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COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF THE BELZ AND DROHOBYCH DEESIS ICONS ATTRIBUTED TO THE FIFTEENTH CENTURY

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Abstract. The research focused on a group of fifteenth century Deesis icons from Belz and Drohobych (today's Lviv region of Ukraine). There are nine icons preserved: the icon of St. John the Baptist (from the Church of Transfiguration in Belz), the icons of Ss. apostles Peter and Paul (from the Belz Church of St. Paraskevi), images of Ss. Nicholas, John Chrysostom, Peter and Paul, John the Baptist, Archangel Michael (these icons were kept in the Drohobych church of Elevation of the Holly Cross). Both fragments of the Deesis Row show high stylistic similarity and are attributed to the legacy of common workshop. Six images from the mentioned group combine three pairs united by iconographical base and almost identical dimensions. An iconographic and artistic-stylistic comparison of three pairs of Deesis icons from Belz and Drohobych (images of Ss. Peter, Paul and John the Baptist) were executed. Iconographic, stylistic recalls and differences were discovered and analysed. As the result of comparison two stylistic painting-lines of the investigated icons were pointed out: the «harmonious» one (the icons of St. Peter from Belz, Ss. Paul, John the Baptist from Drohobych) and the «expressive» line (icons of St. Paul from Belz and St. Peter from Drohobych). It has been also suggested that the author of the Drohobych icon of St. Peter could have been a less skilled apprentice of the master of St. Paul's icon from Belz. The author of Drohobych icons of Ss. Paul and John the Baptist could have been a follower of the Belz master of St. Peter. Drawings of three pairs of the Belz and Drohobych icons were compared. The common prototype was noted not only in connection with general iconography, but also with proportional replays. Drawings of the Drogobych icons of Ss. Peter and Paul were studied in infrared light. The result was a conclusion about the absence of authors' changings in the drawing of two mentioned images. Finally, a hypothesis about the use of common trace drawings for the Belz and Drohobych icons was proposed.

Key words: Ukrainian icon painting, Deesis row of iconostasis, Belz, Drohobych, fifteenth century, iconography, trace drawings.

The photographs of St. Peter and Paul icons from Belz and St. John the Baptist icons from Drohobych were published with the permission of Taras Voznyak (general director of the Borys Voznytsky Lviv National Art Gallery). Icons of Ss. Nicholas and John Chrysostom, Peter and Paul, Archangel Michael from Drohobych were reproduced with the permission of Alla Gladun (director of the Museum «Drohobychyna»).

КОМПАРАТИВНИЙ АНАЛІЗ ДЕІСУСНИХ ІКОН XV СТОЛІТТЯ З БЕЛЗА ТА ДРОГОБИЧА

Оксана Сьомак, Мазур Вікторія

Анотація. Дослідження присвячене групі ікон чину Моління XV ст., належних до спадку галицьких міст Белз та Дрогобич (зараз Львівська область України). Це белзькі ікони Святого Іоанна Хрестителя (із церкви Преображення Господнього), апостолів Петра і Павла (із церкви Святої Параскеви), дрогобицькі образи Святителів Миколая, Іоанна Златоуста, апостолів Петра і Павла, Святого Іоанна Хрестителя, архангела Михаїла (ікони зберігалися в міській церкві Воздвиження Чесного Хреста). Обидва фрагменти Деісусного чину демонструють високу міру іконографічної і стилістичної подоби та віднесені до спадку однієї майстерні. Образи, котрі утворюють іконографічні пари, взяті до розгляду. Здійснено іконографічне та художньо-стилістичне зіставлення трьох пар деісусних ікон із Белза та Дрогобича (образи апостолів Петра, Павла та Святого Іоанна Предтечі). Проаналізовано іконографічні, художньо-стилістичні збіги та відмінності. Виявлено дві стилістичні лінії малярства досліджуваних ікон: «гармонійна» (ікони апостола Петра з Белза, апостола Павла, Святого Іоанна Предтечі з Дрогобича) та «експресивна» (ікони апостола Павла з Белза та апостола Петра з Дрогобича). Висловлено припущення, що майстер дрогобицької ікони апостола Петра міг бути менш вправним учнем автора белзького образу апостола Павла. Виконавець дрогобицьких ікон апостола Павла та Святого Іоанна Предтечі міг бути послідовником автора белзького образу апостола Петра. Порівняно малюнки белзьких та дрогобицьких образів. Відзначено наслідування спільного прототипу не лише в загальному іконографічному вирішенні, але й у пропорційному відношенні. Досліджено малюнки дрогобицьких ікон апостола Петра і Павла в інфрачервоному світлі (змін початкового малюнка не виявлено). Запропоновано гіпотезу шодо використання майстрами белзьких та дрогобицьких ікон спільних прорисів.

