

SACRED IMAGE AS A LOCAL PATRON?

THE ICON OF ST NICHOLAS OF MOZHAISK IN THE PETSERI MONASTERY IN SETU FOLKLORE*

Helen Bome

Abstract: The present article is an attempt to find reasons why a certain icon has been of extraordinary importance in the religious life of local peasants. Is it due to the iconographic type with its connotations; were these known and possibly modified and accommodated according to the needs of worshippers? Is it due to the person of the saint depicted, his contamination with historical and mythological characters? Answers to these questions are sought from the folklore, beliefs and customs of the Setus, a Fenno-Ugric Orthodox group inhabiting the Southeast corner of Estonia, as well as from the travellers' and clergy's descriptions of the image of St Nicholas of Mozhaisk, located in the Petseri monastery.

Key words: icons, popular Orthodoxy, Petseri monastery, Nicholas (saint), saints, Setu.

SETUS: "HALF BELIEVERS" IN THE BORDERLAND

This study centers on a 17th century piece of sacred sculpture (called a "carved icon" in the Orthodox tradition) which has been the focal point of a local cult of St Nicholas throughout centuries. The image was venerated by the Setus, a Finno-Ugric Orthodox group in Southeast Estonia. In the middle of the 13th century, during the formation of Old Livonia, the district of Setumaa was incorporated into the feudal Pskov Republic, which later became a part of the Grand Duchy of Muscovy and the Tsardom of Russia. In 1920, the area was reunited with independent Estonia and in 1945 it was divided between Estonian and Russian Soviet Republics. Setumaa was a peripheral agrarian area. It remained extremely conservative in the cultural sense, stuck in the Middle Ages until the 1920s. The population of the Setus was about 15,000 at the time, a large majority being illiterate peasants without family names and under the control of the Petseri monastery. The Setus were subject to various religious influences. Next to the Russian Orthodoxy, to which belonged the overwhelming

majority of Setus, traces of an early Byzantine mission from the 10th–12th century can be found. The use of Church Slavonic in liturgy, the lack of Setu-speaking priests, reluctance to assimilate into the neighbouring Russians, and the continuous contact with their relatives across the confessional boundary led to the gradual development of a folk religion combining Christianity and Fenno-Ugric pagan beliefs and customs. Russians called the Setus “half believers” (*poluvertsy*) either because of their non-Russian blend of Orthodox faith, or their non-Russian language. For Catholic and later Lutheran Estonians they spoke the right language, but were of the wrong faith. Setus themselves found the term insulting, since given the circumstances – the language barrier – they did the best they could to be “full believers”. Their sincerity was also noticed by the Russian clergy and travellers as well as Estonians. The Setu piety was sometimes described as exemplary for Russian peasants and impressive “even for a dry Lutheran”. However, most of the 19th- to 20th-century descriptions of the Setus are coloured by prejudice, considering them primitive, ignorant, and stubborn or, in more positive terms, as simple, innocent, and trusting. This rural or rough character was also projected to Setu forms of piety as well as objects of veneration – in this case, an icon of St Nicholas. Ironically, the iconographic type of the image in question has played an important role in the “cultural imperialism” of Russia, and while some examples of this type are in their execution almost indiscernible from Pagan idols, the one in Petseri is rather nicely carved. Given the bias of the available texts concerning this icon, is it possible to uncover anything of the original intentions of the devotion to this image? The present article is an attempt to do so with a closer look at secondary sources from 1859–1929 as well as to folklore accounts from 1887–1943.

ICONOGRAPHIC TYPE OF ST NICHOLAS OF MOZHAISK

St Nicholas, the legendary 4th-century bishop of Myra, is one of the most popular saints in Christendom and especially revered in Russian Orthodoxy. The iconographic type of St Nicholas of Mozhaisk seems to have emerged due to a coincidence of certain historical events with a shift in the political and religious mentality. These circumstances not only gave rise to a rather unusual depiction of the saint, modifying his character as well as his appearance.

