, they really painted the death scene.
65. See S. Der Nersesjan, "Moskovskij Menologij," in Vizantija. Južnyje Slavjane i Drevnjaja Rus'. Zapadnaja Evropa: Iskusstvo i kultura, (Moskva: Nauka, 1973), p. 105 (a miniature from the Greek Menologium of the 11th century); Alpatov, Sokrovišč'a, ill. 40 (a miniature from the 13th century Slavonic translation of the Chronicle of Hamartolos).
66. See Atanas Božkov, Bŭlgarskata istoričeska Živopis, vol. I, (Sofija: Bŭlgarski Xudožnik, 1972), ill. 78 (Chronicle of Manasses, 14th century).
67. The quality of the reproduction does not allow me to determine with certainty what is represented in the scene's left corner.
68. I. Šljapkin, "Russkoe poučenie XI veka o pereznesenii moščej Nikolaja Čudotvorca i ego otnošenje k zapadnym istočnikam," in PDP, X (Sankt-Petersburg, 1881), pp. 6-7.
69. Prolog: Martovskaja Čertvert', (Moskva?, 1910), p. 361. Cf. Chapter III, a description of the Translation in pattern-books.
70. Such an unorthodox placement of the Gospel is very rare, but appeared in several Byzantine mon-

uments (in the saving from execution scene). There, however, it was caused by the reversal of the composition (Ševčenko, p. 317), while here and in some other scenes in Russian icons it is probably just a mistake of the painter.

71. Smirnova (Ikona Nikoly, p. 53) entitles this scene The Saving of the Patriarch Athanasius. Only the position of the scene just next to the scene of the feast at Theophanes' house speaks for this identification. However, since the man who is being saved by the saint does not wear a characteristic cowl, I assume that the scene represents the saving of Demetrius.
72. I also could not notice a boat on icons Nos. 12, 19, and 28.
73. Because of the damaged state of the icon, the table cannot be seen. But the 15th century copy of this icon, also from Sinai, shows the Arabs seated, "and this may have been the case on the early icon as well." (Ševčenko, p. 409).
74. The fresco at Psača (1366-1371) shows five standing figures: at the extreme left Nicholas, then Basil with a cup and a towel, next the father (possibly with a candle in his hand), the mother, and a monk. The scene depicts the moment of meeting Basil in the courtyard. This representation brings to mind the icon from Pavlovo (1), where all the figures (Nicholas, Basil, and the parents) are also shown standing in front of a simple building. The fresco at Ramaća (1395) in both scenes shows Basil with a pitcher and a towel. Nicholas is represented on horseback, a motive probably borrowed from the miracles of St. George (see Ševčenko, pp. 411-418).
75. Exceptionally interesting are icons Nos. 25 and 32 which portray only the Arab prince.
76. A cup (pitcher) and a towel in Basil's hand, as we remember (see note 74) appeared in frescoes at Psaca and Ramaća. At Bojana, Basil has only a towel (Ševčenko, p. 411).
77. The dogs already appeared in the scene at Ramaća (Ševčenko, pp. 415 and 418).

78. It may be worth noting that the position of Nicholas in Russian icons is not significant. He may be placed at the right or left side of the composition.
79. Myslivec mentioned two Russian icons which depicted the father coming to greet Basil with a candle in his hand (p. 71); this would be a naive visual rendering of these words of the text: "I poidoša s sveščami mnogami . . ." (VMČD6, p. 8).
80. It is possible that this small composition shows the appearance of Nicholas to the Pope.
81. Myslivec reads "xromca" instead of "xromva" (p. 78).
82. In the Vita Nicolai Sionitae Nicholas heals a man with withered legs. The miracle takes place in the Sion monastery or its vicinity, and the saint heals the patient with a sign of the cross and with holy oil (see Leonid, Žitie, p. 70). Perhaps this scene is an illustration of this particular miracle.
83. According to Antonova and Mneva (Katalog, I, pp. 214-5) on icon No. 10 there is a scene of saving the Saracene from prison. I do not have a reproduction of this representation, but it is possible that the scene illustrates the Polovtsian miracle (not that in the inscriptions to the Polovtsian miracle on icon No. 15, the Cuman is also called a Saracene).
84. Arximandrit Leonid, ed., "Posmertnyja čudesasvjatitelja Nikolaja Arviepiskopa Myr-Likijskago Čudotvorca. Pamjatnik drevnej russkoj pis'mennosti XI veka: Trud Efrema, episkopa perejaslavskago," in PDPI, LXXII (Sankt-Petersburg, 1888) pp. 41-2..
85. The reading of the last word of the inscription is only hypothetical. It is possible that the full inscription read "St. Nicholas bought the carpet from a Persian." Maybe this or similar inscription was misread by the author or restorer of icon No. 51? See note 86 and Chapter VI, note 35.
86. For a discussion of the problem involved in reading this inscription see Chapter VI, note 35. See also note 85 above.

87. The absence of the illustration of this miracle in Bulgarian icons may be related to the difficulty of the Bulgarians in understanding the word "kover." Not understanding the word, they frequently tried to change it or to indicate through an addition of the word "srebr'ny" (silver) the great value of the object described in the story. Hence we find the following names of the object: "beleg srebr'nny", "srebr'ny kover'", "sreboto", "srebrena čaša", "sincir'", "naščrapa", etc. On an 18th century icon from Thrace Nicholas gives a silver object (diadem?) to the old man's wife (reproduced on a postcard issued by Fotizdat-Bulgaria, Nr. D-1214-A, probably in a series of Bulgarian Icons). For a fascinating discussion of the abovementioned changes in the story see E.I. Demina, "Klassifikacija bolgarskix Damaskinov po redakcijam 'Čuda o kovre'," Učenyje Zapiski Instituta Slavjanovedenija AN SSSR, XXIII (1962), 212-46.
88. A very similar unfolded carpet can be seen on the well-known hagiographical icon of Boris and Gleb; see M.V. Alpatov, Kraski drevnerusskoj ikonopisi, (Moskva: Izbrazitel'noe iskusstvo, 1974), ill. 10 (the scene Svjatopolk Rewards the Murderers).
89. This inscription can be seen on the bottom part of the reproduction of the Thauma de patriacha scene. Although the miracle with the three merchants is not reproduced there, it is possible to read the inscription and to notice the halo of Nicholas on the right side of the illustration.
90. A very good illustration of the similarities in iconography presents the Jonah scene in the 10th century Paris Psalter. See Joan Comay and Ronald Brownrigg, Who's Who in the Bible, (New York: Bonanza Books, 1980), p. 223.
91. Myslivec assumed that this was the only icon with three scenes illustrating the story (p. 79).
92. I cannot see the fish, but its presence in the picture is almost certain.
93. The representation of the execution may be a proof of the Novgorod origin of the icon from Boroviči. The heretics in Novgorod were thrown off the bridge on Volxov. See Smirnova, Ikona Nikoly, p. 58.

94. It is depicted in the church at Pelinovo, Yugoslavia (1717-1718). Similarly to Thauma de Petro, Thauma de sepulcro, the Polovtsian Miracle, Thauma de presbytero Mitylenensi and the Translation scene, which sporadically appeared in post-Byzantine monuments, it was probably copied from a Russian work.
95. It may also be an icon of St. Nicholas.
96. Probably this is a container with wine, but the quality of the reproduction prevents a better identification.
97. Antonova calls this scene "Healing of the sick" (Drevnerusskoe, p. 78).
98. See, for example I.N. Voejkova and V.P. Mitrofanov, Jaroslavl', (Leningrad: Avropa, 1973), pp. 128-9; see also p. 130.
99. It is possible that this new composition appeared earlier, but the oldest representation of this kind among the researched icons dates to the 16th century.
100. A.V. Bagrij, "Kievskij spisok čuda sv. Nikolaja ob utopšem detišče," IORJAS, XIX (1914) No. 2, 277.
101. It may be the representation of the bridge across the Volxov river leading to Novgorod's Kremlin, hence another proof of the possible Novgorod provenance of the icon. See Smirnova, Ikona Nikoly, p. 58.
102. Arkiv za povjestnicu Jugoslavensku, IV (1857), 4.

### CONCLUSION

The following observations and conclusions can be drawn on the basis on the study of the literary, artistic and folkloric phenomena connected with St. Nicholas the Wonderworker:

Among the texts described and analyzed in this work the Vita Nicolai Sionitae, the 15 miracle stories often placed after it, the Vita per Metaphrasten and the Praxis de Stratelatis proved to be the most important sources of inspiration for Russian painters. The vitae included in the Synaxarion and the Periodoi Nikolaou ("Neknižnoe Žitie"), as well as the account of the translation of Nicholas from Myra to Bari, were used less often. The miracle stories centered around several common and most popular motifs (*loci communes*): the appearance of the saint to a believer or pagan, the calming of the waves and saving from drowning, saving from prison and execution, miraculous healings and exorcisms, miraculous travels of the saint from place to place in an instant, miraculous multiplications, and the charity or financial assistance of the saint to the needy. Many stories (one may assume that ultimately all of them) originated as oral tales and legends, and in the beginning were not devoted to this particular saint or any saint at all; instead they featured some sort of a mythical hero or miraculous helper. Only at the time when the cult



of St. Nicholas grew and there appeared a need for stories which would demonstrate his sanctity and powers (it must be kept in mind that there have been no data about Nicholas of Myra), were these traditional heroes of oral tales replaced by the saint, and the stories, subsequently, became part of the Nicholas lore. However, even today, in many instances it is clear that Nicholas is only a compositional element framing the story, or a later insertion into the narrative which otherwise concentrates on the experiences of peasants, merchants, craftsmen, etc. This phenomenon is particularly apparent in larger works with well developed plot and dialogue, and with more or less successful attempts at psychological motivation of the actions of the heroes.

One group of miracle stories later developed into the stories of wonderworking icons of the saint. An analysis of these tales shows their obligatory elements: a miraculous appearance of the saint and (or) his image to a Christian or a pagan, the building of a chapel or a church on the spot where the icon appeared, miraculous healings performed by the icon, miraculous travels of the image, and sometimes the defense of the people from enemies. Incidentally, these tales which seem to be of purely legendary, fantastic and didactic character reveal under close scrutiny much fascinating historical data and are a rich source of information for the student of Russian spirituality and folklore.