Ключові слова: український іконопис, Деїсусний чин, Белз, Дрогобич, XV століття, іконографія, прориси.

Публікацію світлин ікон апостолів Петра і Павла з Белза та Святого Іоанна Предтечі з Дрогобича здійснено з дозволу Тараса Возняка (генерального директора Львівської національної галереї мистецтв ім. Бориса Возницького). Ікони святих Миколая та Іоанна Златоуста, апостолів Петра і Павла, архангела Михаїла з Дрогобича репродуковано з дозволу директорки музею «Дрогобиччина» Алли Гладун.

Introduction. In the heritage of mediaeval Belz and Drohobych, there are some artworks marked by common iconography, stylistic similarity and almost identical dimensions. Nine related Deesis icons are preserved: Ss. apostles Peter and Paul (from the Belz Church of St. Paraskevi) and St. John the Baptist (from the Church of Transfiguration in Belz), the fragment of Drohobych Deesis is represented by the icons of Archangel Michael, John the Baptist, Ss. Peter, Paul, Nicholas and John Chrysostom (these icons were kept in the Church of Elevation of the Holy Cross). The mentioned Deesis fragments belong to the group of artworks attributed to a joint workshop.

Formulation of the problem. Strong iconographical similarity between Belz and Drohobych images, corresponding icons' sizes and common style features are the reasons for attentive study of these icons and its comparison. Here are three iconographic pairs: the icons of Ss. Peter, Paul and John the Baptist (il. 1-6).

Relevance of research. Difficulties with defining the fifteenth century painting centres and icon painting workshops of Ukrainian Galicia, as well as the principles of its creativity determine the relevance of this research.

Analysis of recent research and publications. Historiography of the research is provided by the works of Volodymyr Yarema, Vira Svientsitska, Lyudmila Milyaeva, Lev Skop and Halyna Druzyuk, Maria Helytovych and the notes by Vasyl Putsko. V. Svientsytska characterized Drohobych Deesis in connection with «transitional phase of the Bojkivshchyna painting culture at the turn of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries». The art historian noted artistic and stylistic characteristics of both centuries combined in the works [9, p. 485]. V. Yarema involved two Deesis icons from Belz and six Drohobych images from the Deesis Row in the creative output of the «Workshop of the Deesis Rows from Drohobych and Belz»¹. He dated the Drohobych images to the second half of the fifteenth century, and assumed an earlier dating for the Belz icons [3, p. 437]. H. Druzyuk and L. Skop also believed the Belz icons earlier executed [4, p. 3].

¹ Apparently, V. Yarema did not know about the existence of the icon of St. John the Baptist from Belz (this icon is in a collection of the Andrey Sheptytsky National Museum in Lviv).

МИСТЕЦТВОЗНАВСТВО



II. 1. Icon of St. Peter. Fifteenth century. Belz Deesis. Church of St. Paraskevi in Belz, Lviv region. 95x44.7 cm [image by the author, courtesy: Borys Voznytsky Lviv National Art Gallery]



Il. 2. Icon of St. Peter. Second part of the fifteenth century. Drohobych Deesis. Church of the Elevation of the Holy Cross in Drohobych (?), Lviv region. 94x43 cm [7]



II. 3. Icon of St. Paul. Fifteenth century. Belz Deesis. Church of St. Paraskevi in Belz, Lviv region. 95x43.5 cm [image by the author, courtesy: Borys Voznytsky Lviv National Art Gallery]