According to a legend, during the attacks of the Tatars to Russia (13th century) the town of Mozhaisk was under siege and its inhabitants gathered to the cathedral of St Nicholas to pray for help. The saint appeared floating above the church, holding a sword in one hand and a church in the other, indicating that

he will protect his sanctuary. The townspeople found strength from the vision and the enemy was defeated (or in another version, the enemy fled in terror upon seeing the apparition). As a token of gratitude and remembrance, a statue was carved, depicting the holy bishop exactly as he had appeared in the vision. The statue was placed on the town wall, later moved onto a chapel wall, and finally to the cathedral. The statue, or rather the sculptured relief, is life-size (170 cm) and with a flat back. It depicts the saint with a Byzantine type of elongated face, wearing an archaic bishop's ornate mitre and holding a sword, and an octagonal church. Recent research has dated it to the 14th century and proposed that it has been made under Balkan (possibly Serbian) influence (Ryndina 1996: 54). In 1933 it was taken to Moscow for restoration and is now held at Tretyakov Gallery.

This so-called carved icon was not exactly "not made by human hands", but the iconographic type was given by God, and the correctness of the type was confirmed by the miracles that followed. From the 16th century onwards it became one of the most widespread iconographic types of St Nicholas in Russian art. The copies were two- or three-dimensional, but next to the attributes the type had to have a round shape, so that a relief was formed on the surface even on the panels. Religious sculpture has been problematic in the Orthodox church. Even miraculous sculptural images were venerated mainly by the common folk, but St Nicholas of Mozhaisk was an exception. Several Russian saints and especially the Grand Dukes of Moscow and later tsars were devoted to it and went on pilgrimages to this type of images. It was the only type of religious sculpture that was officially favoured by the official Church of Russia. As an iconographic type the attributes were interpreted symbolically: the St Nicholas cathedral of Mozhaisk became the Orthodox Church and the sword defended it from heresy, ensuring protection and peace for the oppressed under the imperial Russian rule, converting and enlightening pagans. In Russian Orthodoxy, St Nicholas features prominently as a merciful helper in everyday troubles, but now he also became the hero of the capital of Russia. Throughout the Empire, the image of St Nicholas of Mozhaisk became the most popular type of protective image, placed on the gates of chapels-churches, a niche of the town wall, or simply painted on the wall. (Voznesenskii 1899: 198ff, 276–277, Vagner 1980: 193–194, 199, Eremina 1998: 391–395).

THE ICON OF ST NICHOLAS IN THE MONASTERY OF PETSERI

The toponym Petseri derives from *pechory*, caves, where – according to the legend – a community of hermits lived since the end of the 14th century. A miraculous icon of the Dormition of the Mother of God appeared there, and a church was built to house it. Consecration of this church in 1473 marks the founding of the monastery, officially named The Holy Dormition Pskovo-Pecherski monastery. The monastery grew in size and reputation and flourished in the 16th century under Abbot Cornelius (1529–1570). It became an important missionary center and a stronghold of Orthodoxy on the Western border of Russia. The monastery was also of military importance from the beginning of the 16th century to the Great Northern War. In 1558–1565 it was fortified by a stone wall with bastions (Malkov 1988: 198–199, 212, 1993: 11). Was it a coincidence that Abbot Cornelius built a church in honour of St Nicholas into the wall next to the main, Sacred Gate? Can we assume something of Abbot's attitude towards the saint, especially in his new role as a patriotic *pobedonosets* ('victorious warrior')?

