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THE DISCOVERY OF HIEROTOPY

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This paper outlines the genesis of hierotopy, a notion serving to conceptualize the creation of sacred spaces as a particular form of human art. The concept encompasses the entirety of the multifarious components employed in Byzantine sacred spaces and analyzes the ways in which their cooperative interaction results in the formation of a 'spatial icon', or a kind of sacred ambiance. The very notion of a 'spatial icon' draws upon the central place of icons and iconicity in the Eastern Christian worldview. In Byzantium, icons were seen as windows opening out onto an otherworldly reality, or, rather, as doors opening up a two-way communication; in this way, the icon was understood as a means or a place, of immediate contact with the divine, or a sort of platonic *chora*, in which ideal divine forms assimilated material contours. Within the context of a sacred space, the icon appeared not only as a principal meaning-making agent, but also as a conceptual key for understanding the way in which other components, as well as the sacred space as a whole, effectively worked; each component was thus understood and experienced as being 'iconic', or icon-like, in the sense of providing other points (or, rather, spaces) of contact between the earthly and the divine. As this paper recounts, Alexei Lidov made his first steps towards forging the concept of hierotopy while studying the design, as well as the perception, of Byzantine iconographic programs; as his studies revealed, icons acted not simply as images, but also with the full deployment of their wonder-working potential evincing a powerful expression of religious meaning, particularly when purposefully employed together with wonder-working relics. Lidov's next step was to realize the fully performative nature of spatial icons by taking into account the crucial role played by the surrounding liturgical context, in which each beholder, or liturgical participant, played an active role in giving life to the spatial icon. Hierotopy was thus discovered (and formally defined) as a special form of art involving the performative creation of spatial icons. The paper also discusses the concept of 'image-paradigms' as multimodal units of meaning within sacred spaces, or as compound mental constructs combining together dogmatic ideas, imagery and holistic emotive components (so-called atmospheres).

Keywords: hierotopy, icon, sacred space, Byzantium, Lidov, relic, performativity, atmosphere, image-paradigm.

ОТКРЫТИЕ ИЕРОТОПИИ

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Открытие и становление иеротопии как нового научного направления описывается как поэтапный процесс рождения новой концепции, органически связанный с эволюцией современной иконологии. В конце прошлого века стала ощущаться недостаточность чистой семиотики. Иконоведы стали интересоваться чудотворными иконами, реликвиями и прочими элементами культа, пытаясь реконструировать историю икон как активных участников формирования религиозной традиции. Византийские иконографические программы включали иконы не только в качестве изображений, но и использовали выразительные возможности их чудотворности и их легендарных биографий. В эти сакрально-образные ансамбли включались также реликвии, которые часто были согласованы по смыслу с иконами и работали как на интенсификацию сакральности, так и на артикуляцию религиозных смыслов. Занимаясь такого рода ансамблями, А. М. Лидов пришёл к мысли о действии в них единого организующего принципа, формирующего эмерджентный иконический образ ансамбля как целого. Этот образ получил название «пространственная икона». Сам этот термин свидетельствует об особой роли икон и иконического в восточнохристианском мировидении. В Византии иконы рассматривали как окна в горний мир, даже не столько окна, сколько двери, через которые божественное могло проникать в дольний мир, формируя сакральное пространство как область контакта двух миров, как неуловимую платоническую «хору», пространство воплощения идеального. В контексте создания сакральных пространств икона фигурирует не только как главный смыслообразующий элемент, но также и как понятийный ключ к функционированию остальных элементов, также принадлежащих сфере «иконического», т. е. служащих каналами связи между мирами. Для окончательной формулировки иеротопии было также необходимо осознать принципиальную важность перформативности пространственных икон, благодаря которой сакральное пространство приобретает динамику и жизнь. В заключительной части статьи обсуждаются актуальные направления иеротопических исследований, связанные с анализом пространственной сакральной образности при помощи «образов-парадигм», сложных мультимодальных ментальных конструкций, функционирующих как модели иеротопического творчества и опирающихся на организованную совокупность материальных, образных и смысловых компонентов сакральных пространств.

Ключевые слова: иеротопия, икона, сакральное пространство, Византия, Алексей Лидов, перформативность, атмосфера, образ-парадигма.

Introduction

The concept of ‘hierotopy’, as well as the term itself, was introduced by Alexei Lidov in 2002 [Lidov 2006 a, 32]. It was defined by Lidov as the creation of sacred spaces, viewed as a special form of human creativity. Hierotopy is thus a kind of

art, and a wide variety of sacred spaces, such as churches and temples, as well as all kinds of sanctuaries, sacred cities, and landscapes, are seen as works of this form of art. The sacred space of hierotopy is understood as the composite sum of its multifarious components, including not only architecture, icons and relics, but also all the performative opulence of the devotional acts that are carried out within it.

During the eighteen years since the concept was first forged, hierotopy has traveled a long route from a debatable theoretical innovation to a university discipline for graduate students. Given the scale and the intensity of the research devoted to it, as well as the sheer diversity and quantity of the publications now housed under its aegis, the time is ripe to lay out a bird's-eye view of its development, roots, origins, tools, and concepts, as well as a review of its scope and methodology. This paper will focus on its roots and origins and leave other issues for future publications.

One way to explain hierotopy is to contrast it to pre-existing methodologies, which Lidov repeatedly and collectively refers to as 'positivistic'. According to this particular explanation, previous generations of art historians conceived of sacred art in terms of flat pictures, images or isolated artifacts, while the true way of looking at things required that one conceive of a spatial whole into which these various bits and pieces would be integrated. Such a simplified picture does well to capture the core idea of hierotopy, but the processes involved in its conception and birth into the matrix of preceding iconological thought (which of course continued to develop along its own lines and included the evolution of the iconological work of Lidov himself) remains out of sight. Hierotopy is thus viewed as an isolated leap of intuition and an unwarranted discovery instead of appearing as the natural fulfillment of a consistent line of theoretical development.

