

with fairly extensive notes; and a selection of translations of Russian folk lyrics, classified by subject matter and genre. The translation of the Propp essay is useful, and, on the whole, quite accurate, apart from such common slips as the rendering of *skot* (unqualified by any adjective) as "cattle," when it should be merely "live-stock." The material which Reeder has included in the notes is useful in most cases, giving at least an elementary idea of the ethnographic background of the songs.

The translations of the songs are another matter, because Reeder apparently has a "tin ear." As Propp points out, the words of folk songs are not intended to stand without the music, and folk lyrics are more difficult to translate than any other form of literature. An appropriate translation can be rendered only by finding an equivalent folk tradition in the target language, as the Scottish poet Hugh MacDiarmid did in his translations of Italian folk lyrics. Reeder's translations give no idea of the compelling linguistic force and charm of the originals, which does come through in the texts published by Propp. Furthermore, Reeder's selection is not as interesting as it might be.

A list of Propp's sources, and a selected bibliography are included in the volume. Given the very small amount of material available in English on Russian folklore and ethnography, this book must be considered a useful, though limited, contribution. However, another method of handling the translations would have better served the cause of intercultural understanding. At the very least, the originals (even in transliterated form) should have been included.

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ICONS AND THEIR HISTORY. By David and Tamara Talbot Rice. Woodstock, N.Y.: The Overlook Press, 1974. 192 pp. Illus. Plates. \$35.00. Distributed by The Viking Press.

The names of David and Tamara Talbot Rice are well known to students of both Byzantine and Slavic studies. Their latest work (also published under the title *Icons and Their Dating: A Comprehensive Study of Their Chronology and Provenance* [London: Thames and Hudson, 1974]) has appeared after Professor David Talbot Rice's death (in 1972). This book, anxiously anticipated as a potentially important contribution to the study of Byzantine icon painting, was envisioned not merely as another work of icons, but as a scholarly attempt to "provide a framework for the chronology of icons by reproducing and analysing almost all those which can be dated with any degree of precision" (p. 7). The scope of the book is obviously very ambitious, proposing to deal with most of the dated icons of the Eastern Orthodox world. Accordingly, the book is subdivided into three parts and seven chapters. The first part is composed of five chapters each of which treats the icons of a distinct geographic region: Byzantium, Yugoslavia, Bulgaria, Greece, and Cyprus. Part 2 (chapter 6) considers the icons of Russia, while part 3 (chapter 7) presents a methodological proposal for the dating of undated icons.

Regrettably, the book has fallen short of achieving the initial goals, for it displays numerous weaknesses of a general as well as a specific nature. At the outset, the wisdom of the organization of the book as a whole must be questioned. Each chapter is conceived as an independent entity, followed by photographs, and finally by the catalog of the icons discussed. While the idea of keeping the visual material and the factual data adjacent to the text seems appealing in principle, the outcome

is less than satisfactory. This is particularly true of the cross references which make the task of finding either an illustration, or a catalog entry unnecessarily tedious. Despite the fact that the catalog appears in several sections, all entries are numbered consecutively, thus adding to the confusion. Finally, the descriptions found under each catalog entry are, in most cases, superfluous, because the main text is repeated almost verbatim. The readability of the book would have been greatly enhanced if the catalog had contained only the objective data for the individual icons, and had appeared at the end of the text where it would have been far more useful.

In regard to the grouping of the material, one must question the inconsistent usage of politico-geographic terminology. Thus, "Byzantium" is used to identify the realm of the empire during the Middle and Late Byzantine periods in chapter 1, while the heading of the following chapter—"Yugoslavia"—relies on modern politico-geographic terminology. The explanation offered by the authors that "the modern name of Yugoslavia has been used in view of the difficulty of distinguishing between the products of Macedonia and Serbia during the prosperous years of the later thirteenth, the fourteenth and the earlier fifteenth centuries" (p. 8) is hardly satisfactory, because, during most of the time span in question, the specified territory was politically and culturally unified as the state of Serbia. Moreover, the authors' explanation, in chapter 4, of their use of the term "Greek" "in its purely chronological sense . . ." (p. 58), does not really clarify matters. The inconsistent reliance on the "securely dated" works is methodologically more alarming. On the one hand, significant material—such as the early Sinai icons—is excluded on the basis that the dating is too uncertain; on the other hand, numerous loosely dated works are used throughout the book as comparative material, on the basis of style alone. In the introduction the authors insist that "in the main . . . the corpus has been restricted to those panels on which dates are actually inscribed" (p. 8), but we find, for example, only three of the eighteen examples listed in chapter 1, and fourteen of twenty-two examples in chapter 2, actually have inscribed dates. The reader is left with the clear impression that very few icons earlier than the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries are "securely" dated, and that by virtue of this fact alone, the scope of this book is narrowed to the later centuries.

Mention must also be made of other methodologically unsound practices, such as the use of dated "icon-like" frescoes where examples of icons were unavailable (catalog nos. 1 and 42), or the introduction of material from an unrelated period or region (catalog no. 1). The reasoning behind the choice of the "four themes" selected as the "pointers to dating" in chapter 7 is also questionable, as is the applicability of such "pointers" to the actual dating of icons. The text of chapter 7 is exceptionally cumbersome, confusing, and anything but methodologically helpful for the purposes intended. Finally, statements such as "by the thirteenth century Palaeologan artists were imbuing their works with deep poignancy . . ." (p. 161), which recur throughout the text, complete the haphazard impression left by the book as a whole.

In the final analysis, this work, which promised a new authoritative approach to the study and dating of icons, has failed both as a methodological guide and as a definitive corpus of dated works. Students of Byzantine art and interested non-specialists alike will undoubtedly share this reviewer's deep disappointment.

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