Il. 4. Icon of St. Paul. Second part of the fifteenth century. Drohobych Deesis. 94x41 cm [6]



II. 5. Icon of St. John the Baptist. Fifteen century. Belz Deesis. Church of the Transfiguration in Belz. 94x39 cm [image provided by M. Helytovych]



II. 6. Icon of St. John the Baptist. Second part of the fifteenth century. Drohobych Deesis.
82.5x41.5 cm [courtesy: Borys Voznytsky Lviv National Art Gallery]



Il. 7. The St. Peter's icons from Belz and Drohobych Deesis Rows. The faces in comparison [image by the author]

L. Skop considered the author of the Drohobych St. Paul's image as a leading icon painter of the workshop. M. Helytovych posted a thesis that there were two masters created the Belz and Drohobych Deesises. The researcher characterized the manner of the master who executed the icon of St. Paul of Belz, as tended to simplification and primitivization [2, p. 306]. L. Milyaeva together with M. Helytovych dated Drohobych Deesis to the end of the fifteenth century [5, p. 138–139]. M. Helytovych also suggested to date the Deesis icon of St. John the Baptist from Belz to the end of the fifteenth - beginning of the sixteenth century [2, p. 306]. V. Putsko attributed an activity of the mentioned workshop to the second half of the fifteenth century [8, p. 947].

In this study, we tend to date the Drohobych Deesis' fragment to the second half of the fifteenth century, agreeing with V. Yarema. According to the complicated state of the Belz artworks' preservation, we suggest broadly dating to the fifteenth century for these icons.

The aim of the article is to compare the iconographical and stylistic peculiarities of six icons from Belz and Drohobych and to highlight similar and distinctive features of these artworks.

Presentation of the main material. The subject of comparative analysis is three iconographic pairs: icons of St. John the Baptist and images of Ss. Peter and Paul. We support the thesis about an earlier creation of the Belz images, so the comparison starts with the Belz icons.

St. Peter icons. *The Belz icon of St. Peter* (95x44.7 cm) is a full-length image of the Saint depicted in a movement to the right. The figure of the apostle appears on a green background. The Saint wears greenish chiton and pinkish-brown



Il. 8. Comparison of the scrolls' texts on the St. Peter's icons from Belz and Drohobych Deesis Rows [image by the author]

himation (strict lines depict folds of the garments). Peculiar patches of light make chiton draperies structured. The St. Peter's figure shows a little reverse. His face and hands have a light-beige tone. Gilded (apparently) and engraved nimbus with red outline circles the Saint's head (the poor state of preservation does not allow to describe it precisely). The face painting is distinguished by exquisite manner, relief modelling of brow furrows and cheekbones, clearly articulated undereve furrows (contours have a gentle brown colour). Massive neck of the Saint and general monumentality of his figure combines with a small head and miniature hands. St. Peter holds a fan-like scroll unfolded with quotations from the Gospels of Matthew and John in Church Slavonic: «You are the Christ, the Son of the living God. You are the King of Israel» (Matthew 16:16; John 1:49). The inscription on the scroll is visible even in the lower folded part, where the last two lines have reduced letters. Clearly the geometrical image of the garments' edge is noteworthy (the border of the chiton wrapped around the apostle's left leg has a polygonal shape). The edge of himation has a half-sphere form combined with a zigzag line. The ground consists of two stripes coloured in different shades of green. The icon has a narrow red border on the margins. High grasses with white and red berry-like flowers cover the ground. The icon suffered great losses of painting.

The icon of St. Peter from Drohobych $(94x43 \text{ cm})^2$ has much better state of preservation than the

² Actual dimensions of the icons of Ss. Nicholas (94x42 cm), John Chrysostom (94x49 cm), Paul (94x41 cm), Peter (94x43 cm) and John the Baptist (82.5x41.5 cm) from Drohobych Deesis do not correspond with the data in the album «Українська ікона XI–XVIII століть» by L. Milyaeva and M. Helytovych (2007), il. 64–66, 68–69.