This type of argument is also prone to another kind of criticism: it borders on truism. Indeed, art historians use photos in want of anything better being available. Hierotopic papers themselves teem with photos of icons, mosaics, and all sorts of artifacts. That scientists look at photos and present them in their papers in no way implies that they are incapable of thinking about spaces. Indeed, spatial aspects are often enough amply discussed in scholarly literature dealing with sacred architecture and ritual. The very term 'sacred space' existed already well before the advent of hierotopy and gained wide acceptance after the work of Mircea Eliade [Eliade 1957]. The symbolism of ecclesiastical architecture has been discussed since time immemorial, and the discourses dealing with it do not seem to draw any direct benefit from the introduction of a new term. The concept of liturgy as a synthesis of arts is known since the work of Florensky, so holistic approaches to sacrality are nothing new.

Given the broad diversity of the research housed under the heading of hierotopic titles, little theoretical effort has been made to clarify what is particular to the hierotopic approach aside from its obvious holistic inspiration and its three-dimensional mode of looking at monuments. The voluminous corpus of hierotopic research is clearly marked by its pronounced focus on case-studies. To the students of sacred art and sacrality in general, focused on their respective specific subjects, hierotopy appears to be a kind of a wonderful Christmas tree

on which all sorts of glass balls and candies may be hung in picturesque disorder. Whatever mention of sacred space is made, it seems to suffice as a pass to a trendy club of hierotopists. Of course, I am not here issuing a call for any sort of hierotopic purism with a vigilant 'sorry, this is not hierotopy' to ward off pretenders, nor am I questioning the fruitfulness of a cross-disciplinary pollination. The question, at the end of the day, is simply what it is that makes hierotopy hierotopy.

The effort to answer this question was kicked off in November 2010 when the Wikipedia article on hierotopy was first created. In fact, it was the first attempt to give a succinct and more or less complete definition of the concept as well as to compile a list of methodological tools and accompanying new terminology. The next step was taken in 2018 when Zagraevsky published a polemical paper in which he called the scientific validity of hierotopy into doubt[1]. It was in the context of this debate that the genetic approach to explaining hierotopy has taken shape [Simsky 2018 a, 37]. It was again used the following year, in 2019, when, on the occasion of Lidov's 60th anniversary, an essay bearing the self-explanatory title "The birth of hierotopy from the spirit of the icon" was published [Simsky 2019, 22]. The genetic approach does not insist on the blunt opposition of flat icons or photos and more stereoscopic views. Instead, within this approach, an icon (broadly understood) is viewed both as a building block and a generative matrix of sacred space, which, in the final analysis, is in itself simply one great icon.

This paper further explores this genetic approach. We begin by reviewing a few major innovative trends in contemporary iconology which have prepared the way for hierotopy. We will show how, inspired by these new ideas, Lidov set out on a quest to redefine the subject of iconology, which eventually lead him to hierotopy. Hierotopy did not spring up *ex nihilo* but grew naturally out of contemporary research on icons and has continued evolving within a broader field of visual theology.

The power of icons

Iconology of the previous century was dominated by a semiotic approach. Icons were considered more or less as a kind of text, composed of a universal alphabet of visual symbols that carried a message to be decoded and understood. This approach, which was innovative in the times of E. Panofsky, was superseded toward the end of the century by an emerging interest in a more multidimensional and multidisciplinary way of looking at icons and at their uses and meanings. New questions came to the fore. What is the icon's place in cultic practices? How do the faithful respond to icons? What do they believe about them, and what do icons mean for them? In fact, icons inhabit a certain space, time and environment in which they interact with the viewers, and the reconstruction of their 'social' life is of great interest to the students of sacred art.

[1] First, Zagraevsky saw in hierotopy a way of mystical vision of sacred spaces inspired by authors' own faith and religious views. Secondly, he argued that the issues of holistic perception of sacred spaces can be tackled nicely within existing disciplines [Zagraevsky 2018, 64].

These new tendencies received support from the general theory of response put forward by David Freedberg. His seminal work, "The Power of Images" [Freedberg 1989], opened up for academic research multifarious phenomena relating to the direct 'uncultured' response to images. Freedberg transcended the boundaries of a traditional art-historical discourse, which focused primarily on masterpieces and was preoccupied with the figure of the genius. What he tried to understand was the hidden and direct impact that any image, be it an icon, portrait or poster, can have. He reminded us that any art is a marvel akin to a miracle. No theory of images can explain the inexplicable: how does a picture, as a mere collection of lines and colored spots, have the power to form such a strong and stable association between a representation and its prototype? It is not for nothing, argues Freedberg, that artists are so easily ascribed divine inspiration. Indeed, what other force has the power to enliven dead matter?

For Freedberg, icons were just an element – albeit an important one – of the wider space of interaction in which people come to terms with the power of images, the power which transforms them into objects of veneration or targets of destructive attacks. The main aspect of this power is self-evident. It is the effect of real presence. The image and that which it depicts merge into a single mental construct in which a clear recognition of the illusory nature of the image is coupled with a no less clear sense of an 'as if presence' of the depicted. It should be stressed that the 'as if' here comes from rational reflection, while the living presence is felt directly and strongly. The main argument is simple: our interaction with an image is predicated on our direct reaction to what is depicted. "What we are dealing with" says Freedberg, "is not the representation of the signified, but its presentation" [Freedberg 1989, 78].

Another important step was made by Hans Belting in his book, "Bild und Kult", which bears the title of "Likeness and Presence" in its English translation [Belting 1994]. Unlike Freedberg, Belting focused specifically on icons, particularly on the history of individual icons. Both versions of the book's title clearly indicate that sacred art is being viewed within the wider context of the cult and that the effects of real presence are in the focus of attention. From the standpoint of traditional art history, Belting's book is unusual. It discusses not so much the issues of beauty, styles and influences but rather the 'biographies' of famous icons. What matters here is not aesthetic quality in a traditional sense but the aura of spiritual significance, that is, the measure of an icon's influence on the community of the faithful and on their religiosity. The effect of a real presence, characteristic of each portrait worthy of such a title, is, with regards to icons, much enhanced due to the believers' faith in immortality and in the eternal heavenly presence of those depicted.

