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What kind of the icon did the members of the Committee for the Care of Russian Icon Painting (1901 – 1917) want? A vision of Russian icon painting in the „podlinnik” by Nikodim Kondakov.

The Committee for the Care of Russian Icon Painting founded by Tsar Nicolas II in 1901 set the goal to revive the Russian icon art. One of the main tasks of the Committee was to elaborate a „podlinnik”, a kind of illustrated textbook for the icon painters containing ready-made patterns for copying. The edition of a „podlinnik” was expected to become a remedy for the dissemination of alien, unorthodoxy iconographic patterns.

In order to elaborate a „podlinnik”, a special three-men subcommittee was established, which consisted of two famous Russian bizantynists – Nikodim Kondakov and Nikolai Pokrovsky – and Nikolai Sultanov, a popular architekt who designer buildings in the Byzantine-Russian style.

Already in the initial stage of the work of the Committee for the Care of Russian Icon Painting, disputes arose about the question, icon painting of what period should be considered as a model and worth presenting in the „podlinnik”. Many members of the Committee, among others Nikolai Pokrovsky and Dmitry Lihachov were opposed to the reproduction of late icons which were created with use of artistic means typical for West European painting (so-called „friez”) and postulated a wider inclusion of the Bizantine art in the „podlinnik”.

Others, such as N. Kondakov, were of the opinion, that the textbook should contain „good examples” of „friez”. Although primarily it was planned to publish several thematic volumes of the „podlinnik”, eventually only one, *Иконография Господа Бога и Спаса Нашего Иисуса Христа* (1905) was created. It was devoted to the iconography of Christ. This is a small brochure with the text of Kondakov on the history of Christological iconography to which a file with reproductions of icons printed on separate sheets was addend. In that published volume of the „podlinnik” most of the presented icons are Byzantine works from the 9th – 15th century and Russian icons from the 17th century, including many examples of „friez” (e. d. icons of Simon Ushakov and Prokopy Chirin).

The aim of this work was to prove that Nicholas II, who wanted to renew and reform the Russian Orthodox Church, consciously referred to the tradition of the Byzantine Empire and to the heyday of the Moscow State, desiring to create on that base an own religious imperial style. It will be to define the reasons of Russian state elites' dissatisfaction with the condition of icon painting in Russia in late nineteenth century, to study which intellectual environment the criticism came from, to present projects of Russian icon painting "remedy" made in that time and also to what extent the assumptions of these projects were realized. Research issues covered in this project do not have a separate monograph yet. The issue of Russian icon painting at the turn of nineteenth century, due to common conviction of its minor artistic quality, rarely is a subject of research papers. The exception are valuable works of Polish art historian Barbara Dąb-Kalinowska (*Między Bizancjum a Zachodem. Ikony rosyjskie XVII – XIX w.*) and Russian historian Oleg Tarasow (*Икона и благочестие. Очерки истории икононого дела в Императорской России*), but due to their general character they do not cover the details that are interesting for the author.