Il. 9. The St. Paul's icons from Belz and Drohobych Deesis Rows. The faces in comparison [image by the author]

previous one. The image represents a simplified folkloristic manner (almost black, broad contour line, contrasted and not-nuanced palette). The Saint's face has a completely new appearance. There are not thin and delicate features, but enlarged, clearly delineated elements with light strokes in his face painting (il. 7). Gilded halo has complicated contouring: it consists of a double engraved line combined with a dotted line, and finally a red painted outline. The nimbus also has an inner decoration shaped of four-petalled flowers with pressed dots in the middle. The well-preserved Drohobych fragment of the text on a fanlike scroll recovers a word «ЖИВАГА» instead of «ЖИВАГО» in the Belz example (il. 8). Together with the scroll, St. Peter holds in his left hand a red ribbon with a massive key on it. Undoubtedly, the almost-same image of a key is ruined in the Belz icon. There is a bright and dynamic ornamentation that appears on the left and right icon borders, where a simple flower motif alternates and forms a zigzag pattern.

St. Paul icons. The image of St. Paul from Belz. (95x43.5 cm) presents a heavy large-head figure of the apostle in a movement from right to the left. The apostle has a recognizable type with a high and bald forehead. He is dressed in a greenish chiton with a clavus and ash-pink himation highlighted with greyish-green. The apostle holds a closed red-edged codex shown in a reverse perspective. Gilded nimbus of the Saint is decorated in the same way as the nimbus of St. Peter from Belz. The movement of the author's brush shows a tangible relief, a thick and energetic stroke. The colour of the incarnate is darkish, the shadows are deep, light hatches are well done. Contours have a rich brown colour. Brown eyes of the apostle do not have a distinctive almond shape, but look



Il. 10. The St. Peter icons from Belz and Drohobych Deesis Rows. The drawings' comparison [image by O. Blonskyi]



Il. 11. The St. Paul icons from Belz and Drohobych Deesis Rows. The drawings' comparison [image by O. Blonskyi]



II. 12. The St. John the Baptist icons from Belz and Drohobych Deesis Rows. The drawings' comparison [image by O. Blonskyi]



Il. 13. Icon of St. Peter. Drohobych Deesis. Photo in infrared light [image by O. Rishnyak, O. Sadova]

rounded, the lips are red. The hands of the apostle are small, clearly outlined, generously decorated with hatches, the phalanges of the fingers are articulated with light strokes. Unlike the previously discussed icons, the ground of this image is different. Here are not small white-red rounded flowers, or elongated buds, but blooming red flowers with black centres and red-black buds. It is noteworthy that this variant of the ground is not repeated in any of the six preserved Drohobych Deesis icons. The inscription of the Saint's name is made with white colour in the frame of dark green rectangles (this variant was also observed in the icon of St. Peter from Drohobych). The mentioned icon from Drohobych stylistically correlates with the artwork of this master.

The image of *St. Paul from Drohobych* (94x41 cm) originally supposed to be a bit wider, but now is cut (it lost the ornamental stripe on the right margin). Stylistically, the image of St. Paul from Drohobych contrasts with the Belz icon.



Il. 14. Icon of St. Paul. Drohobych Deesis. Photo in infrared light [image by O. Rishnyak, O. Sadova]

Skilful drawing is combined with exquisite colour shades. The face of the apostle is harmoniously structured and has a delicate tone. The principle of the image relates this icon with the Belz image of St. Peter (almond-shaped eyes, a thin elongated nose). Here not only the nimbus, but also the border lines of the chiton and the apostle's himation are gilded. Golden strokes probably decorated the cover of the codex in the hands of the Saint, the letters of the inscription in the upper part of the icon are gilded also. The ornamentation and border of the nimbus repeats the halo decoration, noticed in the image of St. Peter from Drohobych, but with contouring simplified. The ground is covered with familiar white-red flowers. Certain imperfection in the depiction of the chiton and the himation of St. Paul is identified. The author probably, was confused with complex draperies, or deliberately took an illogical step in favour of a spectacular coloristic rhythm (the first version is most likely).