Charismatic icons are animated by the personalities of the saints they depict. This is why they behave as persons: they protect their countries at war, they cross rivers and seas, they hide to be newly found, and they even save themselves by jumping out of burning buildings. As a rule, they work miracles. With this active personal character, icons can save, heal and protect, take promises and respect vows, favorably receive or reject gifts and offerings, punish wrongdoers and forgive the humble and repentant. Rather than being merely objects of pious con-

templation, icons offer a communicative interface, expanding intersubjective social space into the dimension of the otherworldly.

The active role of images was further problematized on a new theoretical level in the work of Alfred Gell[2], who took over the exploration of response at the point where it had been dropped by Freedberg. In his book, "Art and Agency" [Gell 1998], he defines art as an intermediating element in a complex network of inter-human relations, in which the response itself is just one component of a nexus constructed around a piece of artwork. Gell also argues that today's aesthetic attitude to art is relatively recent, whereas the archaic role of images was predominantly sacral. Even today's custom of enshrining artwork in museums for public veneration could be seen as a kind of secular sacralization of art.

None of these three art theorists spoke explicitly of sacred spaces, but they did nevertheless prepare the ground for the advent of hierotopy by conceptualizing unconventional multidisciplinary ways to study images. In the wake of their work, it has become clear both that the perception of figurative images has more dimensions than it was commonly assumed to have within traditional art-historical discourse and that it is important to study how images are integrated into a greater space of culture, psychology and philosophy of mind. To state that an image is someone's likeness is not the end of its story, but rather an opening of Pandora's box.

Wonder-working icons and relics. The triumph of Orthodoxy

The international symposium "Miracle-Working Icons", as well as a thematic book published afterword and based on its materials [Lidov 1996 a], helped to establish the topic of miraculous icons as a respectable academic field. The subject of wonder-working icons, as well as relics, talismans and ex-votos, was clearly beyond the confines of the traditional art-historical discourse. Moreover, the wonder-working qualities of icons did not fit with the official Orthodox theology of icons based on the representational theory of John the Damascene. Indeed, his conception of *eikon* implies that the only purpose of the honor given to the image is to be channeled to its prototype. By venerating the icon of the Theotokos, believers convey their devotion to the Theotokos herself, who might respond with the fulfillment of prayers. Although wonder-working icons play such a prominent role in tradition, the classical theory, despite its almost canonical status, does not have a place for them.

Indeed, in theory all the icons are equal in rank and equivalent in function, as long as they adequately satisfy ecclesiastical requirements and are appropriately blessed as holy images. Indeed, the actual cult of miraculous icons teeters on the verge of what is considered acceptable and vividly reminds us of the sorts of 'misuses' of image veneration which provoked Byzantine iconoclasm. Indeed, a miraculous icon is always an individual specific icon-person, including all its

[2] I am drawing here from the work of M. Bacci who first put forward this particular trio of authors as predecessors of hierotopy [Bacci 2016, 9–10]. By Lidov's own words, he was most directly influenced by the work of Belting.

substantial and representational aspects. The veneration of particularly respected icons is very much material in nature: they are kissed so frequently and fervently as to bare them down to the wood, they are dressed in luxurious textiles, they receive expensive presents and they are even washed on holidays. All this bears no relation to the theology of icons that is centered on a generalized iconic image. No theory can explain why one icon deserves more veneration than another. The wonder-working potential does not correlate with aesthetic qualities or with any particular artistic style. But it often does correlate with age. This is a fundamental human trope: objects perceived as archaic are more likely to acquire a reputation of being sacred or divine (of course, age itself is not a warrant for a miraculous 'career').

The next step on the route to hierotopy was Lidov's work on the history of relics[3]. Relics are a peculiar subject in their own right. While a theology of icons exists, there is nothing of this kind with regards to relics – perhaps because they never caused such a sharp controversy. Relics are not man-made and are not imitational. They receive their sanctity directly from divine figures or holy events where they are believed to have originated. The absence of theory is still surprising, however, because the cult of relics is no less official than the cult of icons. Indeed, a small piece of a saint's relic is enclosed in the *antimins* (corporal) of every Orthodox church.

The response of the faithful to relics is in fact very much akin to their response to icons due to a similar "mechanism" being in play, namely the effect of presence. The relics of a saint represent the saint according to the principle of synecdoche, as a part represents the whole. The relics are iconic by their very action in that they evoke the mental image of a saint to whom they belong. Quite analogous to icons, they operate as channels of communication with the Heavenly Realm. A saint is just as truly present in his icon as he is in his relics. This presence is not partial but complete, akin to the presence of Christ in the Eucharist.

The study of parallels between wonderworking icons and relics can and should be understood as a step towards hierotopy because it shows in which sense figurative art and deified matter are fundamentally similar and how they can work together. Above all, icons are not merely pictorial representations but material objects. Pentcheva has studied the substantial aspect of icons, which has the history of its own and is instrumental in the perception of icons as living entities worthy of prayerful intention [Pentcheva 2010]. The complementary nature of icons and relics is confirmed by multiple examples of embedding relics in icons as well as in devotional statues. A striking example can be found in the icon-reliquary of Rila monastery in which the relics of thirty-two saints are inserted [Bakalova 2017, 296].

Despite the absence of an explanatory theory of relics and wonder-working icons, their study has helped to develop the theory of a constructivist kind.