It is known that the abbot brought back the newest ideas in architecture from his frequent visits to Moscow (on display in the church of St Nicholas) as well as replicas of famous icons. During one of his stays in the capital, the abbot copied a St Nicholas icon of Velikoretski type for the saint's new church in the monastery. This icon, dating from the end of the 16th century is still venerated as miraculous in Petseri (Malkov 1988: 215–216, 1993: 99). The provenance of the sculptural image of St Nicholas of Mozhaisk in that church is, however, unknown. It was long considered contemporary with the church (1565), but has now been dated stylistically to the beginning of the 17th century. In written sources, the icon is not mentioned in 1585–1587, but is present in 1639. The sculpture's *kivot* – the cabinet it is placed in – is possibly even more recent (dated to the second half of the 17th century). The *kivot* depicts scenes from the life of St Nicholas and other saints. Around 1960, the sculpture was repainted with enamel colors and has never been properly studied. Attempts to attribute it to local woodcarvers have lost ground due to the later dating (Malkov 1988: 223–224, note 28, Pomerantsev 1964: 12, 1994: 218, 221).

In the 16th and 17th century the monastery suffered from numerous attacks by the so-called Letts – Polish and Lithuanian as well as Swedish and German soldiers. Numerous miracles from war-times have been recorded in the chronicle of the monastery, featuring prominently the Mother of God and her two miraculous icons, the original Dormition-icon and an image of the type of Eleousa. There are, however, some mentions of St Nicholas as a protector of



Figure 1. Carved icon of St Nicholas in the St Nicholas church, Petseri monastery. After Grabar', I. (ed.) [1908–16]. *Istoriia russkago iskusstva. Tom V. Skul'ptura. Moskva: Knebel', p. 18.*

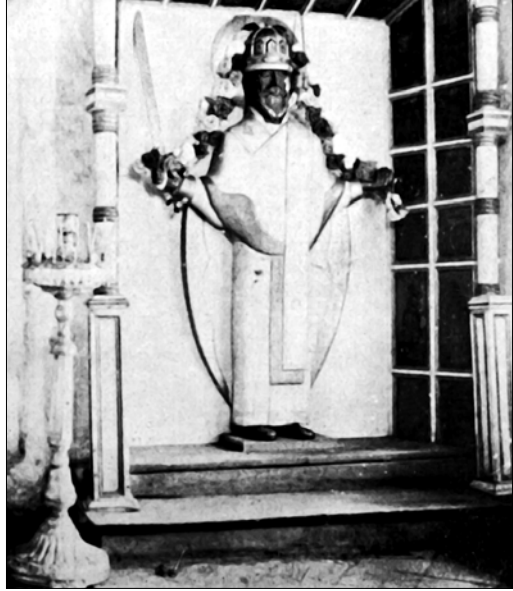


Figure 2. Carved icon of St Nicholas in the St Nicholas church, Petseri monastery. After Sinaiskii 1929, ill 3.

the monastery, too. He was called for in prayers and seen in a vision as a gray-haired man, walking or riding on the wall, helping the defenders and being immune to the arrows sent in his direction. In 1611, he appeared as an old man on the wall next to the Virgin, driving away the troops of Gustav II Adolf with a sword in his hand. During the same siege, in three consecutive mornings, an elderly bishop with a gray beard was seen sitting in the courtyard, and upon opening the church of St Nicholas was full of the scent of incense. The church was sacked nevertheless (Malkov 1993: 56, 57–58). Some authors have presumed that by dedicating the church attached to the wall to St Nicholas, Abbot Cornelius meant to “assign” him the protector of the monastery, and he has indeed been called such (Voznesenskii 1899: 436, Sinaiskii 1929: 18–19). Still, there is no record of miracles from the carved St Nicholas of Mozhaisk. Voznesenskii (1899: 437) does call the image miraculous but seems to be misinterpreting his source (Tolstoi 1861: 115). The only attention given to the icon, besides the brief mentioning in the descriptions of the monastery, is due to the position it holds in the religious life of the local peasants, the Setus.

