

---

## REVIEWS

---

A TREASURY OF ICONS: SIXTH TO SEVENTEENTH CENTURIES—FROM THE SINAI PENINSULA, GREECE, BULGARIA, AND YUGOSLAVIA. By Kurt Weitzmann, Manolis Chatzidakis, Krsto Miatev, and Svetozar Radojčić. New York: Harry N. Abrams, 1968. 107 pp. 220 plates. \$35.00.

In four separate essays by leading scholars and with 220 illustrations—fifty-eight in color—this book introduces a little known but extremely important mode of Byzantine artistic expression, the sacred image or icon. Iconoclasts, conquerors, and the natural ravages of time have decimated this legacy, forcing scholars to reconstruct and interpret the most brilliant Constantinopolitan tradition from the few, randomly preserved examples and, indirectly, from later, provincial replicas. The recent discovery of almost two thousand icons at the Monastery of St. Catherine on Mt. Sinai now makes possible a more direct understanding of sacred Byzantine devotional panels, but knowledge of Greek, Bulgarian, and Yugoslavian products is still needed to complete our understanding. *A Treasury of Icons* presents an excellent selection of works and serious evaluations by leading authorities: an unfortunate omission, however, is Russia, with its close ties to Byzantium and its own brilliant contributions to the history of icon painting. Because icons and artists moved from area to area, the volume has been organized according to modern geographical boundaries. As a result, there is a certain repetitiousness, but each specialist is thus allowed to write an independent essay in the area of his expertise.

Selections from the unique cache of icons preserved at Sinai illustrate Kurt Weitzmann's rich introduction to the theological and artistic bases of Byzantine icon painting. Two early panels of the sixth or seventh century, presumably made in Constantinople, allow the author to discuss the pagan antecedents of this art. Quite different are two narrative icons that Weitzmann assigns to Palestine during the period of iconoclasm. Although one panel is dated to the Macedonian Renaissance, it is only in the eleventh century that icons at Sinai become sufficiently numerous for Weitzmann to trace their history with precision, carefully attributing each work and subtly correlating the styles of each with various historical currents—for example, the monastic asceticism of the eleventh century or late Comnenian humanism.

In his section on Greece, Manolis Chatzidakis takes up largely where Weitzmann leaves off, beginning with the twelfth and thirteenth centuries but concentrating on the fourteenth. As with the Sinai material, the important questions concern the origin of these icons and their artistic relationships to Constantinople. Chatzidakis relies heavily on affinities with monumental and manuscript art to secure his attributions, and he argues that despite the traditional controls on icon painting, fresh ideas manifest themselves in Greek imagery. He identifies and evaluates different stylistic trends in the fourteenth century—a genuine emotionalism that developed from Comnenian humanism, a marked realism, and a reversion to an abstract, idealized style at the end of the century. What Chatzidakis concludes is important not only for our knowledge of Greek art but indirectly also for our

understanding of Constantinopolitan developments during a century poorly documented in the capital.

Icons from the Central Balkans pose different problems for Krsto Miatev and Svetozar Radojčić, who contribute sections on Bulgaria and Yugoslavia. Although icon painting in these regions may date back quite far, virtually nothing from before the fourteenth century has survived. Both scholars include lengthy historical introductions in which they speculate—on the basis of frescoes and manuscript illumination—on the nature of early icon art. As elsewhere, more tender, humanized images appear during the fourteenth century, and, again, one of the main tasks is to differentiate local characteristics from the Constantinopolitan impulse. An insistent conservatism marks icon painting after the fall of Constantinople in 1453. In part this trend was due to lack of inspiration, but, as Radojčić argues, in the seventeenth century it was the result also of a conscious defense of the Orthodox devotional forms.

Of greatest value in *A Treasury of Icons* are the illustrations. Many works, not published before or recently restored, are included. The plates are large and generally clear; there are numerous details; and the color seems quite good. A catalogue and bibliography of the icons completes this volume, which is useful to the scholar and the general audience alike.

HERBERT L. KESSLER  
University of Chicago

TO RUSSIA AND RETURN: AN ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY OF TRAVELERS' ENGLISH-LANGUAGE ACCOUNTS OF RUSSIA FROM THE NINTH CENTURY TO THE PRESENT. Compiled by Harry W. Nerhood. Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1969. viii, 367 pp. \$10.00.

With admirable diligence, Professor Nerhood has assembled an annotated bibliography of 1,422 English-language accounts of travelers to Russia and the Soviet Union. His catalogue is remarkable, above all, for the variety of its offerings. The list of travelers' impressions spans the period from 860 to 1964 and includes the works of a most diversified group of authors—Sigismund von Herberstein, George Bernard Shaw, Bob Hope, and Whistler's mother. Among the titles are gems such as *With My Dogs in Russia*, *Over at Uncle Joe's: Moscow and Me*, and, a memento from a long-lost golden age, *A Tramp Trip: How to See Europe on Fifty Cents a Day*.

Nerhood and his publisher have produced a bibliography that is physically attractive, well indexed, and illuminated with brief comments on the contents of almost all of the individual works listed. Because of their brevity, the comments vary greatly in their usefulness. Some are particularly effective. On Corliss and Margaret Lamont's *Russia Day by Day: A Travel Diary*, Nerhood remarks, "Their comments indicate that their prior judgment was correct: the Soviet Union is pregnant with a bright future for the common man" (p. 226). On the other hand, a few of his judgments are highly questionable. Giles Fletcher, we are told, "inaccurately describes what he saw in Moscow" (p. 13), while Caulaincourt's classic memoirs are dismissed with a single sentence, "A somewhat prejudiced traveler describes his journey to, and away from, Moscow . . ." (p. 41). For the most part, however, the comments are useful, particularly when they indicate that a given account contains valuable statistical data or is accompanied by unusual photographs or other illustrative materials.