[3] In 2000 the Research Center for Eastern Christian Culture, together with the Tretyakov Gallery, organized a symposium entitled "Relics in the Art and Culture of the Eastern Christian World". In the wake of this symposium, a collection of research papers was published [Lidov 2003]. Later, Lidov also edited a compendium of ancient sources on relics [Lidov 2006 c]. This effort was part of a broader research program timed for the bi-millennium of Christianity.

Hierotopy does not answer the question of why the cult of relics was established nor explore the secret of its persistence – such answers would widely differ depending upon one's school of thought and worldview – but it does study how relics and wonder-working icons are used in the design of sacred spaces.

Iconoclasm became possible due to insufficient connection between icons and liturgy. Pre-iconoclastic clergy merely tolerated icons in a measure in which they did not distract the congregation from the service. But shortly after the defeat of iconoclasm, the new tradition was born which officially recognized the sanctity of images and integrated them into the liturgy. The veneration of icons has become a canonized ritual. One is thus able to partake of icons in the same way as one partakes of the Cross, the Gospel and the Holy Mysteries. To mend the pre-iconoclastic gap between icons and liturgy, new iconographic programs were introduced which directly represented liturgical themes and evoked the unceasing Heavenly Liturgy in the space of a church. Icons thereby merged with liturgy in a unifying spatial image. This union of imagery, word and ritual engendered the Byzantine iconic-liturgical space, and hierotopy has become a particularly fitting methodology for its study.

The generalized concept of 'the iconic' provides the key to elucidate the nature of this space [Lidov 2014 a, 9]. Each component of this sacred space functions as a point of contact between two worlds: Heaven and Earth. When the Byzantine liturgical space is analyzed from this perspective, it is easy to see how everything in it is iconic in this wider sense: music, prayers, images, lighted candles, the prayerful expression on the faces of the congregation, the piety and grace of the ritual, the murals, the icons, the ecclesiastic building itself, the dramaturgy of light etc[4]. Icons are not merely the principal sense-making elements of the sacred space, but rather the epitome of the general principle of iconicity that endows the entirety of the sacred space, as well as each of its components separately, with purpose and meaning.

Moreover, the icon itself has come to be seen as a spatial installation. Whereas Western religious paintings of the Renaissance and Baroque periods open up on the inside and allow us to peek into their internal scenic spaces, "flat" icons using an "incorrect" perspective, push holy figures and faces towards the viewers, thus informing sacred spaces in which the faithful meet the otherworldly face-to-face. Even a single icon already creates a sacred space between itself and the beholder. Such spaces are collectivized and merged together in the unified sacred space of a church, breathing with the mystical presence of the multitude of saints and other divine figures. From the Byzantine point of view, an icon is a *chora* – that mysterious platonic 'third kind' in which ideal forms are embodied in visible things in the course of a continuous process of becoming [Isar 2006, 62–65; Isar 2011]. This dynamic, creative hypostasis of the icon is as ineffable as the platonic *chora* itself, which, unlike the two distinct worlds of things and ideas, is accessible neither to physical vision nor to the mind's eye.

[4] Among abundant literature on the iconicity of Orthodox worldview and liturgical life, see, in particular, a comprehensive study by V. V. Lepahin [Lepahin 2002] as well as a recent paper by S. S. Avanesov [Avanesov 2017].

Hierotopy as a kind of art

In 1996 Lidov published a work that can rightfully be called proto-hierotopic, "Miracle-working Icons in Church Decoration: On the symbolic programme of the Royal Doors of St. Sophia at Constantinople" [Lidov 1996 b]. Though the term 'hierotopy' does not yet appear in the text, viewed in retrospect, it is easy to see that it features important innovations, which would later become known as characteristic of hierotopy. The paper was about the sacred installation of the Emperor's entrance of the Great Church, which was designed around the themes of repentance and Divine Mercy. The famous mosaic shows the prostrate Emperor Leo the Wise, leading the sinners in the spiritual battle of repentance and humility by his own example. The entire program also included the wonder-working icon of the Theotokos which had stopped St. Mary of Egypt at the church entrance, as well as another miraculous icon of Christ and the gate-reliquary into which the parts of Noah's Ark were embedded. The article stated that the entire assembly engendered an impressive and memorable "sacral image".

This idiom, "sacral image", has not been used by Lidov ever since, probably because of its art-historical feel and overly straightforward iconographic connotation. Even though it never developed into a fully-fledged hierotopic concept, it can help us to grasp what was new in the proposed approach. Indeed, the term 'image' in its usual sense implies direct perception via corporeal senses. An image can be visual, auditory, tactile, etc. If we include 'sacral image' in the succession of these, more physical categories of images, a question about the modality of sacral images inevitably arises. If each kind of images corresponds to a respective sense, a sacral image is to be matched with a sense of sacrality[5].

A sense of sacrality is a feeling evoked by a sacred object, such as a relic. One can argue about the nature of this feeling or discuss whether it is identical to a sense of the numinous or how much it differs across cultures and epochs, but its very existence cannot be doubted. One can try to describe the feeling as an excitement of a special kind or as a sense of the sublime, or one can even try to define it in terms of bodily sensations such as shortness of breath, rising heart rate, etc. This feeling of partaking in the otherworldly presupposes, as a rule, religious faith, but it can also precede an acceptance of consciously affirmed beliefs. There is, of course, no physiological sensor for the sense of the sacred, so it belongs to the family of elusive "sixth senses", such as, for example, the sense of being in love. It is integrated within the worldview of a believer and is part of his lived reality. One way or another, the sense of sacrality has its place in the phenomenology of the sacred. But it is not easy to introduce it into traditional art-historical discourse, which is busy with objects and phenomena which can be seen or heard by everyone.

