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MATEJ GOGOLA, *Mandylion z Edessy. Rukou-destvorený obraz a jeho miesto v byzantskom umení a duchovnej kultúre* [Mandylion of Edessa. The Image Not Made by Human Hands and its Place Within Byzantine Art and Spiritual Culture], Bratislava: PostScriptum, 2017, pp. 192.

In Slovak historiography, the monograph by Mgr. Matej Gogola, PhD stands out as absolutely unique. It discusses one of the most beautiful Christian legends as well as the image that constitutes its "real" result and proof. The Image of Jesus Christ not made by hands (*acheiropoietos*) underwent an interesting his-

torical development in the Byzantine Empire and was held in very high esteem in connection with both the spiritual and the practical aspects of life.

As a PhD student at Comenius University, under the supervision of Martin Hurbanič, Matej Gogola spent significant time in Vienna

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and Moscow; thus, his scholarship reflects both Western and Russian literature on the subject. The work fulfils all the “mandatory” requirements of an academic monograph (high number of primary sources, use of relevant secondary literature, summary of previous research, independent views and reasoning on the topic). The monograph is based on the author’s doctoral dissertation defended in August 2014 at the General History Department, Faculty of Arts, Comenius University in Bratislava. Since the reviewer has the dissertation at his disposal, it may be pointed out that the greater part of the text has undergone extensive editing, supplementation and refinement.

The *Predhovor* [*Preface*], p. 7–11, besides introducing the topic as such, also outlines the structure of the monograph and defines the basic objectives of the work. The introduction first concisely addresses the general object of the work (the Byzantine spiritual world), then the more specific one (the Abgar cycle), to finally approach the direct – one might even say “physical” – object. The latter is the Image of Edessa, which is *acheiropoietos*, i.e. not made by (human) hands. Naturally, the author focuses on the story of King Abgar of Edessa. The ruler, having fallen gravely ill, sent his envoys to Jesus Christ to plead for help. However, unable to visit either Abgar or Edessa, Jesus answered the call by imprinting his face (as per one of the versions of the story) onto a piece of cloth, thus creating his own image. Subsequently, the image became an important and specific element in the historical and spiritual development of Edessa, Constantinople, the Byzantine Empire as well as the whole Orthodox world. In the *Preface*, Matej Gogola sketches out the structural division of the monograph, including some accompanying subtopics. The first part of the monograph approaches the issues of the pagan predecessors of the Image of Edessa not made by hands and lays out a potential foundation for understanding the image on the basis of Scripture. This part also introduces the individual categories of images, including their apotropaic and magical attributes. The second part of the monograph deals with the cycle of legends about King Abgar, based on the analysis of written sources.

The author declares the monograph’s objectives as follows. Firstly, he aims to increase the awareness about the topic amongst both academics and non-specialists through discussing the basis of the cult of images in Christianity and by analysing the relevant source texts. Secondly, he attempts to bridge the existing discrepancies in the pertinent terminology (*mandylion* – *acheiropoietos*). Thirdly, in connection with the previous point, the author argues for a legitimate place of the term *not made by hand(s)* (*rukou-nestvoreny*) in Slovak historiography and historical terminology.

The *Preface* is followed by the introduction, entitled *O ikonách. O obrazoch* [*On icons. On images*], p. 12–15. Here, the content and function of the term *icon* is discussed. The author points out that the semantics of the term may vary, especially taking into account the way the term is understood currently (with regard to the Middle Ages and Scripture).

The *Preface* and the introduction are followed by the first chapter, containing an overview of the previous research. Since only several works devoted to the Image of Edessa exist, the author often dedicates whole short paragraphs to each of the more important ones. Occasionally, this chapter is reminiscent of its original dissertation character; some superfluous information is at times provided. The latter includes, for instance, detailed introductions of authors of secondary literature, their professions, scholarly achievements, dates of birth/death etc. (a reader can easily order the works cited chronologically on the basis of the text of the monograph as well as the publication dates). Similarly, various authors’ views on issues outside of the scope of the monograph are often discussed. In a serious monograph like the one under review, such digressions are hardly warranted. On the other hand, it should be noted that the author generally avoids pointless digressions; he guides the flow of the text in a straightforward manner, carefully using references to sources and secondary literature and maintaining his overall focus on the designated goals. As concerns the secondary literature, its spans both older, 19th century classics (William Cureton, Karl Matthes, Alexander Lvovich Katanskij,

Richard Adalbert Lipsius, Ernst von Dobschütz) and more recent, 20th century works, both better and lesser known (e.g. by Steven Runciman, Averil Cameron, Jelena Nikitichova Meschchenskaja, Hans Belting or Alexey Michajlovich Lidov). In both the *Preface* and the introduction, when dealing with secondary literature, the author aptly highlights those features or “partial questions” that he deems particularly important (e.g. the possible filiation of the legends, tracing the tradition, discussions on usage and terminology, etc.).