Ultimately, the illustrations of the events from the life of St. Nicholas and of his miraculous deeds derived from the texts, i.e., the literary works gave the impulse to painters to illustrate them. The artists tried, whenever possible to make use of already existing models, and they sought them primarily in the field of Biblical iconography; by accepting the established, easily understandable and legible iconographical formulae, such as the appearance formula, the birth formula, or the prison formula, they were able to present the Nicholas scenes. Thus, the early compositions very often closely resembled the Biblical models they followed. They became Nicholas compositions only through an addition or change of details in those venerated models. When an old, traditional formula could not be found, icon painters invented new compositions. The new representations had many possible sources: not exact copies, but closely related Biblical scenes, other scenes from the Nicholas cycle, the illustrated manuscripts, or a combination of the above. It is interesting that the iconography of these new compositions has been less rigid, thus the painters have had a larger field for displays of their originality.

The Nicholas cycle appears to be much more developed in Russian icon painting than in Byzantine art. The Russians began to enrich the cycle as early as the 14th cent-

ury, but especially numerous changes and additions were introduced in the 15th and 16th centuries. Among the scenes which were never illustrated in Byzantine art were Nicholas' refusal to take milk on Wednesdays and Fridays, his baptism, his healing of a woman with a withered arm, his charming of a dragon and drawing water from the mountain, his miracle with a stone, his giving a child to a childless couple, his encounter with Arius, his saving of Christopher, the three merchants miracle, the Kiev miracle, the Polovtsian miracle, and the Translation of the saint's relics. Several other representations were much more common in Russian icons than in Byzantine works: the saving of Demetrios from drowning, the miracle with the Patriarch, the saving of Peter from prison, etc. In many scenes there are specific details found only in Russian works.

In several cases the Russian artists followed a particular text or group of texts very closely. The author of icon No. 45, for instance, used the Vita Nicolai Sionitae and the Vita per Metaphrasten as a basis of his rendering of the events from the life of the saint, and a selection of the miracle stories for his posthumous deeds. If the author of icon No. 15 had in mind any text for his rendering of the Praxis de Stratelatis (it is possible that he simply copied the compositions from some Byzantine work without even looking at literary works), he must have used

one of the long versions of the Praxis, since only they give all the necessary details. The author of icon No. 12 probably knew the Vita Nicolai Sionitae and redaction B of the Synaxarion. There are many more examples of such traceable influences exerted by the texts on the representations of Nicholas miracles. There are, however, also numerous examples of the influence of some other source: an oral legend, an icon painting manual, or a text not related to Nicholas. Nonetheless, the great majority of icons gives no indication of what texts (if any) have been used as sources of the pictorial representation. One can observe in a few icons the phenomenon of a lack of knowledge of a literary work or a total misinterpretation of a text (Nos. 43, V, etc.).

It is virtually impossible to determine the principles of the selection of the scenes from the cycle. Apparently the selection was left freely to the painter, although he was obliged to represent some events from the saint's life, and some posthumous miracles. A number of scenes were illustrated more often than others; among the most common representations, the birth of the saint, his schooling, his consecration as a deacon or bishop, his death or translation of his relics, and an episode from the Praxis de Stratelatis are omitted only rarely (in icons of Nicholas Babavskij and Velikoreckij, for example, there is no illustra-

tion of the birth of the saint). It may be argued that sometimes the inclusion of particular scenes depended on the geographical area in which the works were executed, or on the tastes of the donor of the icon, but such a theory is difficult to prove.

The importance of several specific icons for the study of the iconography of St. Nicholas in Russia is worth noting. Two early works, from Pavlovo and Bol'šie Soli (1 and 2) are important because they illustrate the Arius episode within the cycle, and do not allude to the events at the First Ecumenical Council by the placement of the figures of Christ and the Virgin on either side of the saint's head. The icon from the Ugrešskij Monastery (12) is significant for its illustration of two miracles otherwise unknown in icon painting, the charming of a dragon and drawing water from the mountain, which have been based on the text of redaction B of the Synaxarion, a folkloric resonance of the Vita Nicolai Sionitae. The icon from Meletovo (22) proved to be one of the most unusual Russian hagiographical works devoted to the saint. The fact that it presents many scenes not found in any other icon of Nicholas and that the iconography of these scenes differs notably from the common Byzantine canons are sufficient reasons for devoting a special study to this particular work, with special attention given to Western influences. Among the 16th century works two de-

serve special mention. The icon from the collection of Pavel Korin (40) is interesting for its large number of border scenes and for the unique representation of the miracle of charming the devil, based on the text of the Periodoi Nikolaou. Despite fewer border scenes, the icon from Boroviči (45), presents probably the most original selection, and even in traditional subjects shows a particular individuality and originality of approach. È.S. Smirnova in her article devoted to this work ("Ikona Nikoly iz Borovičej," SGRM, VII, 1961 ) mentioned the possibility that the icon was painted under the impact of a heretical movement of Artemij, the former Father Superior of the Trinity-Sergius Monastery in Zagorsk, and his disciple Porfirij. The heretics did not believe in the miracles performed by saints and criticized the cult and veneration of St. Nicholas, maintaining that the saint was a "man of humble origin" (smerdovič) and could not have performed all the alleged miracles. Although the heretics were condemned in 1553, a movement of this sort must have resulted in a strong promotion of the cult of Nicholas, and the Boroviči icon could have been one of the means of glorifying the Wonderworker. As proof of this hypothesis Smirnova points out the presence on the icon of the representation of the Thauma de patriarcha, a miracle story about the Patriarch of Constantinople who, like the Russian heretics of the 16th century,

did not believe in the wonderworking powers of the saint and also called him "smerdovič". The other scenes on the icon, illustrating the most unusual miracles of the saint (multiplication of bread, giving a child to a childless couple, etc) confirm the supposition that the icon was painted in order to visually demonstrate that Nicholas could have performed any miracle. In this connection it should be noted that, although the story about the Patriarch was known already in the 14th century and was depicted in icons (No. 4), only in the 16th century did it become popular, and in the next hundred years, especially in monastic circles, its illustrations forced out the illustration of the saving of Demetrios (see the repertory of scenes in Russian broadsides, in Chapter V). Finally, two late icons (Nos. 80 and 82) exemplify the final stages of the development of the cycle. They present several scenes which were not previously illustrated in Russian works (the grainship miracle, the imprisonment of Nicholas, the monastery miracle, etc.), and thus extend the number of border scenes to almost forty, and present very developed compositions with an unusual element of ornamentalism, and with a multitude of figures and details.

A few words may be added here as to the most suitable way of publishing hagiographical icons (not only those of St. Nicholas, but in general). A publication of an icon

should include a general view of the work, supplemented by all the necessary data concerning dimensions of the icon, the date of its appearance, the school of painting, repertory of border scenes, collection, etc., and an enlargement of every scene with an iconographical study of this scene in the context of other hagiographical icons of this particular saint, and including all inscriptions. As was mentioned before, such an approach to icon publishing is now being employed in some Soviet scholarly works. However, still too many icons remain only esthetic objects, devoid of all the necessary apparatus for their full understanding and thorough study.

These concluding remarks would not be complete if one failed to emphasize the amazing growth of the popularity of Nicholas in Russia in the 16th century. Throughout the dissertation numerous ways in which this popularity manifested itself are discussed. First, there were a large number of manuscripts written at that time, related possibly to the appearance of the Reading Menaea of Makarij, and their copying. Opposition to the anti-Nicholas heresy mentioned above probably also played an important role in the growth of the veneration of the saint. The appearance of illustrated vita of the saint, together with the appearance of the wonderworking icons, tales about them, and new versions of the old stories must have been promoted by Ivan IV



and his officials, who wanted to make Nicholas the most powerful spiritual defender of the country. All these phenomena led to an enrichment of the illustrated Nicholas cycle: new renderings of old compositional schemes were invented and miracles never before illustrated appeared among the other border scenes. In general, the number of icons painted increased in proportion to the production of manuscripts. This trend continued in the 17th century. Although there were certain changes in the popularity of particular miracles, the cult of the saint remained very strong. Folklore supplied new examples of the saint's universality and miraculous powers. From the 17th century on, Nicholas became a favorite of all classes, from princes to peasants and beggars. And the image of the Wonderworker as an all-powerful saint, good and speedy helper, eager defender of the people and the nation was ceded to us in Russian art, literature and folklore.

It is hoped that studies similar to this one will be undertaken in connection with other popular saints. This may lead in the future to a large study of hagiographical icons in Russia and their relationship with the Old Russian hagiographical literature. The method of research developed here, using extremely complex Nicholas texts and a full array of icons could be adapted to similar studies of other saints.

### Bibliography

The bibliography includes the sources referred to in the text and a few works not cited, but closely related to the subject. A large number of general works, including dictionaries, encyclopedias, histories, etc., consulted during the research are omitted in order to keep the bibliography as compact as possible.

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Żywoty świętych starego i nowego zakonu na każdy dzień przez cały rok, do których przydane są niektóre duchowne obroki i nauki przeciw kacerstwom dzisiejszym, tam gdzie się żywot którego doktora położył, ku temu kazania krótkie na te święta, które pewny dzień w miesiącu mają, przez ks. Piotra Skargę societatis Iesu przebrane, uczynione, i w język polski przełożone, i teraz znowu od niego po ósmy raz do druku przejrzane, i z rocznemi dziejami kościelnemi kardynała Baroniusza porównane, z przydatkiem niektórych żywotów na końcu. Kraków: Wydawnictwo Księży Jezuitów, 1936. Vol. IV.