FOLK CUSTOMS RELATED TO THE IMAGE

During the last decades of the 19th century and the first decades of the 20th century, several culture-historical and ethnographic descriptions of the Petseri monastery and its surroundings were published, also mentioning the sculpture (Tolstoi 1861: 115, Voznesenskii 1899: 437, Trusman 1890: 39, Sinaiskii 1929: 16). The writers focused on the devotion surrounding the image: the St Nicholas church draws believers by the carved image, especially fond of it are the Setus (*chukhontsy*), who come on the saint's day to venerate it. Some of the customs described are universal to popular piety: praying, bowing, kneeling, kissing and touching the image and placing candles in front of it; decorating the saint with home-made artificial flowers and jewellery, for example, a coral ribbon. There is a note of a Setu belt being wrapped around him or hanging over his shoulder (publication of Trusman 1890 in *Mäetagused* 19/2002, comment 11 by Ali Kikkas). Other customs are characteristic of the Setu piety: placing loaves of bread around St Nicholas, covering him with them, and smearing his lips with cream. The exotic nature of the gifts is stressed by the authors: it is a special type of milk product. The face and hands of the image have become black from the smearing. In one of the texts this custom is described right after a pagan tradition of worshipping a wooden idol with black candles and offerings of beer. The St Nicholas image is thus presented next to the pagan idol, the related customs parallel to pagan offerings:

Also in contemporary feast days the half-believers are expressing very raw Pagan beliefs. For example, in the St Nicholas church of the monastery of Petseri, there is a crude image of St Nicholas the Wonder-worker carved out of wood [--].

The customs are also characterized as crude (*grubyi*) and the ones performing these as ignorant (*nevezhestvennye*) (Trusman 1890: 39).

As to the folklore accounts concerning the image, these confirm the information about the specifics of the veneration – the ritual and the offerings. In these texts there is a firm connection to agriculture and cattle-raising. The Setus place bags of seedcorn in front of the image for the night, so that the saint would bless it before they go about sewing (E 57306, ERA, Vene 14, 466 (10)). The Setus also place their boots in front of the image and leave them there, believing that he will put them on and walk through their fields at night, blessing the crop (E I, 42 (294; 295)). The loaves of bread baked for the feast day, called Nicholas' bread (*migulavatsk*) are fed to the cattle before putting them out to pasture on St George's day (Hiemäe 1984: 162–164, note 7). The

loaves placed in front of the image are divided between members of the clergy and the beggars (ERA II 209, 246/7 (16), ERA, Vene 14, 465 (6)). The rituals seem to have taken place on both of St Nicholas' feast days, his memorial (6th of December) and the day of the translation of his relics (9th of May), according to the respective activities in the folk calendar. The memorial seems to be more important, though. The main role attributed to St Nicholas in these texts is a protector of the crop (wheat, oat, potatoes) from the cold.

According to the ethnographic descriptions as well as folklore accounts, the image of St Nicholas in the monastery appears as just another embodiment of the saint in his role as an agricultural patron – the role he has in Russian folk Orthodoxy in general. But this does not explain the special veneration of the icon by the Setus. Although there are also accounts of these agricultural customs in Russian, the Russian peasants seem to have venerated the image because of the saint's more canonical role as a protector of seafarers against storm. Sinaiskii (1929: 16) mentions local fishermen as the main group devoted to the image, and in the area of Petseri professional fishermen were Russians (Setumaa 1928: 79). What could be the reason for the special attention given to the sculpture by the Setus? They did use other icons of the saint for the same agrarian customs, but the carved one in Petseri seems to have been of extraordinary importance. Could the reason be the three-dimensionality of the image? There have been opinions among scholars that the sculpted images – and especially the ones of St Nicholas of Mozhaïsk – attracted the attention of the simple folk, the recently converted and especially of Finno-Ugric origin, because these reminded them of their pagan idols (on a classical 19th-century reasoning in that respect, see, e.g., Voznesenskii 1899: 204–205). The analysis of the mentality and methodology of such scholars is beyond the scope of the present article, but even if that were true, why did the clergy in the monastery – renowned for its pure faith – tolerate such blatantly pagan behaviour?

THE LEGEND OF ST NICHOLAS OF MOZHAISK IN SETU FOLKLORE

It would be reasonable to look for information on how the Setus really saw the image of St Nicholas in Petseri. In describing the icon, was the three-dimensionality worth mentioning? Did they notice the unusual stature and attributes of the saint? In short, did they perceive the image as different from all the other icons of St Nicholas?