All this is known and, perhaps, even somewhat trivial. But what is undoubtedly less trivial is that, by arranging sacred objects in a certain way, one is able to

[5] In Lidov's work the Russian word *obraz* is used, which is a close equivalent of 'image'. It is semantically close to its German analogue, *Bild*. The semantic field of *obraz* is fairly broad and lends itself to a wider understanding of the notion of 'image' more readily than the English word, 'image', strongly attached as the latter is to its primary connotation of 'picture'.

orchestrate a stronger, more comprehensive and well-targeted sense of sacrality, capable of endowing a holy place with the qualities of a sacred space. Such an assembly of sacred artifacts is not an incidental heap of objects but a carefully selected sacred ensemble that produces a certain 'hue' of religious emotion. In this particular case it induces a sense of repentance and a hope of forgiveness and salvation for the sinner. Such a sense of sacrality is evoked in those capable of such feelings in about the same way that the auditory image of a musical melody is composed of notes or a painting is constituted by brushstrokes. This sacral image is not only characterized by a sheer intensity, force, or 'density' of sacrality, but it is also imbued with a rather explicit intonation.

The discussion of sacral images and their partial analogy with artistic images takes us directly to an important point of a methodological affinity between hierotopy and art history. In hierotopy, the creation of sacred spaces is understood as a special form of art – a synthetic creative process akin to the work of movie directors and interior designers. Lidov, an art historian by education and profession, approached sacred space as an artistic creation, as a special kind of artwork. In the paper we are now discussing, this aspect of hierotopy is made quite explicit, and the artist-creator is named: Emperor Leo the Wise. Later Lidov would return to this subject and consider it as a typical example of hierotopic creativity [Lidov 2009 a, 9–35]. This means that in the 1996 paper the notion of hierotopy was already present, but it was not yet identified as such, and its existence was latent, pre-natal.

But how was the sacral image of salvation through repentance created in the space of the imperial entrance? It emerged through the entirety of its components, each charged with a sacrality of its own but functioning in the assembly similarly to figures in a sculptural group or a painting which are interconnected through the unity of action. All the components – mosaics, miraculous icons and holy doors – constituted together a single sacral image. In the further development of hierotopy, this proto-concept of a sacral image has been split into two fully developed and well-defined concepts, namely the *spatial icon* and the *image-paradigm*. The first of the two conceptualizes iconicity as a general quality of all sacred spaces and invites us to interpret sacred spaces as iconic multimedia installations. The second helps to analyze the imagery of sacred spaces and identify distinct relatively independent sub-images within it.

Hierotopy was thus conceived in the matrix of Byzantine iconographic programs, viewed as spatial wholes. In fact, what Lidov discovered was a basic principle of sacral aesthetics, namely the organic unification of the visual imagery of icons and the image-less sacrality of relics, merged together in the media of the ritual and integrated into a sacred space experienced as a single *existential image*[6]. This is precisely why the theme of miraculous icons happened to be an early precursor of hierotopy: it explicitly combined the sacrality of visual imagery with the sacrality of sanctified matter. The icon is thus not only the most important sense-making component of the sacred space but also a conceptual key to its most important powers.

[6] Another Lidov's neologism communicated through private discussions.

Yet this was still not enough for hierotopy to be born. To be revealed in full blossom, sacred space had to be enacted with that very ritual for which it was designed. The space of the Christian church is the place of the Holy Liturgy, and only in the process of the liturgy is its sacral potential realized. An empty church can be a monument of ecclesiastical architecture but not a hierotopic project. The liturgical actors (i. e., the clergy as well as the congregation) belong to the sacred space of a church in the same way and in the same measure as icons and relics do. What hierotopy was in need of, in short, was performativity. The sacred space had to be animated with the life of ritual.

Sacral performances and the performativity of the sacred

A detailed discussion of the notion of the 'sacred' is well beyond the scope of the present essay, not only due to insufficient space or to it not being entirely relevant for the purposes of our main subject, but also for another important reason. The issue is that hierotopy considers sacrality as an existing phenomenon of culture, i. e., from the outside, without attempting to delve into an interpretation of it or into the intimacy of its experiences. Both the phenomenology and ontology of sacrality stand outside of hierotopic discourse. Hierotopy is prepared to work with any understanding of sacrality which is already formed, or given, in a certain religious community or an academic school. Indeed, multiple ways of understanding sacrality might co-exist even within the same confession and at the same epoch. But what then is hierotopy, as a particular branch of scientific research, supposed to look like if it is going to be a stable, coherent mode of inquiry? Which aspects of sacrality are eligible to scientific analysis and systematization?

Science is certainly capable of studying external, constructive aspects of the sacred, that is, sacred actions. Sacred rituals define and fill the sacred space. In practice we deal primarily with so-called 'world religions', that is, popular, commonly recognized religions which posit the key loci of their sacrality in monumental buildings. As such, we are tempted to think that the inside of a cult edifice decorated with icons and symbolic artifacts is a sacred space. But this is still not yet a sacred space in a full sense of this term, but rather a shell which has merged so fully with its contents as to appear to be just as organic and necessary as clothes are to a human.

This is still just a shell, however. From the very first veterotestamental examples, we see that sacral action is primary, while the sacred space is secondary. Rituals precede sacred spaces, such as in the well known Biblical examples of the Tabernacle or Solomon's Temple. The structure of the ritual predetermined the structure of the sacred space layered according to the degrees of sanctity. We see the same in Christian churches, where the sanctuary (altar) is set apart from the nave due to the special role it plays in the Eucharist.

Sacred action is typically collective in nature, and, unlike a theatre, it knows no distinction between actors and spectators. During the Holy Office everyone is praying, hence everyone is participating. Everyone and all together perform the sacred action and define its space. The prayerful face of someone standing next to us is as important a part of this space as gilded cupola, rich paintings or the solemn rhythm of *lectio divina*. To characterize both the creation and the perception

of the space of the sacred ritual by its participants, Lidov introduced the term 'spatial icon', which he began to use prior to the introduction of hierotopy [Lidov 1992].