APPENDIX  
(ILLUSTRATIONS)

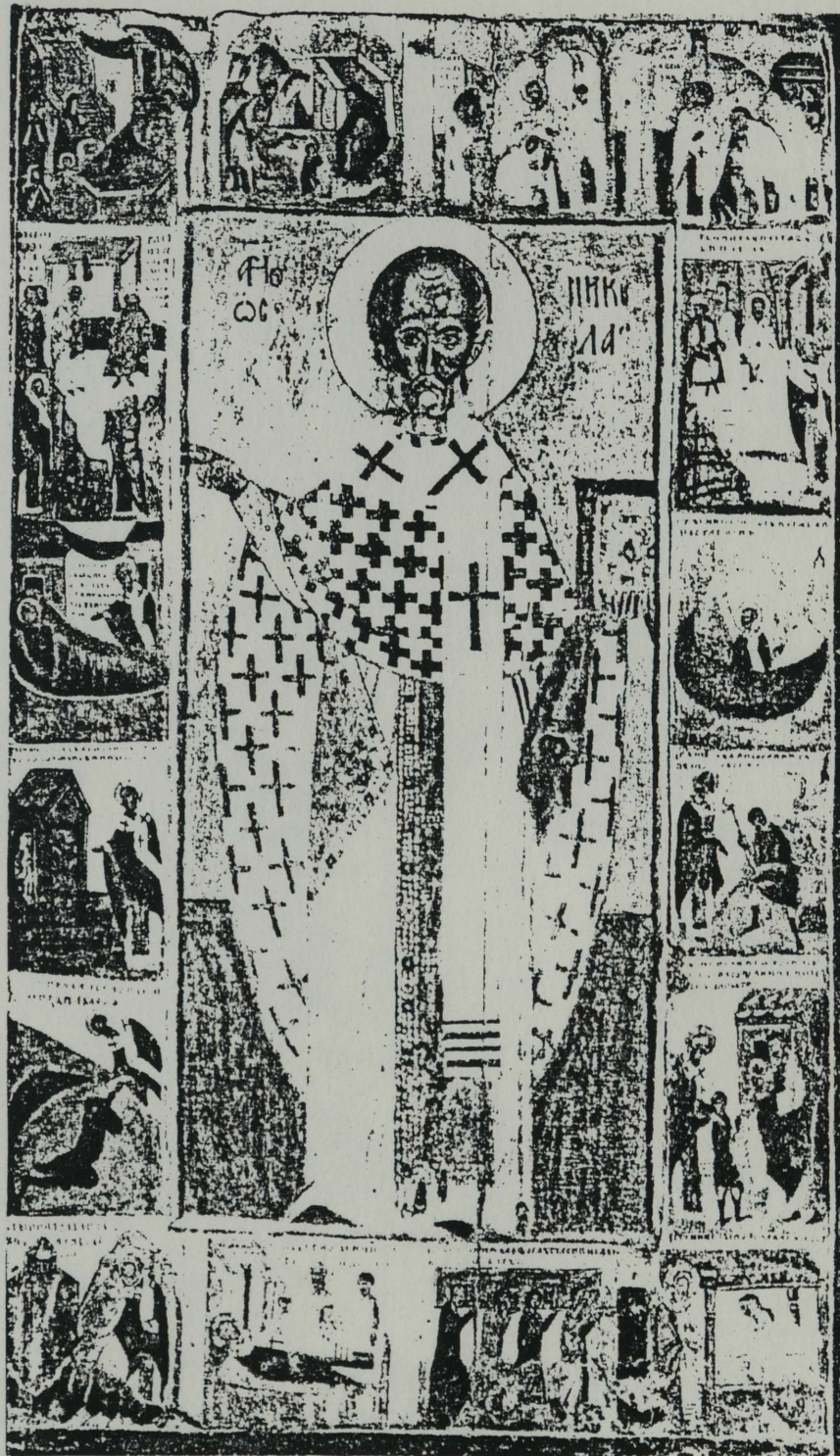


Figure 1



































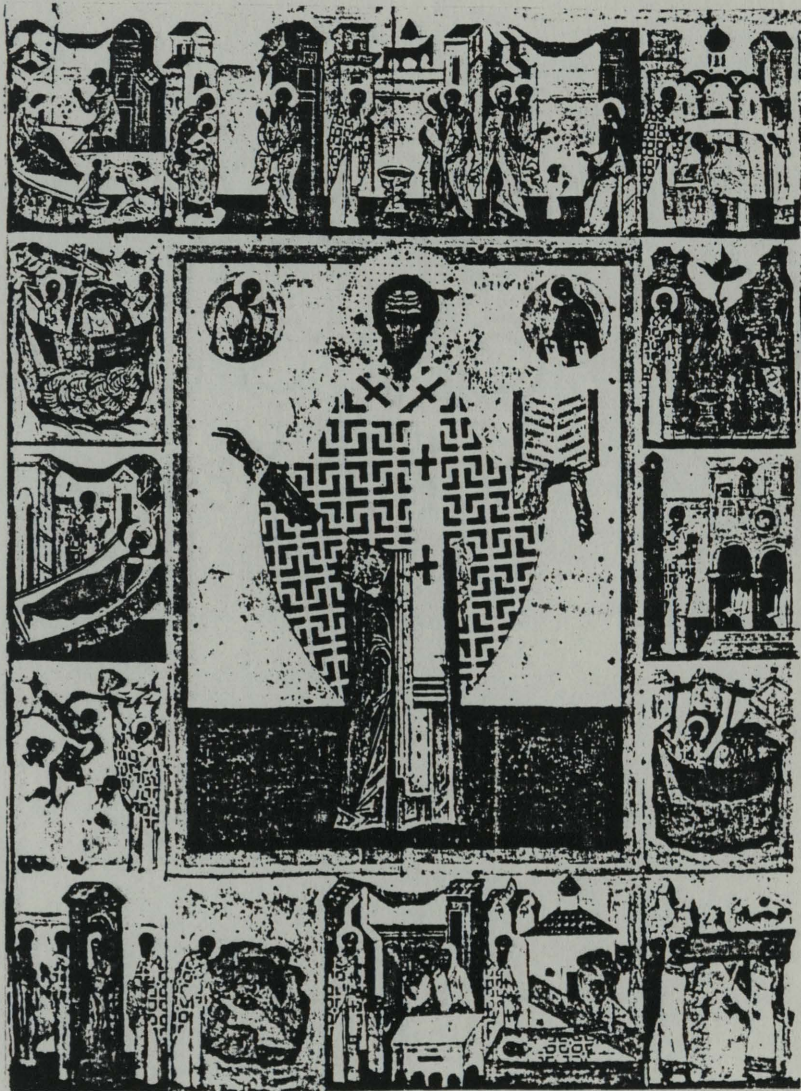








Figure 7







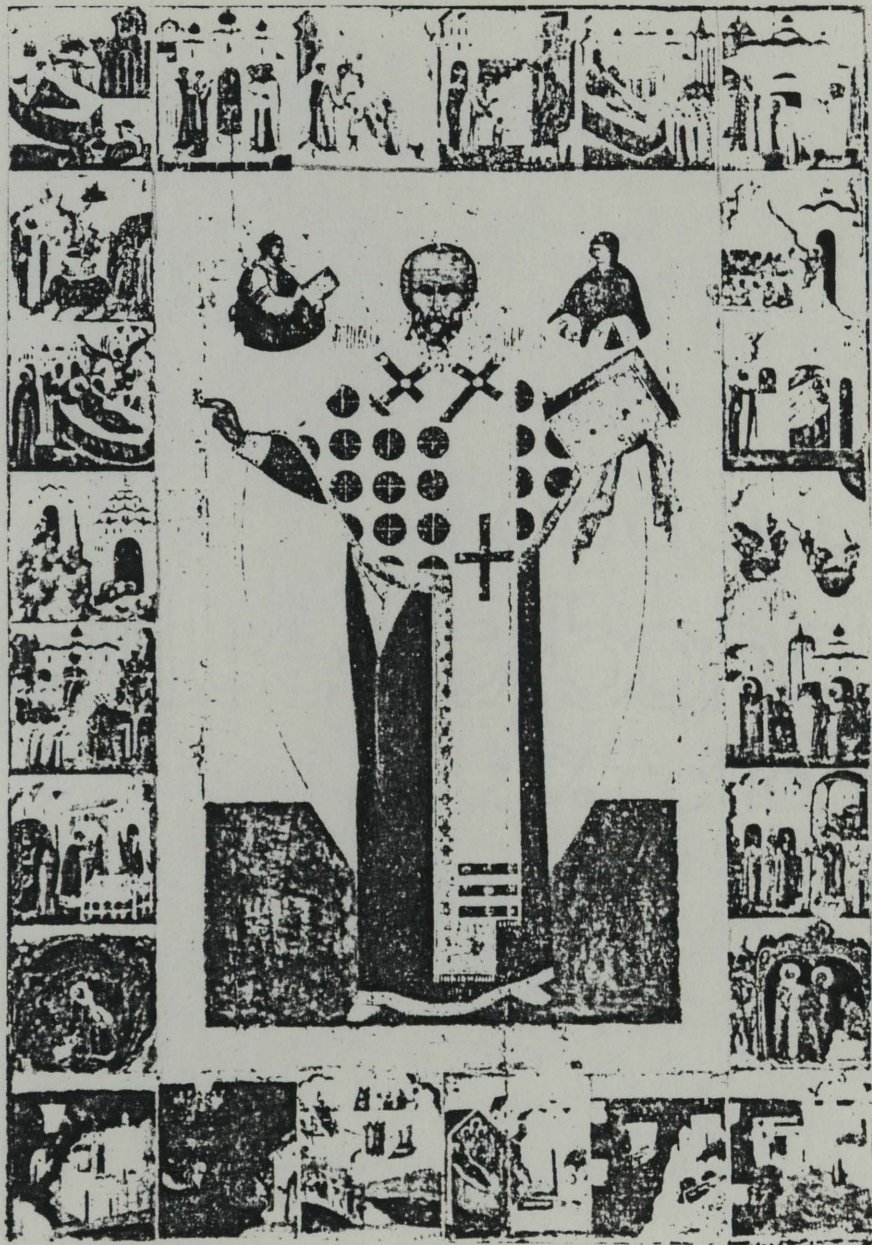