The second chapter, entitled *Prologomena k problematike – etymológia a termíny* [*Prolegomena to the topic – etymology and terminology*], p. 31–46, addresses the first use of the term *acheiropoietos* (though not related to an image) in the New Testament. It is paradoxical, however, that the work should place the use of the adjective *acheiropoietos* in a papyrus letter from Nearchos to Heliodoros before the Epistle to the Corinthians, the Epistle to the Colossians and the Gospel of Mark: chronologically, this is not coherent. The inclusion of a minor subchapter dealing with terminology is indeed justified. As already observed by the author on the introductory pages, the topic is beset with certain terminological inconsistencies – in particular, the retrospective (and thus anachronistic) use of the later and broader term *mandylion* in reference to the Image of Edessa. However, it would be appropriate to mention the first use of the term *acheiropoietos* (by Pseudo-Zacharias) referring to the Image of Edessa already at this point; this information only appears 20 pages later (p. 51). If the subchapter on terminology and etymology also included commentaries on the use of terminology in the secondary literature (the author is obviously well-acquainted with the relevant facts – he mentions and quotes them properly, although these references are scattered throughout the text) and combined this with a discussion on the terminology used in the primary sources, this part of the book would become a fine, full-fledged chapter of the monograph (together with the discussion of the etymology of *mandylion*).

On the other hand, the structure of the monograph is the author’s decision – and, in fact, the

work does benefit from his choice to continue in a different manner. In the next part of the book (p. 33–34), the text regains its dynamics. This indispensable subchapter providing the crucial context of evolution is entitled *Obrazy v predkřesťanském období* [*Images in the pre-Christian period*], p. 34–36. Images of the *Diipetes* type (the *Trojan palladium*, the images of Artemis from Ephesus and of Serapis from Alexandria) were held in very high esteem and served as a developmental model for images of Christ. The following subchapter continues with a historical overview of the cult of images, focusing on the attitudes of the early Christian Church towards the Old Testament prohibition of the worship of images and idols. It also discusses the status of the legend on St. Luke’s Icon of Mother of God and its credibility. The subchapter analyses the position of Christian communities based on passages from the Bible and from the Church Fathers (Tertullian in particular). The subsequent stage in the development is the *Imago imperialis*, which precedes images related to the Christian cult. This kind of image – more specifically, a portrait of an emperor – served as a deputy for the emperor himself. The image could preside over courts and administrative assemblies and could be venerated. Receiving the imperial image symbolised the legitimization of the recipient’s position.

Inspired by Ernst Kitzinger, Matej Gogola divides the *Křesťanské acheiropoietai v Byzancii* [*Christian acheiropoietoi in the Byzantine Empire*], p. 47–56, into 1) those that had the status of “not made by hands” according to the tradition (Image of Edessa, Shroud of Turin) and 2) those that were mediated by a person but still wield the same power, functioning as a sort of “print” of the archetype (the *Camouliana* as well as two other images which were created as a result of its effect, or the *Keramion*). Such images appear in sources from the second half of the 6th century onwards, but, as emphasized by the author, it is challenging to discover the exact reason behind their emergence. The phenomenon of an image possessing spiritual power was far from being a novelty, as already demonstrated in the previous chapters: in Hellenised areas, the above-mentioned *Diipetes* are relatively