Among the folklore accounts, there are several concerning the appearance of the statue. One of the most interesting among those is a legend from 1898 (H II 61, 688/95 (10)), which seems to have emerged as an explanation of the miniature church St Nicholas is holding in his left hand. In the story, traces can be found of the original miracle story from Mozhaisk and possibly of other legends concerning the saint's appearance – already in his Mozhaisk type – on other military occasions. In the legend, St Nicholas as a hierarch accompanies a king in a campaign, functioning as a chaplain. He exhorts the king and his troops to victory, and the fleeing enemy is pursued to its capital, which is then set on fire. St Nicholas has mercy on the “beautiful church”, diminishes it and carries it in his hand across the sea, walking on the waves. In the king's capital, it grows back to its original size. This miracle is presented as the reason for calling Nicholas a saint and a Miracle-Worker with a festive memorial-day. The text concludes: *On this day they take loaves of bread and place them in front of the image of St Nicholas in the church, because he was like a ploughman*, with a rapid shift to the agrarian aspect of Nicholas' character. Still, the connection between the siege of a city, the fleeing enemy and preserving a church from destruction and the image of St Nicholas of Mozhaisk in the monastery of Petseri is made.

In the Estonian Folklore Archives, there are numerous accounts of how St Nicholas ended up in the monastery, of his character and activities, as well as of other details of the image: ERA II 163, 422/3 (142), ERA II 286, 129 (97), ERA II 286, 26 (16), ERA, Vene 11, 75/6 (6), ERA, Vene 11, 475 (50), ERA, Vene 14, 465/6 (7), ERA, Vene 14, 464 (5), ERA, Vene 14, 481 (8), ERA, Vene 14, 465 (6), some in Setu dialect, some in Russian, recorded during 1937–1941. The analysis is somewhat complicated, since there are two images of the type of St Nicholas of Mozhaisk in the church: a panel painting and a sculpture. Still, the texts seem to refer to the sculpted image, describing the saint as standing in the church *as a man*, or remaining there at standstill after his travels, or standing there. This could also be a characteristic Setu way of speaking of icons as human beings. But since the accounts also mention the customs that in other texts are firmly connected to the sculpted image, then we could assume that the carved icon is the one talked about here as well. The image is frequently presented at the end of the story as an evidence of the actual happening of the events described earlier.

Most frequently mentioned are the saint's boots. The saint walked about, either to bless the crop or instructing people how to live (a frequent motif for several saints). Nicholas quickly wore out his boots and the people finally refused to give him new ones, or insulted him by repairing the old ones. From then on he stopped walking and stayed in the church. This explanation carries some

interesting connotations. The Setus left boots in front of the image to encourage St Nicholas to walk through the fields. Was it compensation or an apology for the original refusal to give him new boots? Was the saint perhaps “imprisoned” in the church and could now be sent to a certain field by the choice and liking of the one offering the boots?

The military character of St Nicholas, so unusual for the saint outside this iconographic type, can also be found in remarks as to his other attribute besides the miniature church – namely the sword. The sword as a saint’s attribute is quite common as referring to their martyrdom, but it is in a raised position only in exceptional cases (St George as the Dragon Slayer, for example). As expected, the sword is mentioned in most of the accounts. The informants have not been too concerned with the shape of the blade, calling it a sable (although it is wide and straight), or even a scythe. The saint’s menacing posture has also given rise to a story of St Nicholas (i.e. his image) threatening to strike an old woman (in front of the image) who did not believe in him. In one account he arrives to give a hand, with a sword, in building the monastery. It seems that the original meaning of the attribute has been forgotten. Two of



Figure 3. Carved icon of St Nicholas in the St Nicholas church, Petseri monastery. Woodcut by A. Möldroo. After Möldroo, A. 1937. *Petseri klooster sõnas ja pildis* [Texts and images about Petseri monastery]. Petseri.