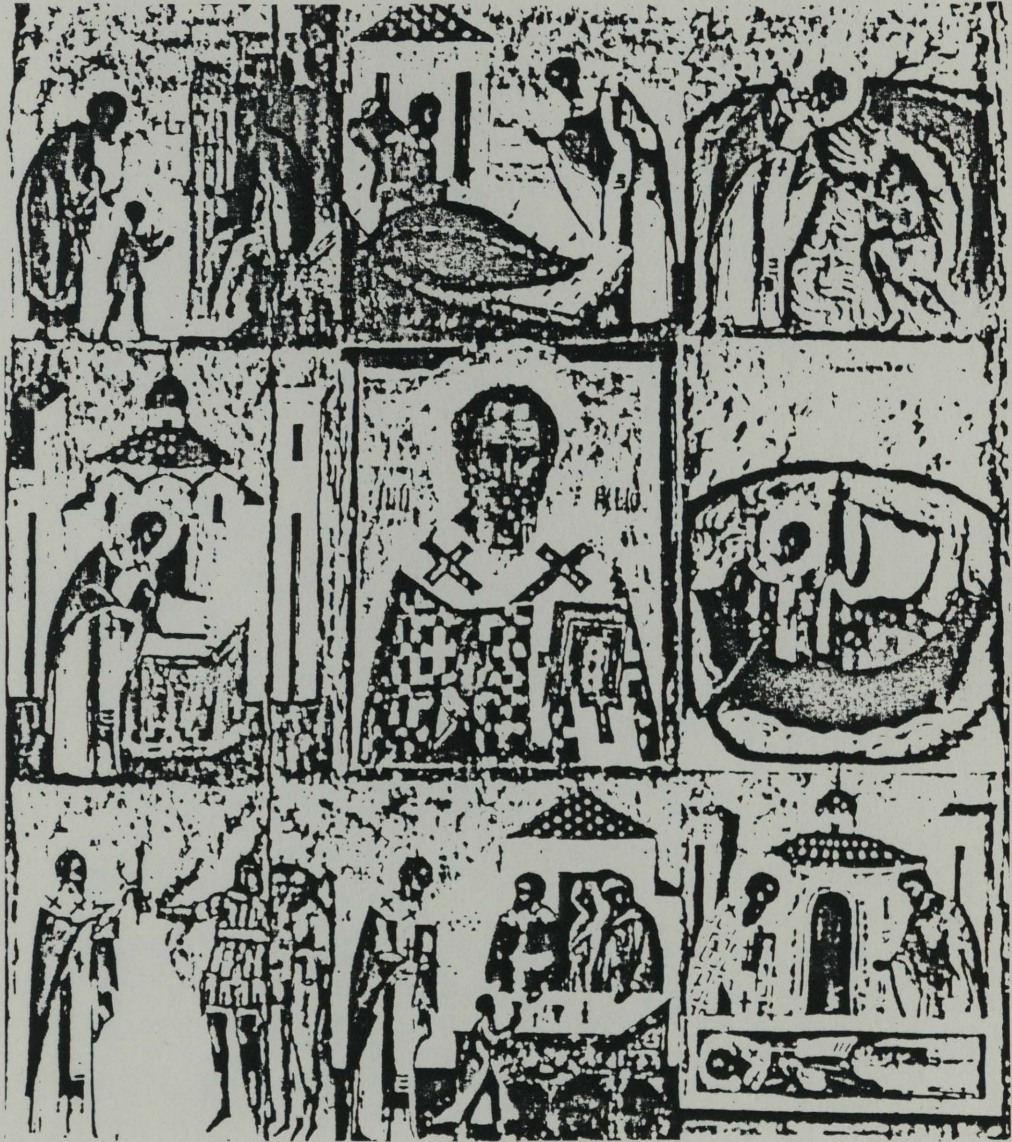




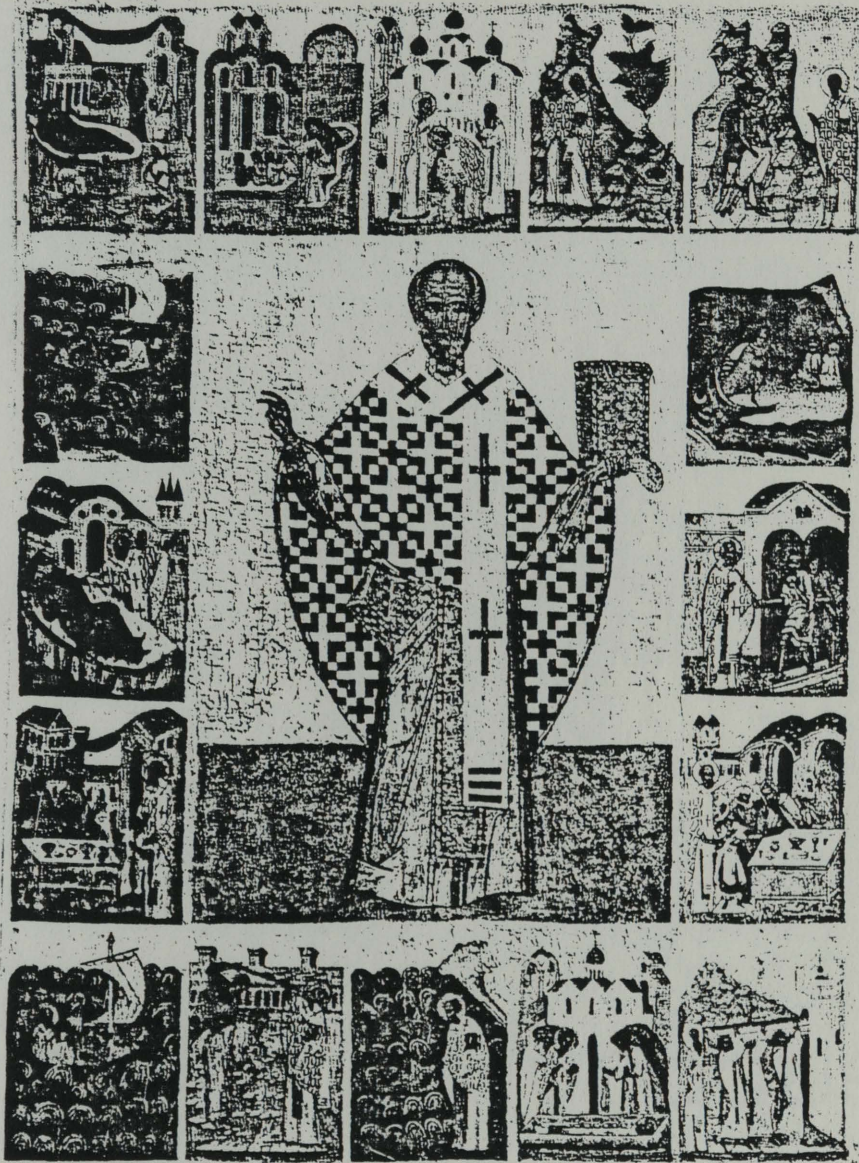






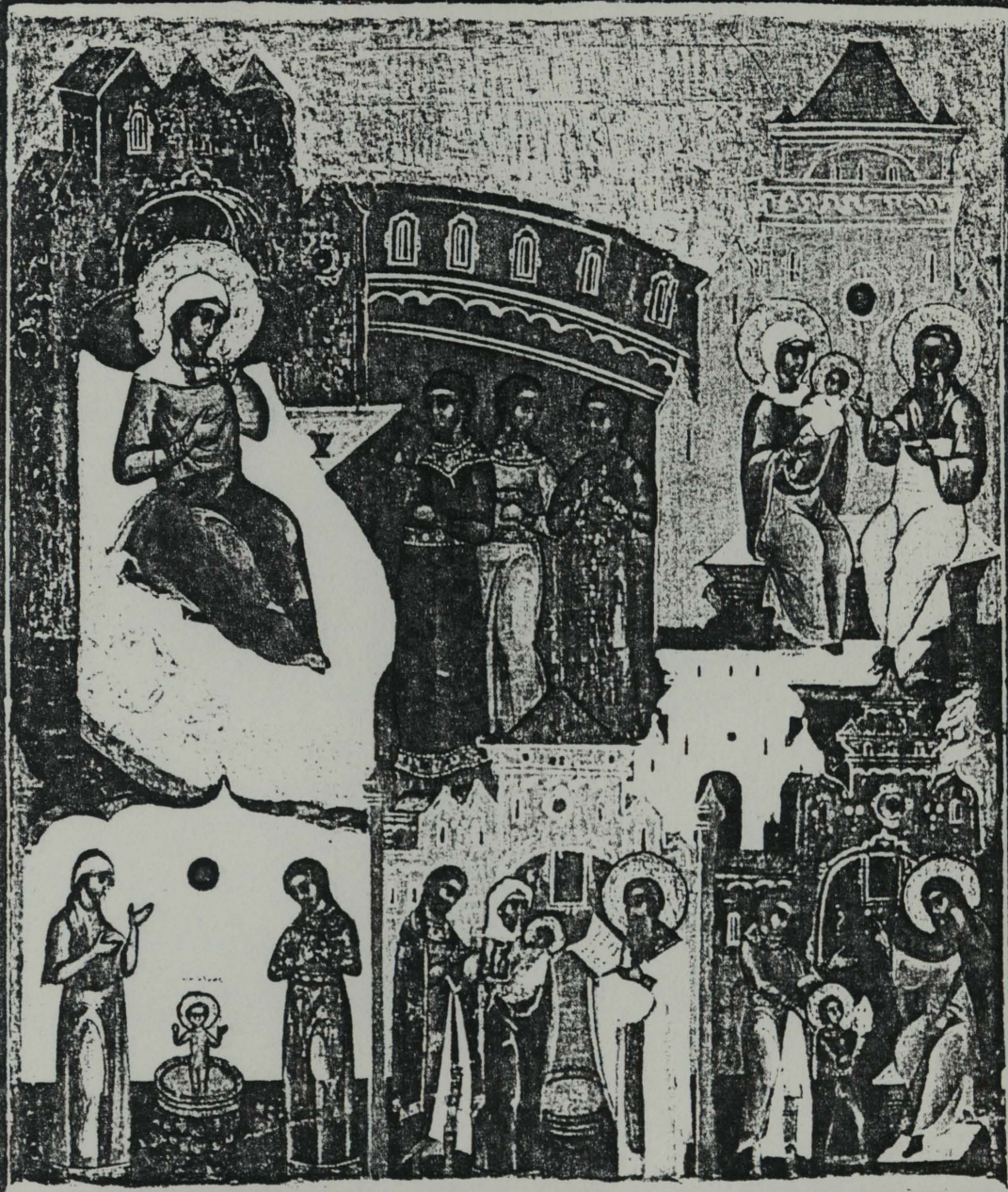








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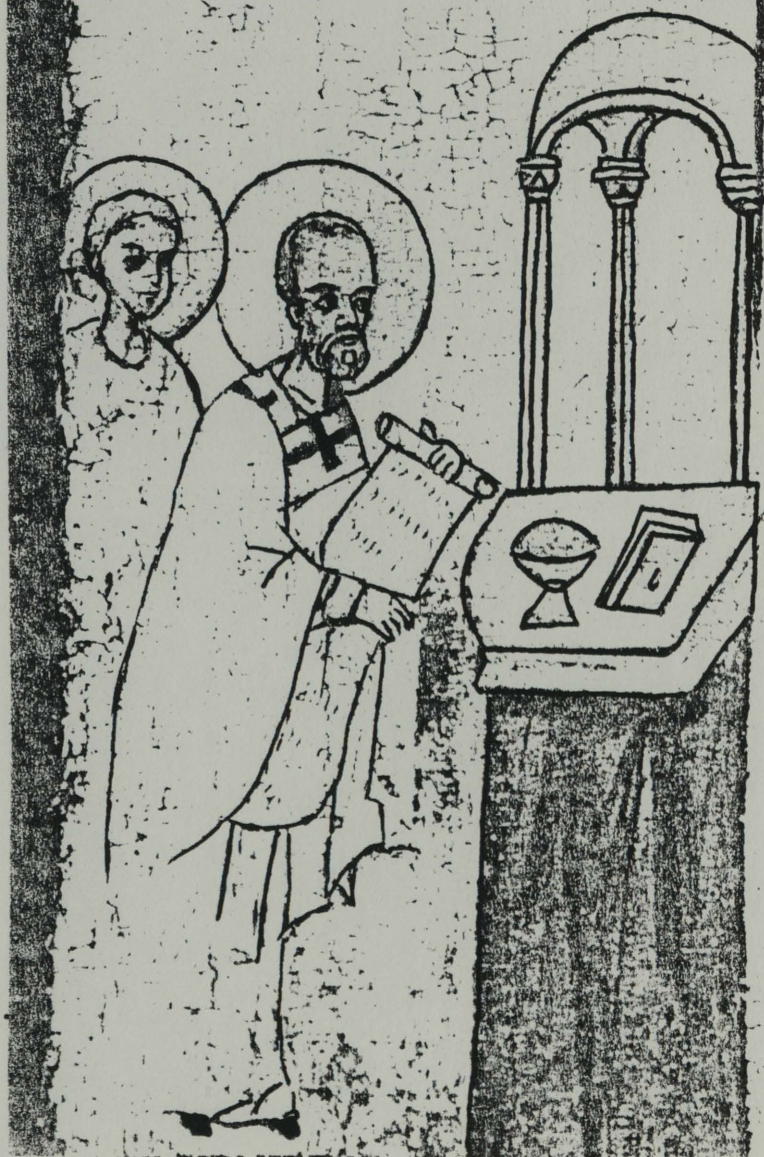