The Tuesday Hodegetria procession is a vivid example of a performative spatial icon [Lidov 2006 b, 349–350]. This weekly ritual, an ecstatic performance, perceived as a miracle by its viewers, is known to us from multiple eyewitness accounts. It occurred each Tuesday in one of the central market squares in Constantinople by the Hodegon Monastery. The miraculous icon, clad in a heavy *riza* (revetment) was moved in circles around the square on the shoulders of icon-bearers, giving the impression that it moved on its own while dragging its bearers with itself. All the viewers-participants of this holy show, united by ardent faith in the intercessory role and the salvific force of the Theotokos, followed in one accord the evolutions of the flying icon, thus making of themselves an icon of a special sort. In Lidov's own words: "The important peculiarity of this phenomenon was that it suggested no distinction between a viewer and an image. In this system of values, a spectator became an inalienable and constitutive part of the image itself. The spatial icon of the Tuesday performance included everyone who prayed in the square…" [Lidov 2006 b, 348].

The Tuesday procession marks a pivotal episode in our story. In fact, we have almost reached our destination. Here we sense the vibrant heartbeat of living hierotopy. This mysterious ritual – traditional, but still spontaneous and ever unexpected – was free from the palatial sumptuousness of great cathedrals. Here our vision is not dazzled with shining gold or gems. The sacral action unfolded in a market square where commerce went non-stop. What we have here is the mysterious act of direct communication of the Heavenly Queen with Her people, a spatial icon that enacts and monumentalizes this communication. Such a formation of a performative sacral image is, in fact, the conceptual core of hierotopy. The sacred space ceases to be a mere collection of sacral objects or an analogue of a podium. It is now filled with life and action, becoming a space of spiritual resonance and a place to encounter the Holy face-to-face.

Spatial icons and icons in space

Let us now rewind the chronological flow of our story back into the 1990s and talk in more detail about the notion of the 'spatial icon', so instrumental in the discovery of hierotopy. To simplify, it can be stated that a spatial icon stands in the same relationship to a two-dimensional icon as a modern multimedia installation stands with respect to a painting. There are several ways to create spatial icons. Above, while discussing the imperial entrance gate of Leo the Wise, we identified a straightforward approach: a spatial icon was created by saturating the space with sacral objects imbued with profound meaning and drawing an intensive response. Acting together, these objects informed an emergent 'sacral image'. In this section we shall discuss a radically different way to do the same thing: to saturate the space with symbolic links rather than with substantial carriers of Divine Grace.

Typical examples of this kind of hierotopy are the so-called New Jerusalems, the sacral landscapes (natural or partly man-made) imitating the Holy Land

[Lidov 2009 c]. The largest of these is found in the vicinity of the New Jerusalem Monastery near Moscow. With such hierotopic 'technology' there was no need to create any new landscape. The magic of the 'iconization' of space worked purely by means of renaming. The Istra river became the Jordan; a pine grove on a hill was christened 'Gethsemane', etc. Evangelical associations came with names. The Gospel narrative inhabited an unpretentious Russian landscape surrounding the monastery, laying down roots in its chapels, sketes and holy wells.

The term 'spatial icon' was first applied to various phenomena, including New Jerusalems and similar cases a few years before the advent of hierotopy. A simple Internet search readily confirms that the term was widely adopted and frequently used independently of hierotopy. Indeed, a spatial icon is a category of icons which are not painted on wooden boards but are composed in one way or another out of spatial elements. It remains an icon in a more or less customary sense – it is just implemented with unusual tools and materials. One accustomed to modern art, with its infinite freedom in choosing the means of expression, cannot be terribly confused at the idea of an icon as a kind of artistic installation. An icon is still an icon, whatever is the medium of representation.

The scientific significance of spatial icons becomes clear when one thinks of the nature of art that creates them. What variety of artistic work is employed in creating spatial icons? It is neither architecture, nor painting, nor landscaping. It is, in fact, not an artifact-making activity at all. It is rather the creation of sacral meanings. In order to introduce this kind of art into scientific circulation, we need to give it a name. This name is hierotopy.

Hierotopy could perhaps be defined as a variety of art which has the creation of spatial icons as its subject. The word 'art', however, which has almost come to be synonymous with 'technology', is too heavily charged with connotations of production and human skill or talent. With respect to art, moreover, we also have to deal with aesthetics, which is accompanied by all sorts of related concepts, such as aesthetic distancing and aesthetic judgement, each of which many would consider inappropriate when applied too bluntly to the study of religious phenomena. We all know that beauty has its place in Christian culture, but this place has always been a matter of heated debate. As such, Lidov, with commendable prudence, prefers to speak in the less obliging terms of 'creative activity'. It should be emphasized that if the term 'hierotopy' refers to the creative activity itself, the term 'spatial icon' refers rather to its outcome. Hierotopy implies a symphony of arts which all meet and work together for the sake of a single common goal – the creation of a spatial icon.

Having considered sacred space from the standpoint of an art historian, Lidov explored and formulated one of its most important aspects: the fact that it takes shape and comes into its own through conscious human activity. Take a Byzantine church as an example. Its architecture, rituals, music, iconography and so forth are all orchestrated in order to create an artwork of a special sort, namely a spatial icon. But how? There is no simple answer to this question. Hierotopic projects are to be studied individually and concretely, one by one. Hierotopy provides an approach and a methodology, but not a ready-made theory of sacrality. It delineates a space of a discourse, a common ground for interdisciplinary discussions. A novel approach to the origins of the sacred based on the methodolog-

ical foundation of art history brought about the discovery of hierotopy as a fruitful cultural-historical concept and discourse.

