

The Battered Blade

October AS XLII (2007 CE)



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Letter from the Editor:

Where did September go? Were we too busy with school starting to notice the month *flying* by? Whatever the reason, October is now upon us, bringing cooler temperatures (she says with crossed fingers), lots of events, and the beginning of the holiday season.

Unchained Doom XX is fast approaching. All of the Shire's events are important, but Doom was the first event the group held some two decades ago, and this year (obviously) marks the 20th anniversary of An Dun Theine. It's going to require a good bit of work from everyone to make it be the bash it should be, so jump in and make it happen! If you want to help but don't know how (especially if you're one of the new people we're so truly happy to have), contact either Fearghus, the autocrat, at srobinson193@mchsi.com, or the feastcrat (that would be me) at glenheather@knology.net. Don't be shy! We'll be glad to find a way to put you to work!

YiS,
Ailleagan



Shire Schedule for October:

October 2: business meeting, 7:00 p.m. in room 126 at the UAH student center
October 4: fighter practice, 5:30 p.m. outside the Student Center
October 7: archery practice at the Robinson Range, 2:00 - 6:00 p.m.
October 9: project night, room 131 at the student center
October 11: fighter practice
October 16: class night - THL Theodosia is teaching embroidery, room 131
October 18: fighter practice
October 19 -21: **Unchained Doom XX**
October 23: dance, room 131
October 25: fighter practice
October 30: social, location TBD (not at UAH)

Announcements:

There is only one archery practice this month, and it's on Sunday, October 7, from 2:00 - 6:00 p.m. at the Robinson Range. If you need directions or other information, you can contact Lady Aoibheann at cerobinson@mchsi.com. Happy shooting!



Yeah, check out what happened to me at the September archery practice: I shot a gold! OK, so most of my arrows were all over the place, and I over-shot three of them, but I still got a gold! Huzzah!



Greetings Riders of Meridies,

Just a friendly reminder that the Northern Cavalry Practice will be held Saturday, October 27, in Mentone, Alabama. We have well-trained rentals available; for \$10 you get a horse for the day for any level of rider, from first-timers to the more experienced. If you are interested in attending the practice, please email me at logansilveraxe@gmail.com so I can make arrangements for the horses.

Our general schedule will be as follows:

- 8:30 - 9:00 a.m. -- safety and risk management class for new people
- 9:00 - 10:00 a.m. -- mounted authorizations (open field for others, or open field if no authorizations)
- 11:00 - noon -- open field
- noon - 1:00 p.m. -- lunch (Bring your own. If enough are interested, we can do a call-in order to Dessie's or Shorty's and send someone to pick it up. Bring cash, as neither place accepts checks or credit / debit cards.)
- 1:00 p.m. - 4:00 p.m. -- open field, with possible HMC and Jousting if enough authorized riders and equipment show up
- 4:00 p.m. - 5:00 p.m. -- Clean up the area, then return the horses to the barn
- 5:00 p.m. -- Dinner (usually Cracker Barrel or Ruby Tuesday's in Ft. Payne)

Hope to see you there,
Logan



While in the Animal Kingdom during her vacation at Disney World in Florida, Christine (Lady Aoibheann when she's in garb) had her picture taken with this excellent period-esque fresco of an archer.



The Ballad of Unchained Doom

*composed by Gaelan of Skye on the 28th day of October, A.S. XXV
reprinted from The Battered Blade, Vol II, No. 11, A.S. XXV*

(slow drum beat, chorus - softly "Doom-Doom Doom-Doom")

A Lone Fighter was resting
One dark and windy day
Storm clouds were a' threatening,
Lightning began to play.
When all at once he saw,
approaching through the gloom,
Nine grim and ghostly warriors.
'Twas the Legion of Doom.

(Chorus)

Doom List. Doom List.
What a fearful sight.
The Norseman and the Saxon
Circled for a fight.
As they passed him by
He heard the field marshal's cry,
"Salute the Crown, salute your lady, lay on!"
He could see the Saxon a'grinnin'

It looked like he was winnin'
But he knew before the finish they'd be gone.