Figure 4. Carved icon of St Nicholas in the St Nicholas church, monastery of Petseri. After Malkov 1988, ill. 74.

the texts call the saint a warrior. Is this simply derived from the fact that the saint is carrying a sword?

The St Nicholas day in autumn/wintertime, when most of the ritual use of the icon seems to have taken place, is called the War Nicholas (*sõa-mikul'*) as opposed to the feast day in springtime, the Merciful Nicholas (*halõline-mikul'*). Apart from the story of the miniature church, there is no evidence that the Mozhaisk legend was known among the Setus. One can, of course, assume that it would have been known, related by the priest or a pilgrim or read (out loud) from the saint's vita, but it has not left any explicit traces in the folklore recorded. There are, however, some other texts not referring to the image but describing St Nicholas as a warrior-hero who wears out boots. Every night he goes to war, killing enemies to protect his people. The texts are S 96836/7 (29), S 72979/80 (6) published in Laugaste 1963, and ERA II 286, 269 (252). Versions of the story present the Setu warrior hero as the main character, and sometimes Abbot Cornelius himself takes the leading role! Is it just a catchy story line with colourful motifs and an interchangeable hero, or is there a connection between St Nicholas, Abbot Cornelius, and the hero of Setu?

THE HERO, THE ABBOT AND THE SAINT

The character of the hero of Setu or the hero of Petseri is a local version of the (giant) hero found in Estonian folklore. Stories of him tell that he was offended by the people, who refused to give him new boots or repaired the old ones, and went to sleep in the monastery of Petseri, promising to wake up if a war comes. Alternately, he built the monastery of Petseri. The king took offence that the endeavour took place without his permission and beheaded the hero. The hero walks away and lies down to sleep, promising to rise if his people are in trouble. Several of the texts are published by Laugaste (1963: 315–332, 402) and www.folklore.ee/ri/folkte/myte/olev/petserid.html. The hero's resting place in the monastery is either the caves or the church of Mary or the Mother of God, thus not connected to the St Nicholas church or the image of St Nicholas of Mozhaisk. Universal or Estonian motifs are here contaminated with the life and death of Abbot Cornelius, who built the wall around the monastery, was beheaded by Tsar Ivan the Terrible and buried in the caves in 1570. His relics were transferred to the church of Dormition in 1690 (Malkov 1993: 102–107).

In the accounts of the image of St Nicholas in Petseri, there is only one mention of him coming to help with building a stronghold (*krepost'*) near Petseri (as does the hero of Petseri in one of the variants). The miniature model of a church in his hand could have given rise to this motif, although it does not look

much like the church surrounded by walls of the original Mozhaisk image, but is more like the “beautiful church” described in the Setu story. Still, in addition to the Setus’ presumed knowledge of the original Mozhaisk legend there is one account in written lore that connects St Nicholas with the monastery wall. It seems to derive from the chronicler’s account of the saint’s apparition on the monastery wall during a siege, writing about a white-bearded man on the wall who remained untouched by the enemy’s cannon fire (ERA II 286, 27/32 (19).

The reasons for the popularity of the hero and the saint are obvious. But how does Abbot Cornelius become of the same rank? He did merge with the Setu warrior-hero and is called “the hero Cornelius” in the stories. He also became the most renowned of the local saints. The abbot is known for his missionary activities, building churches and founding schools for the Estonian and Setu peasants. Considering the local clergy’s view of the cult of the image of St Nicholas of Mozhaisk among the Setu, the reason for the special veneration of the icon is gratitude for such activities. A text written by a monastic priest Joseph of Petseri (Iosif 1858: 49) describes the Setus and the statue in a manner similar to the secular authors, adding that in his opinion the Setu custom of bringing gifts to this image is an expression of gratitude towards Abbot Cornelius, the missionary among the Setus. May this be the reason why the “pagan practices” that filled the other authors with horror were tolerated by the monks? Indeed, Joseph finds the piety of the Setu admirable and exemplary. This could be caused by his better knowledge of the local customs or the fact that he is writing at somewhat earlier date than the other authors. Still, there must be something connecting these characters to the locale. Abbot Cornelius died his martyr’s death in front of the Sacred Gates of the monastery. A sanctuary dedicated to him was later built above the gate, adjacent to the St Nicholas Church. Beside the monastery wall, there is also the motif of “safety in times of war” recurring in the stories of the hero, the abbot and the saint. Is it possible that the Setus did express their thankfulness not so much for the enlightening missionary activities, but in remembrance of the shelter sought and received behind these impressive stone walls?