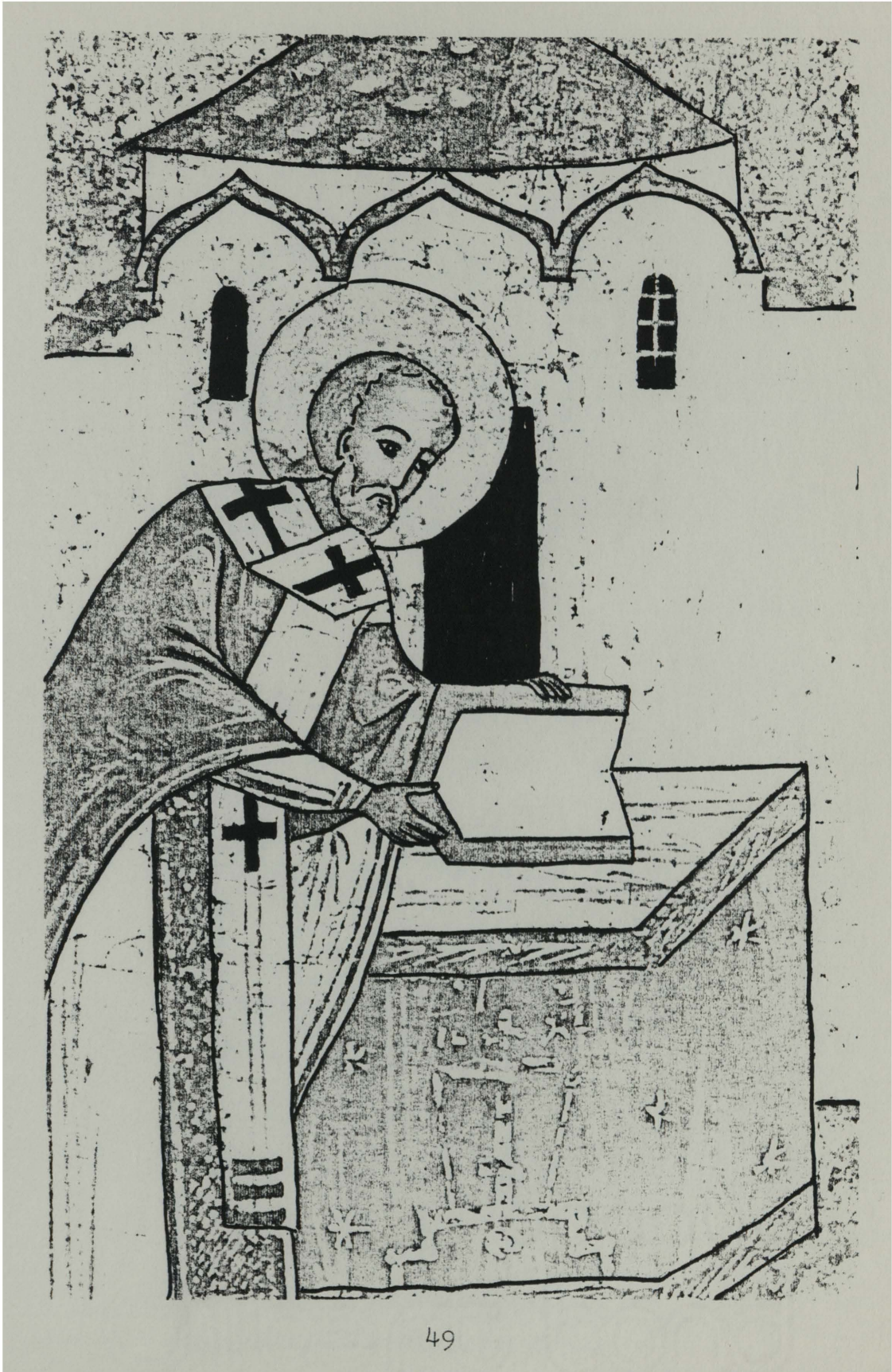




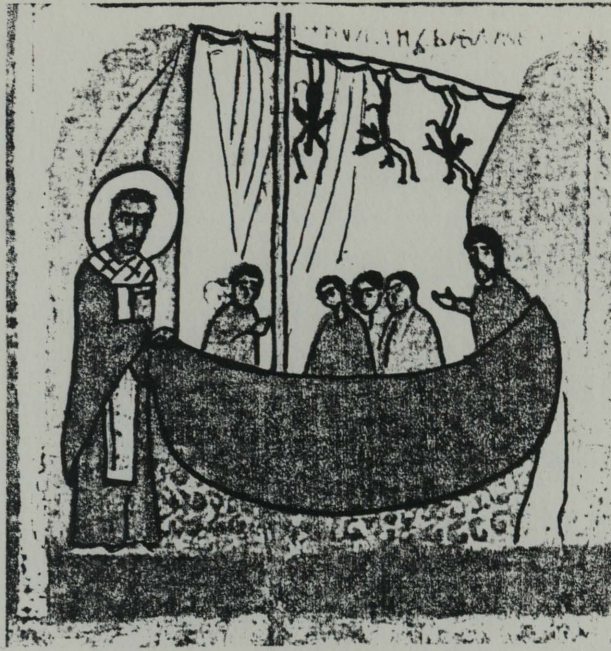
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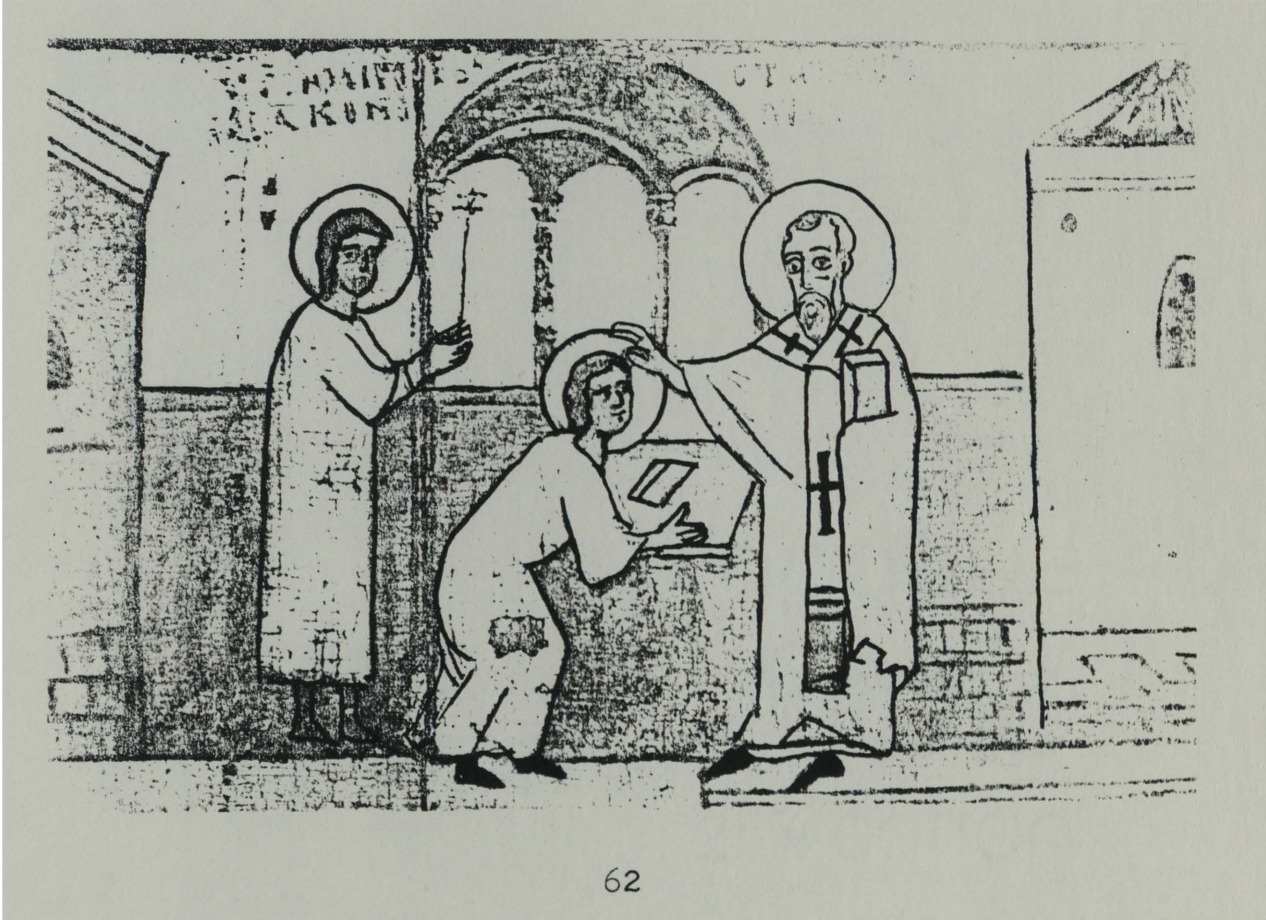






