(chorus-softly "Doom-doom doom-doom")

A bolt of fear went through him
As more fighters took the field.
A frank and an Englishman
All dressed in plate of steel.
A Briton and a Roman,
A Scot and a Norman, too
Joined in that Circle of Doom
Seven would fall before they were through.

(Chorus)

Doom List. Doom List.
What a fearful sight.
The Norseman and the Saxon
Circled for a fight.
As they passed him by
He heard the field marshal's cry,
"Salute the Crown, salute your lady, lay on!"
He could see the Saxon a'grinnin'
It looked like he was winnin'
But he knew before the finish they'd be gone.

(chorus-softly "Doom-doom doom-doom")

A Roman drew his gladius,
A short sword made of steel.
The Briton stood so close
his hot breath he could feel.
The Frank saluted the Norman
They had come here to die.
All joined in the fighter
As hail fell from the sky.

(Chorus)

Doom List. Doom List.
What a fearful sight.
The Norseman and the Saxon
Circled for a fight.
As they passed him by
He heard the field marshal's cry,

"Salute the Crown, salute your lady, lay on!"
He could see the Saxon a'grinnin'
It looked like he was winnin'
But he knew before the finish they'd be gone.

(chorus-softly "Doom-doom doom-doom")

As the warriors battled by him
The Mad Celt called his name.
If you want to save your soul from Hell
A'fightin' on this plain
Then fighter, change your ways today
Or soon, very soon,
You'll find yourself among us,
This legion of the Doomed.

(Chorus)

Doom List. Doom List.
What a fearful sight.
The Norseman and the Saxon
Circled for a fight.
As they passed him by
He heard the field marshal's cry,
"Salute the Crown, salute your lady, lay on!"
He could see the Saxon a'grinnin'
It looked like he was winnin'
But he knew before the finish they'd be gone.

(Chorus reprise)

Doom List. Doom List.
What a fearful sight.
The Norseman and the Saxon
Circled for a fight.
As they passed him by
He heard the field marshal's cry,
"Salute the Crown, salute your lady, lay on!"
He could see the Saxon a'grinnin'
It looked like he was winnin'
But he knew before the finish they'd be gone.

(chorus fade chant "Doom-doom doom-doom")

Ham Loaf

submitted by Lady Aoibheann

I heard that several people did not try the Hamloaf castles at Beggar's because they were called "Spamloaf". They did not have an ounce of Spam in them. Here is the recipe for ...

Hamloaf

2 cups ground beef or turkey
2 cups ground ham
1 cup soft bread crumbs (I use Italian flavored)
1 cup milk
1 egg
salt to taste

Combine all ingredients and mix well. Pat into a loaf pan (or as Matheus tried, a castle mold...). Bake, uncovered, at 350 degrees for 1 hour.

Variations: I sometimes put a layer of Swiss cheese in the middle of the loaf.

Glaze:

3 Tbsp of Sprite
1 cup brown sugar
1 tsp dry mustard
3 Tbsp water

Pour over the loaf and bake as directed.



Many, many thanks to Melissa (far left), who has brought activities to fighter practice to keep our kids entertained!

Russian Icon Class Notes

Submitted by Mistress Alys Wallace

The word "icon" derives from the Greek word "eikon" and means an image or representation, but "in the more restricted sense in which it is generally understood, it means a holy image to which special veneration is given". Even though the word "icon" applies to all kinds of religious images including those painted on wooden panels (called icons proper), on walls (called frescoes), those fashioned from small glass tesserae (known as mosaics) or carved in stone, metal or ivory - the most common icons are painted on wooden panels using tempera paint (which is pigment ground into a mixture of water and egg yolk). In the Eastern European Christian tradition, the subjects of icons can be portraits of Christ, his Mother, or the saints, but they can also be narratives about sacred events or even depictions of liturgical hymns. In Russia, these icons are so venerated that they are often "dressed up" in jewelry and decorative frames which are changed for different seasons and holidays.