The Setu warrior-hero, Abbot Cornelius and St Nicholas are fused in Setu folklore. They are interchangeable characters in the stories, and their functions overlap. They walk around the land, teaching people how to live, they are building the wall around the monastery, they are currently asleep there, but will rise if called to protect the Setus against an enemy.

Different iconographic types revealed different aspects of the saints, fulfilling specific tasks. Every single image could have a specific character and function, derived from its history and miracles (Binde 1999: 117). St Nicholas of Mozhaisk had several subtypes besides the stern defender of fortresses symbolic and

real, for example, the merciful and wise elder (Pomerantsev 1994: 16). Although the Setus called the feast day when the image was venerated Nicholas of War, it seems that in more peaceful times the icon retained its importance but there occurred a shift in his character. He began to function for the Setu mainly as a patron of agriculture, but the older layers of military meaning merged with the new role causing some confusion, which is especially apparent in the custom of placing the boots in front of the icon.

CONCLUSION

St Nicholas of Mozhaisk had been the patron of his hometown. Then it was taken by Muscovite rulers and indoctrinated into a representative of the Russian Empire. As such he was sent out to the provinces and border areas to protect the state and the church against their enemies. But there, in the middle of the so-called “other nations”, the meaning of the images of this type was transformed, modified, adapted to the local situation. The story of St Nicholas of Mozhaisk in Petseri could be seen as an example of such a process of domestication. The image was supposed to glorify Russian hegemony and supremacy, its political, religious and cultural power, but it was turned into a local patron or patronal image and lavished with indigenous forms of veneration. The “Nicholas of War” seems to have been perceived by the Setus as protecting them against anyone who threatened their safety, their land and their way of life, including the forces trying to assimilate them. St Nicholas of Mozhaisk, the missionary and the conqueror, betrayed his cause and went over to the enemy’s side.

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Comments

¹ In 1722, the Holy Sinod condemned images that were executed crudely or not according to the canon. These were sent to Moscow, evaluated, and either returned or destroyed. An alternative was the “exile”: the images were put out of sight or sent to provinces. In 1832, all sculptures were forbidden in churches as a “Catholic influence”. (Voznesenskii 1899: 676–677, note 133; Pomerantsev 1994: 14)

² However, the motif can be found outside the Setu folklore and piety as well, for example the Russian proverb *Vsem bogam po sapogam, a Nikole bole, chto khodit bole* (Kalinskii 1990: 64). A miraculous image of the Mozhaisk type in the village of Zeleniat (Perm region) wore out a pair of boots each year, walking from house to

house looking for food (Serebrennikov 1967: 12). The miraculous carved image of St Nicholas of Mozhaïsk in the monastery of Valamo depicted broadcloth sandals, embroidered with silk and pearls (Voznesenskii 1899: 490–492).

³ In the legend, St Nicholas prefers to use a whip, a rod, or simply his fist for punishing the disobedient.

⁴ In terms of the image in Petseri, there seems to have been several church models. A photograph published in 1908–1916 shows one, on another, published in 1929 and 1937, the saint stands empty-handed, and on a photo published in 1988 he is provided with a new miniature church (Figs. 1–4). The temporary loss of the church model is also reflected in folklore accounts describing the image. The mitre of the bishop has also disappeared.

Sources

- E – M. J. Eisen's collection
- ERA – Estonian Folklore Archives
- H – J. Hurt's collection
- S – S. Sommer's collection

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