well-documented. The author links this fact to the Byzantine social and spiritual atmosphere, significantly influenced by the state of permanent war and recurring natural disasters. The first source containing an account on the *acheiropoietoi* is the *Syriac Chronicle* by the so-called Pseudo-Zacharias, referring to the *Camouliana* (this topic is covered by the first subchapter of the third chapter). It does not mention the legend of Abgar, but the one of Hypatia of Camulia (in Cappadocia): a pagan woman who witnessed a revelation of Christ's face on a piece of cloth in a fountain. Hypatia took the cloth out of the water and wrapped it inside her own veil; subsequently, the face of Christ was imprinted onto the veil as well. There was another copy of the original image from the fountain in the possession of an unknown woman from Diobulion. Pseudo-Zacharias maintains that a procession with the image enabled the quick recovery of Diobulion after the village had been raided by barbarians in 553/554. The next subchapter focuses on eyewitness accounts, namely a report of Archdeacon Theodosius (520s or 530s) and of a pilgrim conventionally referred to as Antoninus Placentinus in the historiography (560s and 570s). Both of them saw an image of Christ's face imprinted on a column in Jerusalem, in the place where Christ had been flagellated. In addition, Antoninus also witnessed a shining image of Christ's face venerated in the city of Memphis. The next subchapter discusses reports from military operations, which naturally and regularly attract the focus of narrative sources. Thus, the monograph proceeds to analyse accounts of the images not made by human hands possessed by Maurice and Herakleios.

The fourth chapter, *Rukou-nestvorený obraz z Edessy – Mandylion z Edessy [The Image not Made by Human Hand – Mandylion of Edessa]*, p. 57–86, finally reaches the core topic – the Image of Edessa. This chapter highlights one of the very positive aspects of this monograph, namely the ample use of primary written sources. The Image is not to be traced in the oldest legends, since the first account only appears as late as in the 7th century, in the *Acta Thaddaei*. The sources that are the basis of this apocryphal text contain various versions of the Abgar legends.

The Bratislava scholar first discusses Abgar's letter to Christ (as well as Christ's reply) on the basis of the *Historia Ecclesiastica* by Eusebius. The story reflects a strong apostolic tradition, referring to Thaddeus's stay in Edessa. Abgar's letter to Christ (which Eusebius allegedly saw in Edessa) obtains its protective abilities and functions only at the moment of a crisis – when Edessa is under Persian siege – as late as in the *Itinerarium Egeriae* (a travel narrative by a female pilgrim, who claims to have seen the letter, or even two of them, in Edessa on her way to the Holy Land). These parts of the monograph provide the essential critical evaluation of the sources while examining their context and taking into account earlier texts that served as their models; the author also uses a comparative perspective, paying attention especially to the most significant fragments. The *Doctrina Addai* (*Syriac Acts of Apostle Thaddeus*) is the first source to supplement the older legend of Abgar with the image. Christ's and Abgar's exchange of letters is described similarly as in the account by Eusebius; in this case, however, the envoys return with a painted image of Christ, who was unable to travel to Edessa and treat Abgar's disease in person. Logically, the monograph pays due attention to the image, which fact is reflected in the space devoted and in the profundity of the analysis; a comparative approach is applied to the sources in the search for analogies as well as differences. The *Acta Thaddei* (early 7th – early 8th century) is the first source to refer to the image as having been made by Christ himself. The author (as well as the literature cited) considers Evagrius Scholasticus's report an interpolation from 787. In this version, Christ noticed the envoys' intention to have a picture of himself painted – thus, he made their task easier and dried his washed face with a piece of cloth, which preserved the imprint. The final part of this subchapter summarises the development of the image throughout the sources – from Abgar's letter to Christ as reported by Eusebius through the letter and image in the *Doctrina Addai* to the image not made by hands performing a miracle in the *Acta Thaddei*.

The following subsection, entitled *Zmienky o rukou nestvorenem obraze z Edessy počas*

obrazoboreckého obdobia [Accounts of the Image of Edessa not made by human hands during the period of Iconoclasm], p. 80–86, constitutes an excerpt from the more extensive treatment of Byzantine Iconoclasm in the dissertation. The image of Christ “made by his own hand” highlights the general importance of images with regard to the Christian cult and teachings as defined by John of Damascus, Andrew of Crete, a fictional letter to Leo III, Pope Gregory II or the anonymous author of the *Nouthesia gerontos*, among other sources.

The fifth chapter – *Od edesského obrazu k Mandylionu* [From the Image of Edessa to the Mandylion], p. 87–94 – revisits the terminological dispute concerning the term *mandylion*, already alluded to in the introduction. It addresses the oldest etymology of this term, going back to the Arabic *mandil* or Latin *mantelium*. The author explains how the semantics of these expressions gradually changed over the centuries; besides, he clarifies when the name was first used with reference to the image of Christ’s face (in *The Life of Paul the Younger of Mount Latros*). The author’s extensive comments outline the geography of the occurrences of the *mandylion* in art (in the form of mural paintings). Special attention is paid to a 10th century depiction of the Abgar legend and the Image of Edessa in the Monastery of Saint Catherine on Mount Sinai as well as to a commentary to the Genoese *Volto Santo*. The author explains the well-known scheme of semantic transformations of the relevant terms. The word *mandylion* acquired a more general meaning when it started to refer to specific iconographic depictions (Christ’s face on a piece of textile) and it is applied retrospectively – though incorrectly – to the *acheiropoiotos* of Edessa.