But why does hierotopy focus so heavily on the creation of sacred spaces? Would it not be sufficient just to describe them? The answer is no, and this is precisely because sacred spaces are treated within the hierotopic approach as artwork. Don't we see a similar degree of attention paid to the process of creation in art history? Instead of simply enjoying a beautiful portrait or a landscape, we do not spare our efforts gathering all kinds of information pertaining to the process of its creation. We take interest in everything: the biography of the artist, the spirituality of his time and its more influential philosophical ideas, the general cultural context, the historical background, tastes and common aesthetic preferences, political views, economic factors etc. The artwork is never merely an object of direct perception but a semantic nexus, into which information streams from all directions [Gell 1998]. It is an information hub where all sorts of influences meet together in order to inform a cultural matrix, engendering an art product. While studying the question of HOW an artwork was made, we find a partial, but generally satisfactory answer to the question of WHAT it is. Art history tends, in other words, to replace ontology with genetics.

When applying a similar approach to sacred space, we also focus on the circumstances of its creation. How did it come about? Who designed it? What was its purpose within the religiosity of its time? What was the core concept of its visual-theological design? To move on from here to specific case studies, one needs tools of study, and the most important of these is the image-paradigm.

Image-paradigms and the aesthetics of the invisible

Image-paradigms are religious image-concepts associated with sacred spaces [Lidov 2009 a, 292–293; Lidov 2009 b, 148–149]. They are mental images that inspire hierotopic creativity and are evoked in the minds of the beholders. They shape and inform the construction of sacred spaces as mental models. The 'paradigm' in image-paradigms is a kind of design, sketch, or outline understood along the lines of the original meaning of the Greek word παράδειγμα. Image-paradigms are essentially non-pictorial in nature. Being nowhere directly depicted, they emerge as visions or mental images from a manifold of concerted associations and take shape in the viewer's imagination via an organized system of iconic, symbolic and typological elements constituting the sacred space.

Significant attention has been paid lately to the identification and characterization of specific image-paradigms as well as to the elucidation of their ontological and functional aspects [Simsky 2016 a; Simsky 2016 b]. We are speaking here of such fundamental image-concepts of Christian culture as the Heavenly Jerusalem [Lidov 2013; Simsky 2018 b], Divine Fire [Simsky 2013], the Holy Mountain [Lidov 2019] and the Temple Veil [Lidov 2014 b], as well as image-paradigms of the Rivers of Paradise [Lidov 2017 b], the Priesthood of the Virgin [Lidov 2017 a] and the Holy city of Edessa [Lidov 2009 a]. These images were embedded in a certain way into the design of sacred spaces and reified in the minds of their viewers-participants. The discovery and analysis of specific image-paradigms is

fruitful in itself, and it is also important as the accumulation of evidence for further theoretical generalizations.

The theoretical analysis of image-paradigms is meant to clarify the issue of their ontology, that is, it must answer the question "What it is?" Some study has already been done on this subject, so we now understand image-paradigms better than before. It is still quite difficult to give a general definition of image-paradigms as a class because they differ significantly in character and structure. They all are mental constructs, built from the material of religious experience: visual imagery, theological ideas, personal emotions and thoughts, as well as mystical encounters with the otherworldly. But each is built in its own way, and they are all different. Divine Fire, for example, is not so much visual in nature, but rather a sensory image, enacting the senses of heat and burning, a sense of the numinous that we experience before flames, as well as a concept of sin and the experience of God's wrath and punishment.

Divine Light, to give another example which, strictly speaking, has not yet been categorized as an image-paradigm, has an obvious 'optical' nature, but can still hardly be called 'visual' due to its wholly non-pictorial and non-figurative character. Or, take the image-paradigm of Heavenly Jerusalem, which has at its core the sense of one's being in the Holy City. A sense of being somewhere is, again, quite a distinct mental construction, reducible neither to a visual image not to an abstract idea, but intuitively clear from our daily experience.

In an attempt to present the reader with a realistic and, at the same time, not overly simplified picture of image-paradigms as a class of mental constructs, we could use the metaphor of the color palette. Let the whole range of variation of image-paradigms be analogous to a spectral range of colors, where any color can be obtained by mixing the three basic colors (red, blue, green) in different proportions. In our case we shall use in the same way three basic categories of image-paradigms: (1) visual mental images (2) rational ideas or dogmas and (3) 'atmospheres', i.e., auras of places or ambiances. Let us agree, for the sake of argument, that each actual image-paradigm can be composed from the three above-mentioned ingredients, and that all three are necessary for its completeness and stability.

A theological concept or dogma is like a core of such a construct. It imparts an image-paradigm with its stability and permanence. Such concepts belong to the religious tradition and they endow image-paradigms with objectivity and unity, clarity of form, distinctness and identity. They set boundaries for the play of emotions and curb imagination. Sensual imagery and emotional material then grow around this core as flesh forms around the structure of a skeleton. The organic unity of the conceptual and the imaginary forms a single 'image-concept' that combines both rational and sensual aspects. An image-concept is thus enlivened by the imagery, while conceptual core secures its firmness and continuity.

At another end of the spectrum we have a structureless and formless feeling, a sense of ambience, or a so-called 'atmosphere', something well known from everyday life but introduced only recently into the scholarly discourse [Böhme 2017]. An atmosphere is the emanation of the expressivity of things condensed in space. It is an emotion projected into space which renders the space emotionally tuned, as if charges it with a certain mood. We encounter atmospheres practically

everywhere: at home, at work, when visiting a stylish restaurant or a shop, in a garden or a park, etc. A typical example of an atmosphere is homeliness, that is, the sense of being at home in a familiar, warm and cozy environment.

When we speak of a cozy home, we project into the space of a home our feelings of domesticity which can also be described as a 'sense of coziness'. Unlike classical beauty, domesticity requires the presence of people. Whereas Venus of Milo is perfect even in an empty museum, when no one is looking at her, an empty house cannot be cozy. A cozy home is performative in much the same way that sacred space is performative[7]. Coziness is not a property of a home or its interior, but of its atmosphere, understood as a medium interfacing the home and its inhabitants. This medium is immaterial and subjective because it does not exist outside of our perception. But it is also objective because everyone who enters the house is able to sense it. In it individual things lose their separateness. They dissolve in the atmosphere, which takes on itself the function of an object. This is also the case with sacred spaces: if we focus our attention on one object, taken separately, the sense of the whole is lost. If you ask me, what I perceive when I am in a cozy home, the answer would be: "the atmosphere of coziness!" This sense of homeliness, similarly to the sense of sacrality, emerges as the product of a very concrete and conscious activity, which often follow explicit cultural recipes (e. g., Feng Shui).