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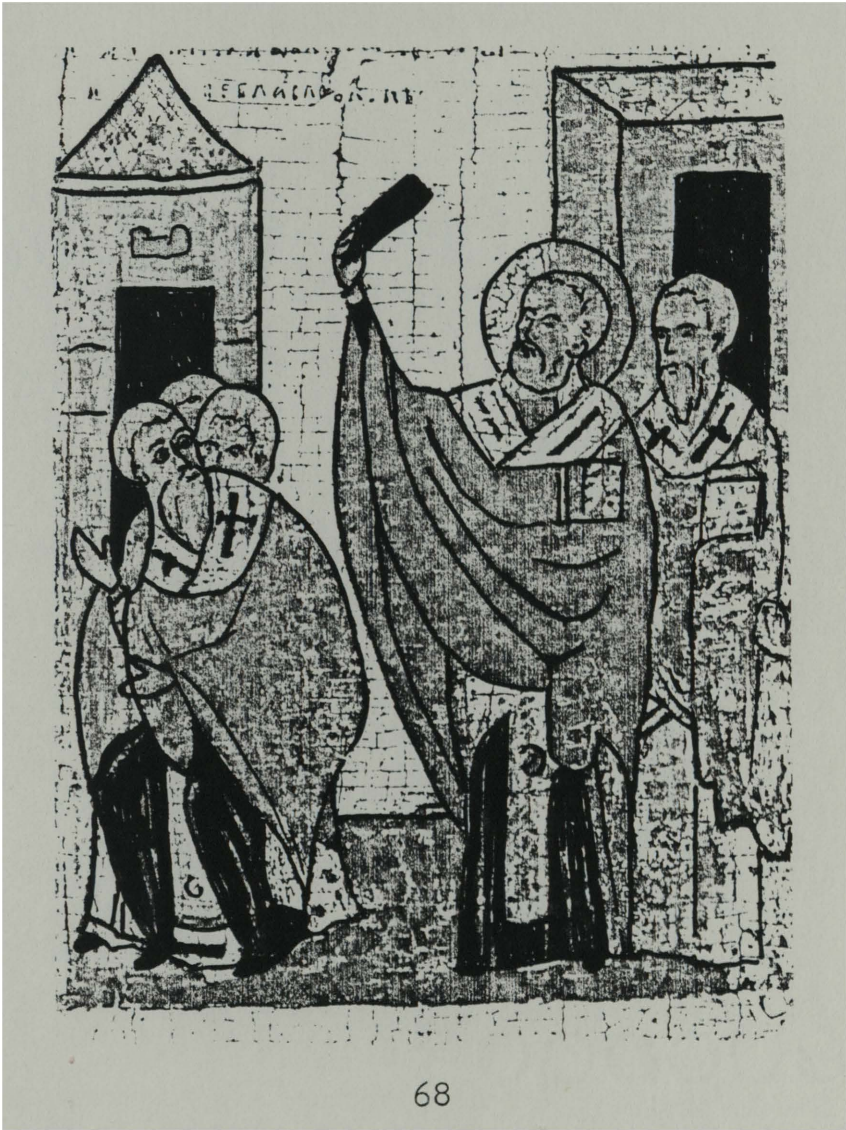
















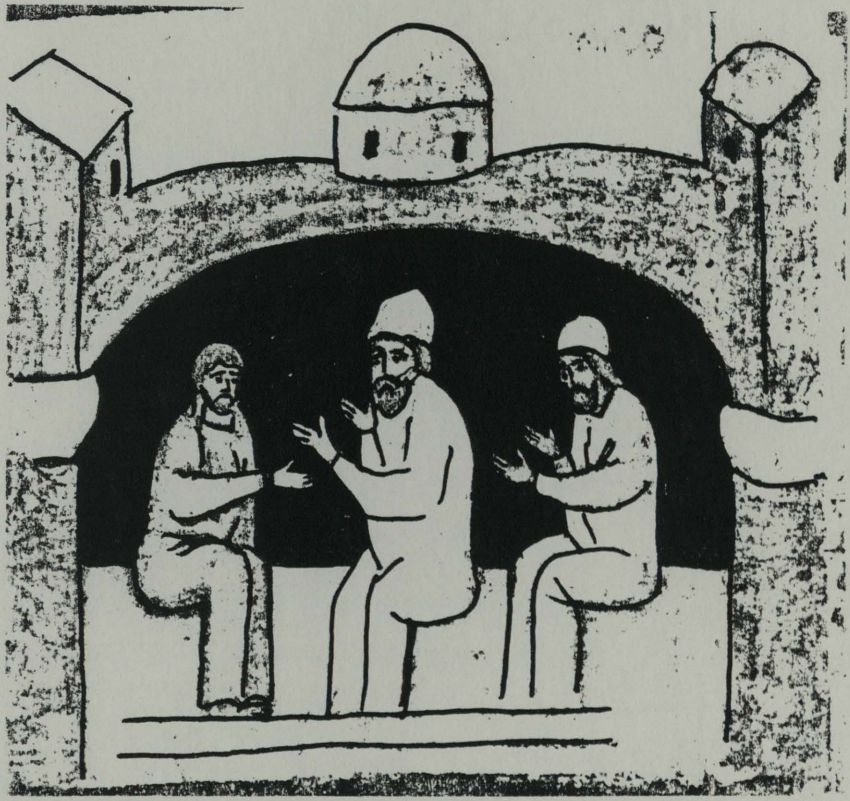
















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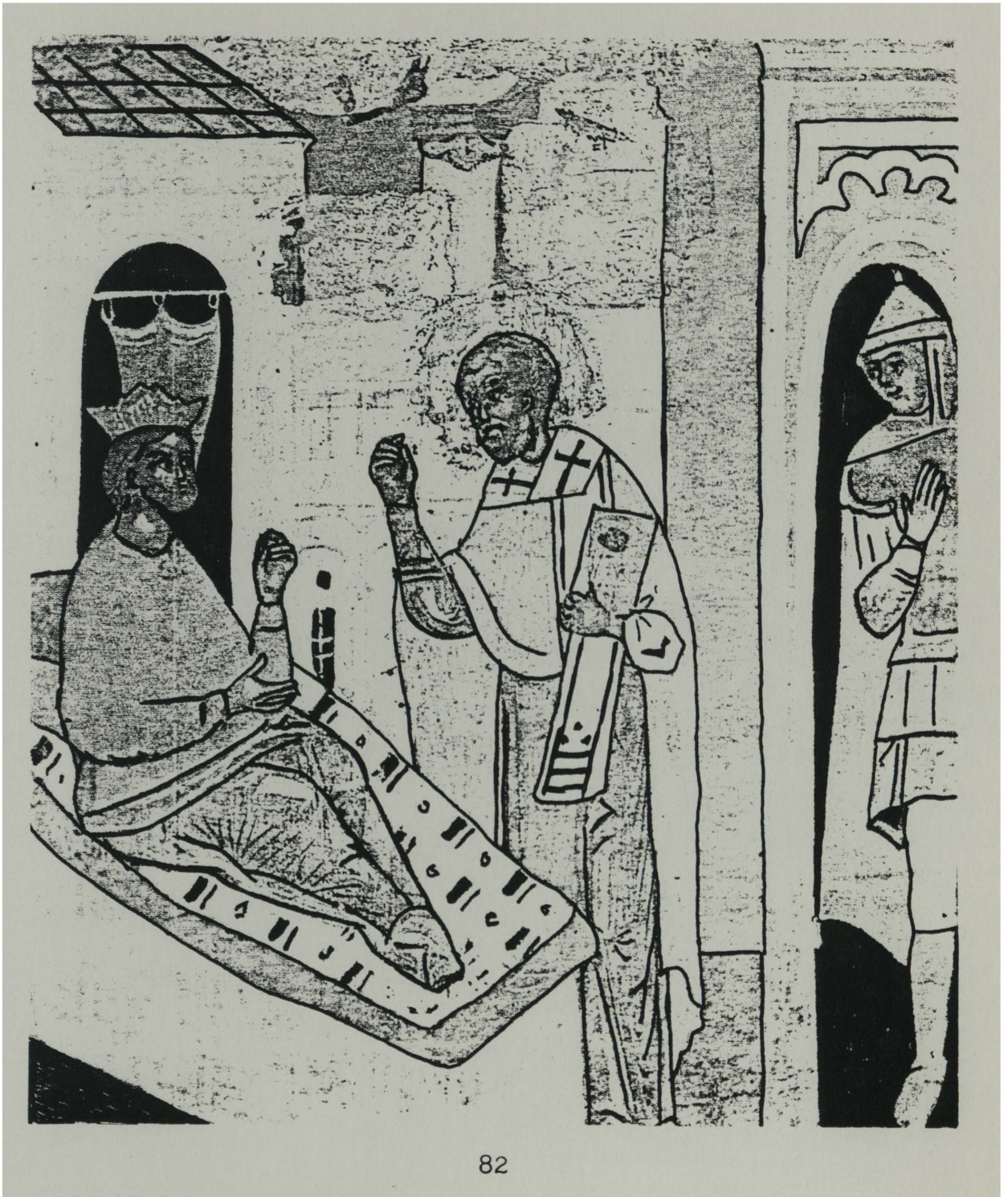