In the last regular chapter of the monograph, *Powest o obraze z Edessy z 10. Storočia* *Narratio de imagine Edessena ako kompilát prameňov* [The tale of the image of Edessa from the 10th century *Narratio de imagine edessena* as a compilation of sources], p. 95–110, the author reintroduces his textual and critical work while analysing the source previously ascribed to emperor Constantine Porphyrogenitus. He examines the most crucial issues of the analy-

sis, referring to academic authorities (Katanskij, Lipsius, Pokrovskij, Dobschütz, Illert); moreover, he comments on the issues of authorship, dating, manuscript versions and model texts. Since this source is the most complex and developed one, its narrative digressing into a number of accompanying subtopics, the author dedicates substantial space to its retelling; he also includes his own interpolations, confrontations and comments (p. 97–103). The *Narratio* is an extensive compilation of various versions of legends related to the Image of Edessa. It also contains a story of the creation of the *Keramion* and its subsequent historical development (*translatio*). Similarly, the monograph discusses the historical reality of the Image of Edessa, brought to Sainte-Chapelle in Paris after the Fourth Crusade (sold to Louis IX by Baldwin II in 1247). The image disappeared after 1793 in the midst of the turbulent times following the French revolution.

The chapter named *Exkurz* [Digression]: *Obliehanie Edessy v roku 544 podla Evagrija Scholastika* [The siege of Edessa in 544 as recorded by Evagrius Scholasticus], p. 111–115 follows; it contains the author’s views on the “virtually” oldest report about the Image of Edessa and its miraculous protective power, the *Historia Ecclesiastica* being – in the author’s opinion – an interpolation from 787. Eusebius’s account is confronted with information stemming from other writers, particularly Procopius of Caesarea.

In place of a conclusion, Matej Gogola offers a summarising chapter entitled – *Tradicia obrazu z Edessy a otázka jeho vzniku a pomenovania (namiesto záveru)* [Tradition of the image of Edessa and the question of its name and creation], where he again approaches the question of correct terminology relevant to the Image of Edessa (while explaining other, incorrect terms). He also analyses the roots of the Christian cult of images and conducts a chronological review of the evolution of the legends of King Abgar as well as of the creation of Christ’s *acheiropoiotos*.

The monograph contains several appendices, in particular – numerous depictions of *acheiropoiotos*, imperial images, images of the Theotokos, the *Volto Santo* with a geographical

and chronological identification as well as the Greek version of *Narratio de imagine Edessena* as edited by Ernst von Dobschütz (p. 119–136). As revealed by the author, he hesitated whether to append his own (non-critical) Slovak translation of the whole text, which he had prepared with the present publication in mind and which is at his disposal. In the end, he decided to publish the monograph excluding the translation, arguing that the source is actually rather unknown. This may be perceived as a slight error, as the source is now easily accessible to historians and the 17 pages of the Greek text are of no use for the majority of readers.

There are only rare stylistic and formal shortcomings to be found throughout the text and these can be easily ignored. For instance, the author confusingly refers to himself in the third person singular in two instances, but otherwise uses the first person plural; middle names of authors are sometimes only represented only by the initial (e.g., Richard A. Lipsius); originally Greek works are quoted in Latin, which is paradoxical, bearing in mind the predominantly Greek terminology in the text; in the case of sources named via consensus by histo-

rians (as for instance the *Historia Arcana*), the specification “so-called”, or similar, is lacking. Some parts would require more references (or rather, supplementing quotations), e.g., when the author mentions “an opinion of a group of historians,” or an “ongoing discourse” (while only quoting one participant in this discourse); this would also apply to specifying certain locations, etc. However, these minor imperfections are greatly outweighed by the meticulous analysis of written sources, thorough use of relevant literature and the resulting erudite but readable text; Matej Gogola formulates informed opinions on the particular questions concerning the Image of Edessa and its history. Therefore, the work presents a new and valuable addition to Byzantinological historiography in Slovakia and beyond.

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