

THE ORIGIN AND ROLE OF THE EMBLEM IN THE SERBIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH OF THE 18TH ON THE TERRITORY OF HABSBERG MONARCHY

The phenomenon of emblems in the Serbian visual arts of the 18th century could best be explained by the influence of different spiritual centers. That is, predominantly the Ukrainian, with the foothold in the Kiev Pechersk Lavra, but also the Western European, first of all through the presence of illustrated Bibles which, due to the activities of the Jesuit propaganda, deeply penetrated the Orthodox - Christian world.

The Baroque culture disposed of an abundance of themes with symbolic signs representing a mixture of pictures and words, while the emblematic literature was the footing and source of sacral artistic creative endeavors. One of the best preserved examples of the use of emblematic manuals when painting iconostases is the book, which was created within the Kiev Theological Academy in 1712. This emblematic body of texts is called *ITIKA JEROPOLITIKA*, (*ethics and politics*), and its very name indicates that the book belongs to the group of ethical and political emblematic manuals. Copperplate illustrations on 67 emblematic pictures were made by Nikodim Zubrzycki, modeled after the Western European emblematic literature. According to the opinion of the Russian researcher Dimitrij Chyzhevsky, the model for it had probably been the emblematic anthology of the Jesuit emblem author Hugo Herman, which was printed in Antwerpen in 1624. The body of texts *Itika Jeropolitika* enjoyed a wide popularity among all the confessions (i.e. the Orthodox, Catholic, and Protestant world). In Ukraine and Russia, it was reprinted and expanded five times. The Serbian edition of this emblematic book was printed in the Vienna Printing House of Joseph Kurcbeck in 1774. In its actual preface, it had been pointed out that the book was intended for education and moral improvement of young people. It specifies codes of ethics and rules one should adhere to.

The visual presentation of Christian and civil virtues got its materialized form on the iconostases of certain Serbian churches located in the territory of the Habsburg Monarchy. One of them, which has been preserved up to the present days, is the church in Ečka (which belongs

to the territory of the Banat region, at the time within the southern Hungary). In the lowest zone of the iconostasis (the dado), a group of emblems was painted, created under the direct influence of this body of texts.

For example, the emblem of *"Faith"* is presented as a big rock from which stones are falling off and dropping into the sea, while a ship with sails is appearing at sea. In the text underneath the emblem, *Faith* is interpreted as a rock, which is confirmed by the verses from the Gospel according to Matthew (17, 20), which read: "Jesus said to them: Because of your unbelief. For, amen I say to you, if you have faith as a grain of mustard seed, you shall say to this mountain, remove from hence hither, and it shall remove; and nothing shall be impossible to you." The emblem of *"Hope"* is painted as an anchor with a helmet towards which arrows fly from all sides. In the text accompanying the emblem, *Hope* is compared to the immobile Zion Mount: "Those who trust in the Lord are like Mount Zion, which cannot be moved, but abides forever". (Psalm 12,51). These words supplement the symbolic meaning of the anchor, the basic pictogram of the emblem of the Christian trust in God.

The emblem of *"Chastity"* is presented as the instrument *harp*, hung on a branch of a tree and, in the text underneath the emblem, it is explained that the "holder of wisdom" is clearly revealed in the Bible. The imago of the emblem was taken over from the biblical tradition of presentation of David, the psalmist, with a harp in his hands. The harp, David's attribute, thus becomes the emblematic pictogram of the divine omniscience. In the text accompanying the emblem, ten main aspects of chastity are specified, which are symbolized on the harp as ten strings (chords on the harp). Its meaning includes the virtues of: sobriety, integrity, gentleness, prudently, etc.