Icons of St. John the Baptist. The icon of St. John the Baptist from the Church of the Transfiguration in Belz is the narrowest (94x39 cm) and the most mysterious icon among the artworks included in the analysis, because it has significant losses in the upper and lower register (the face and feet of the Saint are ruined). The icon represents a full-length image of the holy prophet, whose posture and gesture of outstretched hands show a prayerful expression. The Saint is dressed in a light brown chiton with a brown clave and a greenish himation fell from his left shoulder. The clothes of St. John the Baptist are depicted with a significant emphasis on the graphic component and a large number of rhythmic highlights. In general, the graphic part of the icon is beautifully executed.

Drohobych icon of St. John the Baptist (82.5x41.5 cm) is cut in the lower part. Chiton and himation of the Saint combine milky-brown and cold green colours. Delicate and refined manner of the icon refers us to the images of St. Peter from Belz and St. Paul from Drohobych (this image of St. Paul is also corresponding due to its specific upper and down margins' ornament that is also preserved on the upper border of the Drohobych St. John the Baptist icon). The way of inscription on the icon is familiar - gilded letters over dark green rectangles. The decoration of the Saint's nimbus is the same to the mentioned St. Paul's icon has. The St's face is gently coloured, poetic and spiritual, and at the same time is shown with pushed forward chin, which adds asceticism to the image. Thin tall stems with white-red flowers show a melodic rhythm. This icon is undoubtedly a high example of harmonic painting.

To finish the comparison, let us turn to analysis of the Belz and Drohobych icons' drawings and dimensions. The Belz Deesis icons are almost identical with the Drohobych images. Inspired by an art historian and restorer Oksana Sadova, we compared the drawings of three preserved Deesis pairs and realised that the paired icons almost match (il. 10-12). The iconographic unity of the Belz and Drohobych icons is indisputable. Art historian, restorer Tetiana Tymchenko drew attention to the study of the drawings in infrared light for understanding if the authors' addition to the general drawing took place. The existing photos of the icons of Ss. Peter and Paul from Drohobych testify to the fact that the authors of the Drohobych icons did not change the drawing (il. 13, 14). Therefore, here is an argument in favour of trace drawings' use. Were these traces made after the Belz icons? Returning to the comparison of the two icons of St. Paul, we under-

stand that the use of a trace from Belz image would not have led to the appearance of such a delicate Drohobych icon. Noteworthy is a bright difference between the ear depictions in these icons. Therefore, we assume that Drohobych and Belz masters used trace drawings from common protographs unknown to us today.

Conclusions. Comparative analysis of three Deesis icon pairs from Belz and Drohobych presents the following results. Three Belz icons are distinguished by a higher professional level and more refined style than the ones from Drohobych artworks. Belz and Drohobych images have common iconography not only in general, but also in details. A comparison of figures and accessories depictions in three pairs of icons founded practically the same drawings. Graphic models of the drawings comparison, as well as an examination the drawings of Ss. Peter and Paul icons in infrared light, allow us to assume the use of common trace drawings for the Belz and Drohobych icons. The manner of three icons from Belz divides into «harmonious» and «expressive» stylistic lines. Drohobych artworks under study also represent two stylistic variants. One, apparently, continues the exquisite painting of the master of St. Peter from Belz. We assume that this master could execute the icons of Drohobych Ss. Paul and John the Baptist (this icon painter was well skilled in drawing and fine colour nuances). The second manner belongs to the author of the Drohobych St. Peter and embodies a folkloristic following to the master of St. Paul from Belz. Perhaps the Drohobych master was an apprentice of the author of the Belz St. Paul's icon and adopted his stylistics. At this stage of the study of the artworks, two stylistic lines of the workshop's painting can be clearly formulated as «harmonious» (the icon of St. Peter from Belz, images of Ss. Paul and John the Baptist from Drohobych) and «expressive» one (Ss. Paul from Belz and Peter from Drohobych). A large scale of damaging blurred the understanding of the Belz image of St. John the Baptist's style.

Perspectives of the results. An available direction for the further research of the Belz and Drohobych fifteenth century legacy is a separate study on iconography and stylistic features of the Drohobych Deesis icons not connected with iconographic counterparts.

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