Every believer leaving a church in a grace-filled mood is a witness to the importance of the 'atmospheric' aspect of his or her experience. Its fundamental importance is confirmed by the Biblical commandment forbidding any attempts to picture the divinity. The non-pictorial character of God is analogous to the non-pictorial aspect of the sense of sacrality, which even in the Christian tradition holds a higher status than mere 'figments of imagination'. We know, nevertheless, of the intensive use of images in Christianity, and we rightfully link this to the Incarnation of God in Christ. Even in the case of icons, however, we are dealing with mental constructs, which, aside from their visuality, contain and manifest other, non-visual dimensions.

Take for example such a typical figurative iconic image as an icon of Christ. The typical perception of such an icon by believers engenders a sense of the presence of the Savior. But who would deny that such a feeling is more multidimensional than a purely visual image? A sense of the presence of another human is always richer than a simple contemplation of his or her appearance – indeed, it includes all that connects us with this person. Christ, stepping out of an icon, activates in a believer's mind a rich world of religious experience including the Gospel narrative, the spirit of His teaching, the experience of prayer life and all kinds of spiritual warfare, etc. In fact, in the world of icons even a simple figurative image contains much more than it seems to and includes both dogmatic and 'atmospheric' components.

A classical example of an image-paradigm is the Heavenly Jerusalem [Lidov 1998; Simsky 2018 b]. The image-concept of the Heavenly City belongs to the Christian tradition as a whole, and, like other image-paradigms of such a caliber,

[7] Parallels between home and sacred space have been studied in the material of Dutch art [Simsky 2018 c].

is accessible to anyone willing to plunge into its atmosphere. It is transmitted through all the components of the religious experience including learning, prayer life, reading, liturgical life and it gradually takes shape and matures in the believer's mind. Even before coming to church, a believer knows quite well what the Heavenly Jerusalem is. The image is not created in a church (remember, it is nowhere depicted!), but is as if recalled from memory. The task of the designer of a sacred space is to help evoke this mental 'image-concept-atmosphere' in the minds of the faithful.

Whereas an iconic image of Christ imparts His presence to us at the place where we stand, here and now, the image of Heavenly Jerusalem suggests our imagined presence in the Holy City and includes all three of the above-mentioned components. The theological aspect comes from Christian soteriology, which offers the faithful a firm and well-worked foundation for the construction of a concrete and at least partly visual image of the afterlife and Paradise. Its visual aspect originates from a well-known description in the book of Revelation. Finally, the sense of being in (or at the gates of) the ineffable gigantic Holy City, shining with God's Glory, this indescribable and unimaginable feeling, is engendered in a purposefully created atmosphere.

With regards to the Heavenly Jerusalem, the word 'image' should clearly be kept in quotation marks, bearing in mind that, in this case, the term 'image-paradigm' is being used to categorize a phenomenon quite apart from what we usually refer to as an image. Although it does feature a visual component, the focus is on the mental translation of the Heavenly Jerusalem into the space of a church, accomplished through a multitude of concerted symbolic pointers, which, in their entirety, create an image-atmosphere, experienced as a mode of being rather than as an externally perceived object[8]. The sense of being in the Holy City is evoked in the liturgy by means of a concerted assembly of imagery, artifacts, ritual and symbolic meanings, all pointing to key attributes of the Holy City.

In the first place, there is the monumental stone building itself – a bastion of faith with its celestial vaults. The space of the church is filled with the mystical presence of the saints, represented via visual imagery or relics. In the center stands the Heavenly King, represented by the officiating priest as well as by the Holy Mysteries on the altar-throne. Holy Vessels and other paraphernalia, richly gilded and studded with gems, remind us of the material of the Heavenly Jerusalem. Finally, there are the choral chants which, for good reason, are referred to as 'an angelic song', especially in the post-Paschal period when "Shine, shine, o, New Jerusalem!" is sung. It is this whole polyphonic orchestra, which merges together in a single symphony, that transports the believer to the Holy City.

Conclusion

When discussing hierotopy, one often hears repeated statements about an organized ensemble of multiple factors informing Byzantine sacred space, and we tend to forget that the key sense-making component of this system of val-

[8] Recall the note above about the 'existential image' or 'image-existence'.

ues and significations is still and remains the icon. Hence, it is not surprising that hierotopy emerged from the study of Byzantine iconographic programs as their fundamental organizing principle that united into a coherent assembly everything from relics and ritual to other sacred components, engendering a holistic experience of a spatial sacral image. Icons were key actors in this iconic-liturgical ensemble. They played the leading tune, as it were, while other iconic components also joined the choir, producing a forceful polyphonic symphony.

Icons first appeared as commemorative, votive images that were closely linked with and used in prayer, but their real destiny and promise was only fulfilled in Byzantine hierotopy. Hierotopy was born in the matrix of iconographic programs, even while the full potential of the icon has only been revealed in the context of hierotopic studies. Icons engendered and nurtured the iconic worldview, which was instrumental in the perception of sacred spaces. Through icons the divine penetrated the 'here and now', both forming and filling sacred space as an interfacing area between the two worlds and transforming it into a living spatial icon.

The wonder-working activity of icons, which has never quite fit in with the classical theory of icons, has found its place and purpose in hierotopy. Indeed, icons are working miracles all the time – miracles of the incarnation of the divine into dynamic spatial forms. The famous example of the Tuesday Hodegetria is archetypical in this respect. Any icon is, potentially, a Constantinopolitan Theotokos, ever ready to engage in the sacred celestial *choros*.

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