In the church of St. Nikolas in Kikinda, which was icon-painted by the end of the 18th century, presentations of virtues also stand out, in the zone of the dado (the lower part of the iconostasis). In this church, several Christian virtues were painted, such as: *Swiftness*, *Righteousness*, *Love*, *Hope*, and *Virility*. "Swiftness" is presented as a snake (wisdom), which is rolled up by the mirror. The emblem of "Righteousness" is illustrated using a pair of scales, which is the symbol of justice and presents a noble, righteous soul. It also serves to weigh

virtues and justice, i.e. to admeasure punishment and reward. The emblem of “*Burning Heart*” is the symbol of Christ’s heart, love, and sacrifice. In the post-tridentine emblematics, the act of compassion was presented with the heart in flame in one hand. The emblematic presentation of *Hope* is here, same as on the previous iconostasis, depicted by the symbol of anchor, and “*Virility*” was emphasized through the presentation of a lion holding a book between the paws. The meaning of this emblem is related to the attributes of comeliness, courage, and strength. At the bottom of the Holy Door, artist painted a censer. The presens of the emblems of the iconostasis indicates that accompanies the scene of the Annunciation, which is also located on the royal doors. *The Censer* is extraordinary emblem, and is incorporated in the context of *Christ’s Sufferings scene*. Emblem (*Impreza*), along the picture censors, has moralizing meaning in many emblematic books.. However, like subject which is incorporated at the impresa, censors in its content relates to the martyrs and to all who are exposed to the troubles of this world. They set fire for gratitude to God as martyrs endured (*Digniture Domine oratio mea sicut incensum in conspectus tuo*).

The emblem, on which *Moses tablets with the cross* are painted, is the reflection of the Old Testament presentation related to the life of Moses (receiving of the law, the Old Testament). The iconographic arrangement of the Cross with Moses tablets was widely accepted and a frequent example on the Orthodox iconostases during this epoch. According to the interpretations supported by the Orthodox believers, the Cross and Moses tablets are the symbol of death, and the New Testament symbol of Christ’s sufferings.

Yet another emblem that could be frequently seen on the Orthodox iconostases in the course of the 18th century, in the territory of the southern Hungarian territory, is the emblem of the *On the Vision of God* (De visione Dei). It is predominantly placed at the very top of the iconostasis, most often above the big cross, or above the Holy Door. Quite frequently, this emblem was the decoration on seats (the Bishop’s pontifical seat and the seat of the Virgin Mary on earth) located in the vicinity of the iconostasis on the left- and right-hand side. “*On the Vision of God*” is the vision of the Egyptian symbol – Horus’s face of the Renaissance hieroglyphics, which, in the Baroque emblematic, became the unavoidable emblem of God. It is the emblem of divine

omniscience and wisdom, accepted way back at the time of the Renaissance, (the works of Hieroglyphic from Pier Valerian is in question). In the post-tridentine emblematic practice, the concrete Christianized meaning of divine providence was obtained. It is always placed in a triangle, because the triangle symbolized the Holy Trinity. This emblem will remain on the Orthodox iconostases for a long time afterwards, and it was frequently painted even later, throughout the 19th century.

Christianization of the pagan symbol was based on the Psalm verses: „The eyes of the Lord are toward the righteous and his ears toward their cry“ (Psalm 34:15). Promoted in the preachers' books and the illustrations accompanying them, the all-seeing Lord's Eye is encountered in the Serbian Baroque paintings with the unchanged symbolic meaning. The medallion on which the painting is most often illuminated by the light from the background. This motif was later adopted by the scholars whereby the Christian theological concept of the Light was secularized and transformed its values. For the intellectuals of the Enlightenment the source of Light is no longer the divine revelation. This pictorial element is a symbol of the light of the supreme mind illuminating and enlightening the chosen minds through whom the light is spread further. There is a series of examples in the French propaganda revolutionary graphics of the 18th century, in which a torch or a triangle above the heads of Voltaire, Rousseau, and other revolutionaries is presented symbolizing the light and mind.

The emblematic literature among the Serbian Orthodox Christian population, which was settled in the territory of the Habsburg Empire in the 18th century, in many aspects represented the carrying on of the Middle-age pedagogical tradition. Starting from the basic concept that human mind is guided more by the eye than by ear, the Baroque educational system, through the textbooks of rhetoric and poetics, provided basic information on the nature and function of emblems. Apart from being used for educational purposes, numerous examples indicate that emblematic books were also used as artistic specimen to be copied, which means that such literature was well known both to painters and clients, who jointly participated in the visual shaping of the Serbian sacral visual arts.