

Title: The Relation of Written Hagiography to Narrative Icons of St. Georgii and St. Paraskeva

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Although much has been written on the subject of Russian icons, relatively little study has been given to the unique properties of the *zhitiinye*, or narrative icons, the majority of which depict either Holy Fathers or martyrs. A narrative icon is composed of an icon of a saint, surrounded, usually on four sides, by smaller scenes from his or her life. The center scene is usually either a portrait of the saint or one of the critical moments in the saint's life, or even afterlife. While Leonid Ouspensky and Vladimir Lossky assert that the border scenes remain subordinate to the central depiction of the saint (125), the prevalence of graphic scenes of torture in narrative icons of martyrs, which evoke powerful feelings in the viewer, negate their claim, along with the idea that icons are simply objects of serene contemplation (39).

The Rus'ian narrative icons of St. Georgii and St. Paraskeva include more dynamic scenes of torture and torment than narrative icons of Rus'ian martyrs, such as Boris and Gleb, perhaps because of the more extensive hagiographical tradition of the Byzantine saints. These scenes vary from icon to icon, being left, in part, to the discretion of individual icon painters and schools of painting. The commonalities in the arrangement and depictions of the border scenes of icons of both St. Georgii and St. Paraskeva suggest an established method for painting narrative icons. Over time and with an increasing rise in literacy, icon painting conventions changed to specifically reflect the written hagiographic lives of saints as set out in Dmitrii Rostovskii's 1705 revision of the *Velikie Chet'i Minei* (Great Monthly Readings).

Works Cited

Ouspensky, Leonid and Vladimir Lossky. *The Meaning of Icons*. G. E. H. Palmer and E. Kadloubovsky, trans. Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1982.