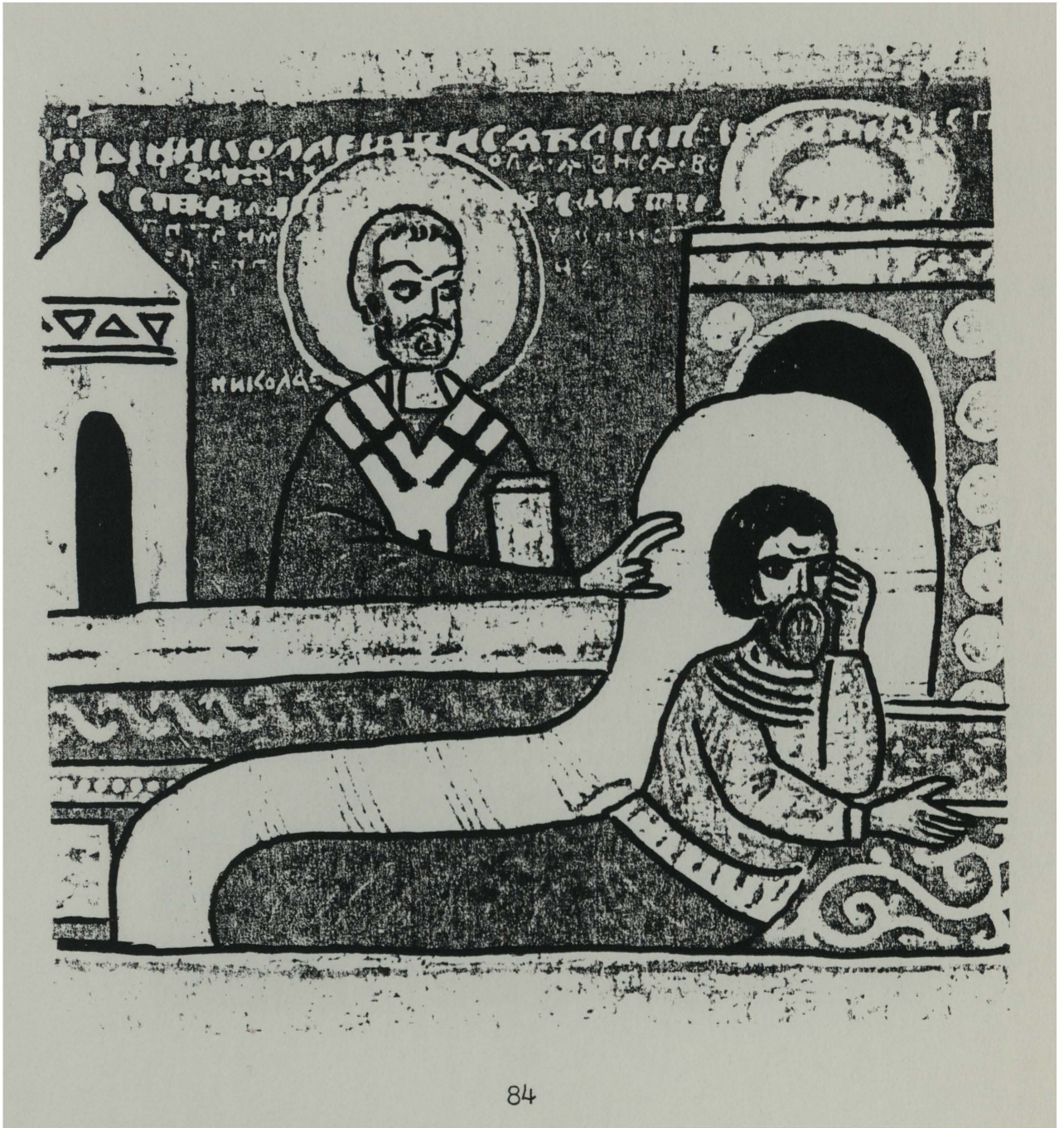
























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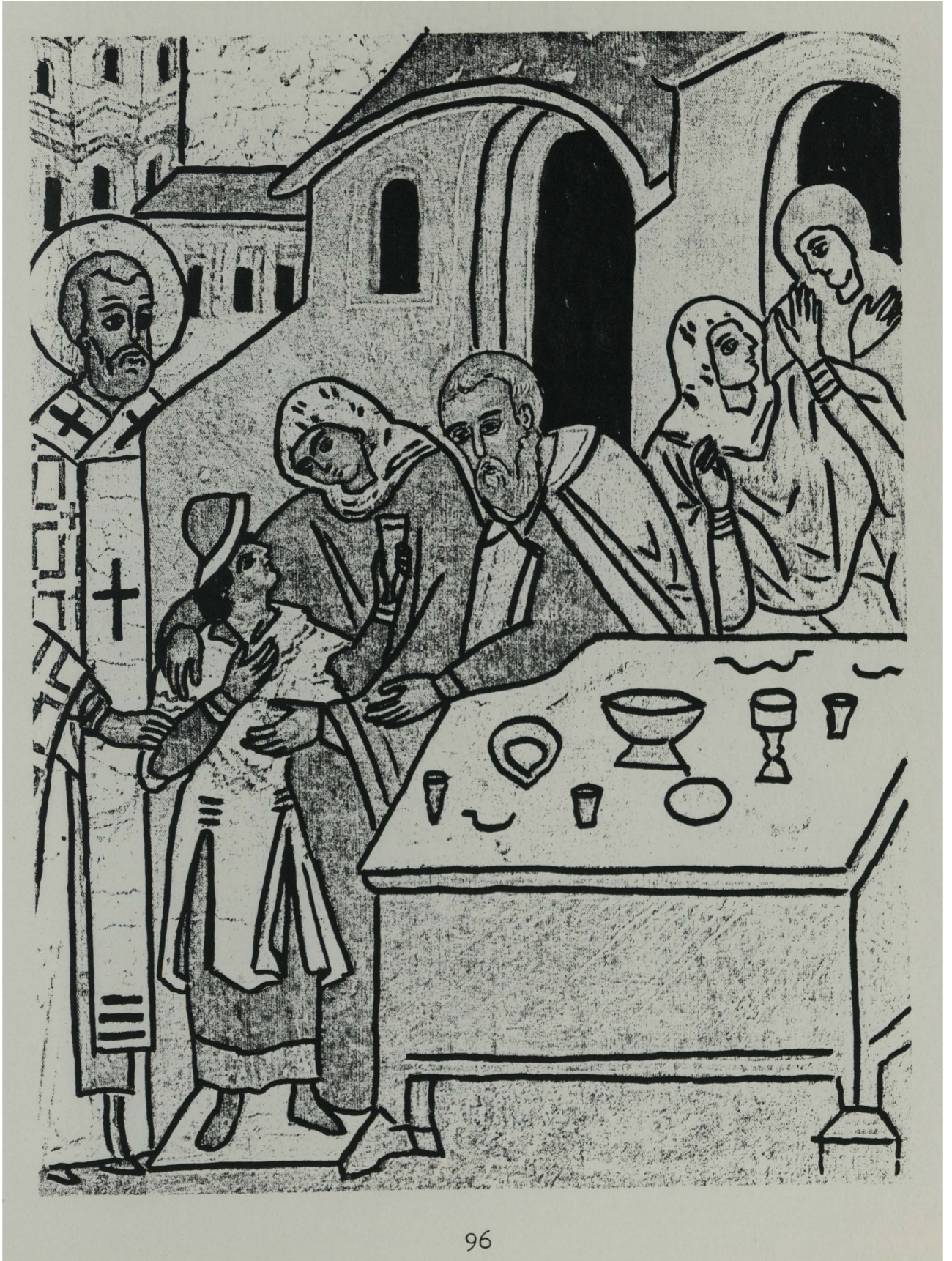








