

10th century religious iconography in Preslav art

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The article considers fine arts pieces with Christian saints' images dated to the 10th century AD. The selected examples employ various techniques: white clay modeling, bone carving, metalwork. The images are made by painting, relief making, carving, and casting. They display common stylistic features: the same body and posture representation, details of clothes and especially the faces arranged in the center of the composition. The eyes wide open, the ascetic-looking faces and the stiff frontal body view emphasize the spiritual aspects of the human nature and accentuate the spiritual power of the depicted persons. This was the dominant manner for all Preslav arts from the late 9th to the early 10th century AD, each of them searching for their specific ways of establishing and development of the Christian ideology. The author makes the conclusion that the Old Bulgarian iconography embraced art traditions of the Orthodox East preserved in the provinces of the

Byzantine Empire. The principles, criteria and special expressiveness of the Old Christian art infiltrated into the Old Bulgarian spiritual development and penetrated the entire spectrum of Preslav arts and culture. They were consistently applied to all their manifestations and turned into their official platform. The typical features of the Old Orthodox representation define the stylistic features of the miniature painting, calligraphy, decorative sculpture and figurines. The church architecture, liturgics and burial practices developed according to the Old Christian traditions. On this background the author argues that the iconographic types, which developed in Preslav reflected the general intellectual atmosphere of the Second Bulgarian capital. They were developed in a local environment by artists who were well educated in the Christian dogmatics, deeply convinced in the mystic influence of the Old Christian arts and having high skills to reproduce it.