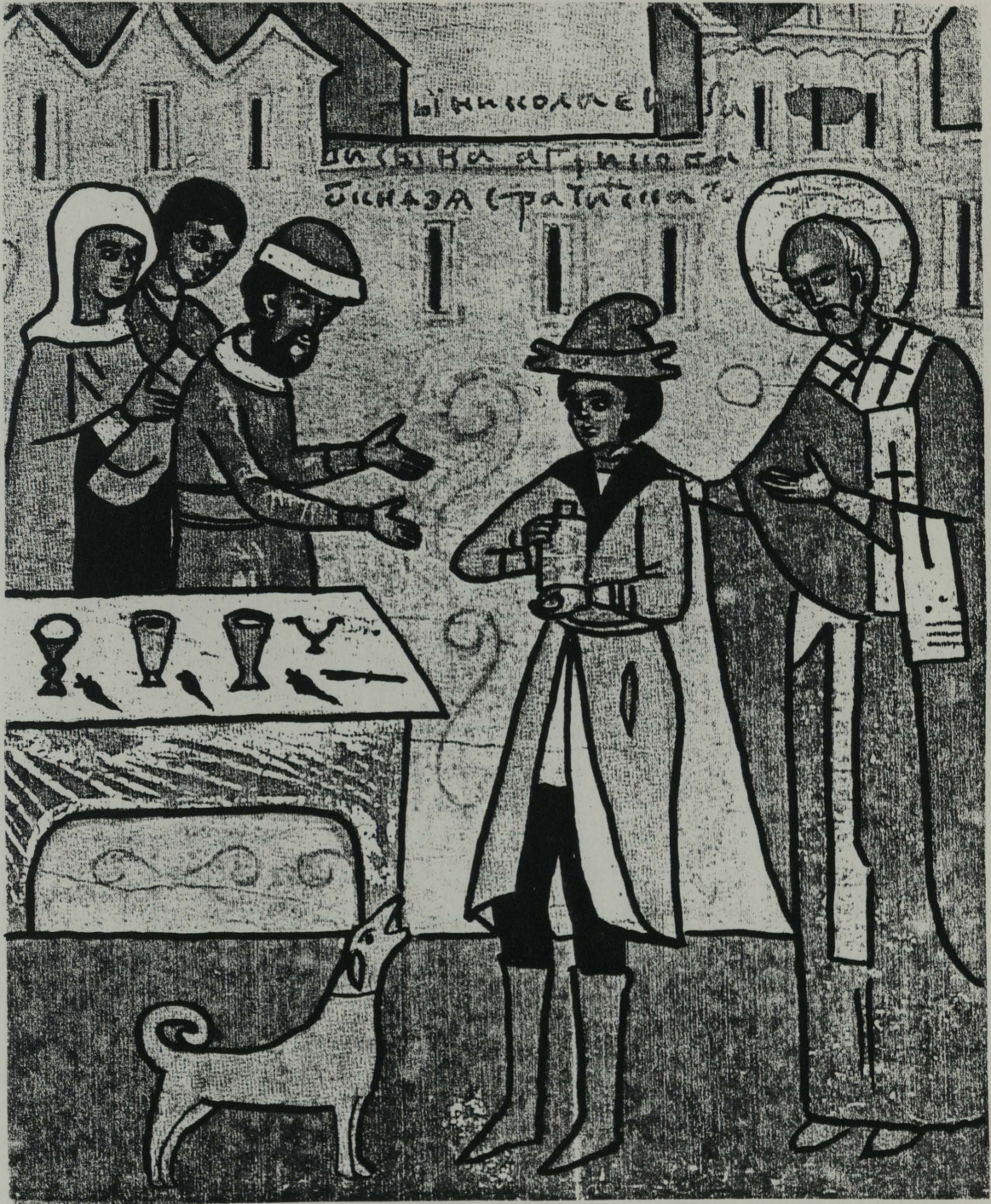


















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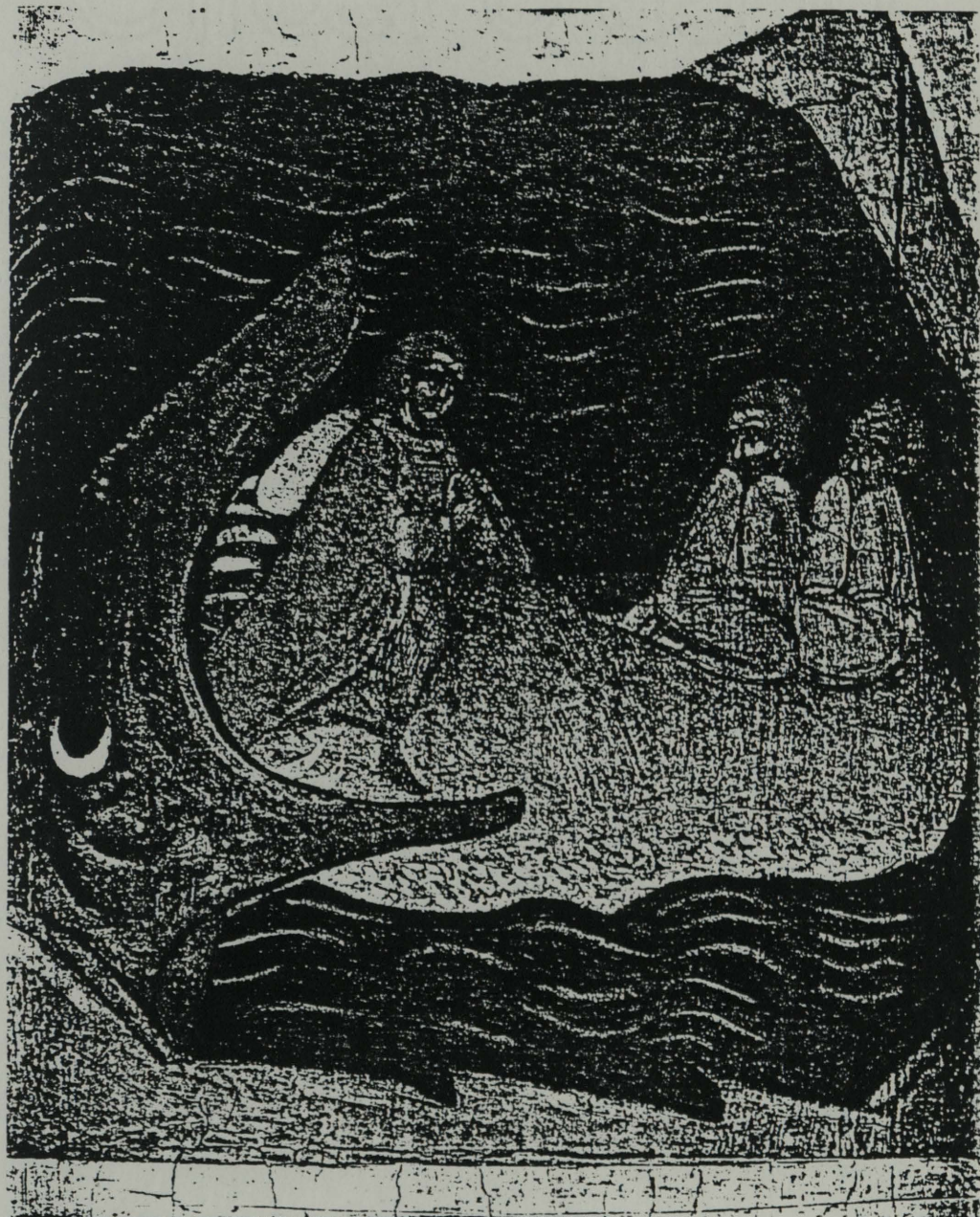


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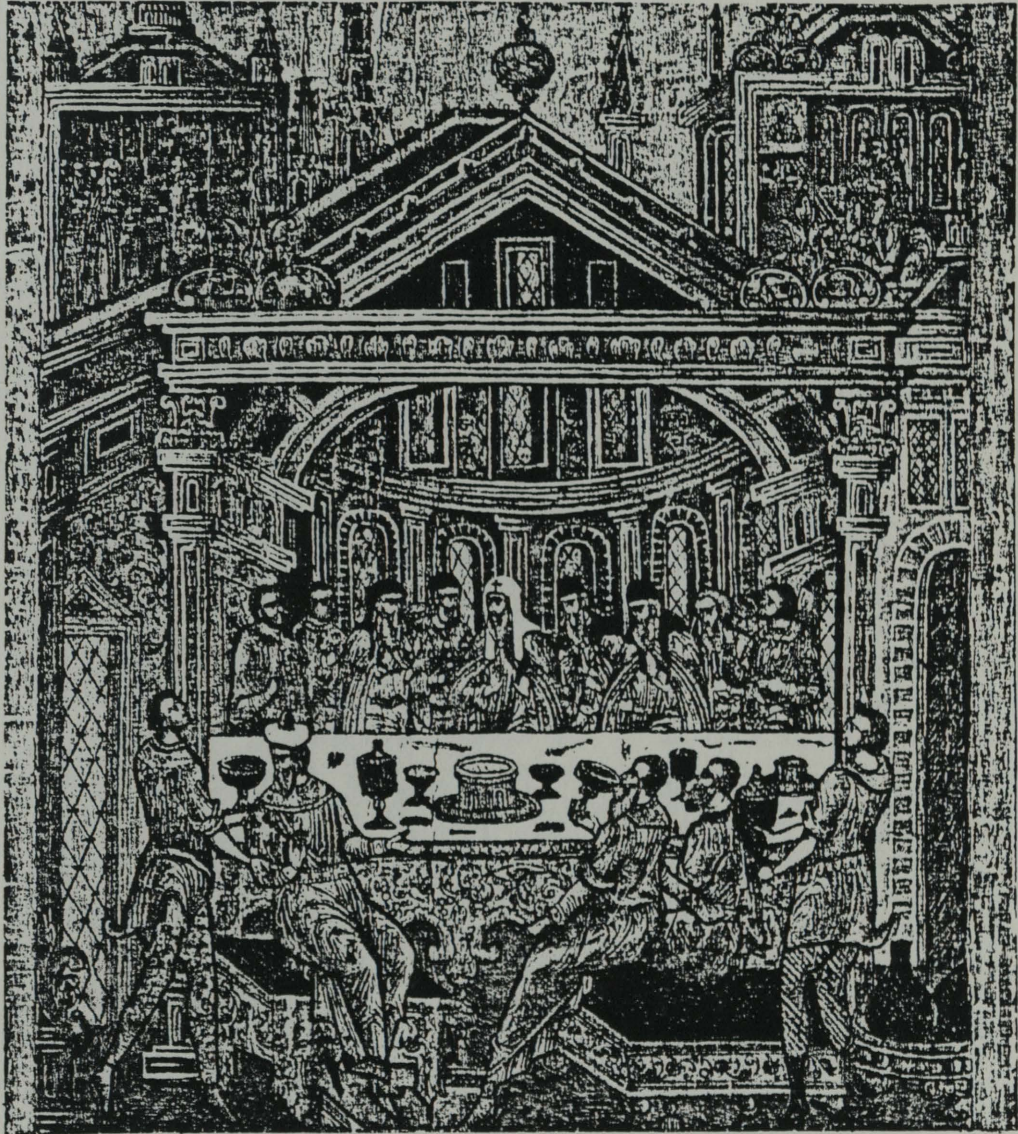














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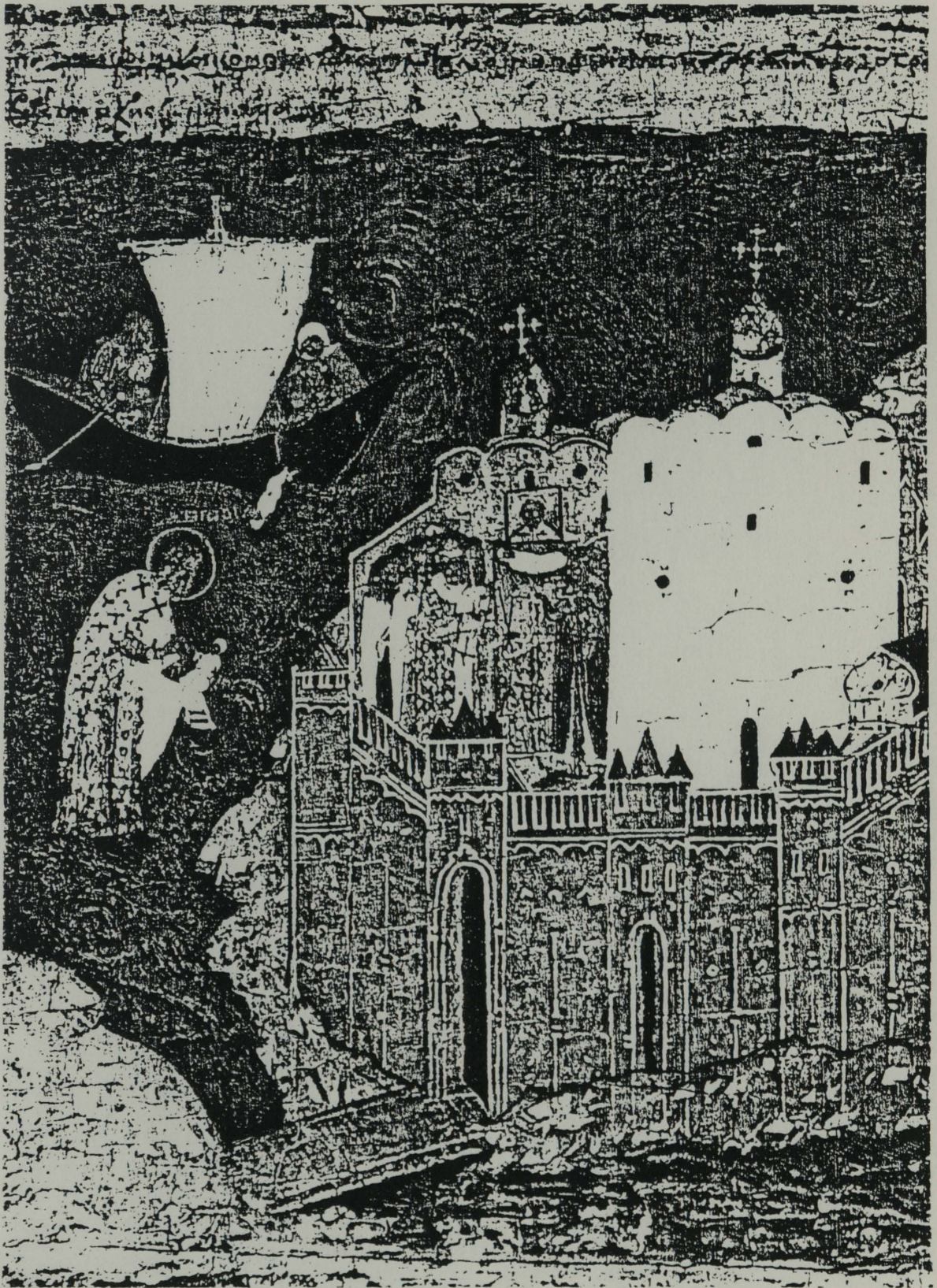


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