The majority of the first Christian images appeared around the third century, though there were a few found in the Roman catacombs of the 1st and 2nd centuries. This could be an indication that for the first two hundred years of its existence, the new religion, probably affected by its Jewish roots and the Second Commandment, "Thou shall not make unto thee any graven images" (Exodus 20:4), objected to representational sacred art, particularly to any representation of the Deity. It should be pointed out that also in Exodus 26:1 and 25:22 are instructions for decorating things (like the Ark of the Covenant and embroidery) with artwork. This would seem to be a conflict in the Bible's stance on representing things from heaven.

When Christians finally turned to art to aid them in promoting the religion, they found many available examples in the earlier art of mystery religions and in the pagan art of the Roman Empire. Naturally, they incorporated various elements from a number of sources: from Hellenic art they borrowed gracefulness and clarity of composition; from Roman art they took the hierarchical placement of figures and symmetry of design; from Syrian art they took the dynamic movements and energy of the represented characters; and from Egyptian funeral portraits they borrowed large almond-shaped eyes, long and thin noses, and small mouths. By the time Christianity became the official religion of the Byzantine Empire in 313, iconography was developing rapidly and the basic compositional schemes were well established.

In 726, the Emperor Leo III and a group of overzealous "monothisits," who believed that Christ has only 1 side which is perfect and that man is imperfect and thus has no right to represent him in art. They argued that misinterpretation of religious images leads to heresy, banned all pictorial representations and began a systematic destruction of holy images. This was known as the period of iconoclasm. To fight the iconoclasts, the iconodules (the defenders or lovers of icons) had to find powerful spokesmen who would come up with convincing arguments to prove that icons were not worshipped but venerated and that such veneration was not idolatry. The iconodules based their defense of icons on the Doctrine of the Incarnation and on the Dogma of the Two Natures of Christ. St. John of Damascus (675-749) and St. Theodore of Studios (759-826) wrote extensive treatises explaining the reasons for and the importance of icon veneration. The Empress Irene suspended the iconoclastic persecutions in 780. Seven years later the Seventh Ecumenical Synod in Nicaea

reaffirmed the veneration of icons. The battle wasn't over though, the attacks on icons were renewed by Leo the Armenian in 815. And it was only in 843, during the reign of the Empress Theodora, that the iconoclasts were defeated for good. The day of their defeat is celebrated each year on the first Sunday after Lent as Triumph of Orthodoxy.

After the dispute on the religious meaning and functions of icons within the Christian church that occurred during the 8th - 9th centuries between the followers of iconoclasm and their opponents, the Eastern Orthodox Church formulated its theological position on the use of images as spiritual tools allowing the faithful to commune directly with God. Strict rules according to which icons should be painted were established.

In 988 Prince Vladimir I of Kiev converted to the Orthodox Christian faith and introduced the Christian faith as the official religion of Russia. Church services in Kiev closely followed the Byzantine norms and many icons and religious furnishings were brought back, from Byzantium, for Kiev's growing number of sanctuaries. Although the first icons in Kiev were imported, Byzantine artists were soon lured north to Kiev to work and teach their craft there. The earliest icons actually painted in Russia closely followed Byzantine models.

The faith of the Church in the reality beyond this world, that is, in the truth of the spiritual world, defined from the beginning the content and character of icon painting. The Church was primarily interested in the beauty of the spiritual world and, with all the means it possessed, it tried to interpret that world. The Church's transcendental content was not the physically beautiful or the naturally good; for this reason it did not try to depict natural good and beauty. The purpose and the ideal of Byzantine icon painting was the expression of holiness, they were not made to appeal to the senses by being physically beautiful. In Christian Orthodox art the beautiful is not determined by the natural form of the objects, but by its sublime content, meaning, by its power to serve the ideals of the faith. You might think of them as focus items. According to St. John Chrysostom, "Thus, we say that each vessel, animal, and plant is good, not because of its form or color, but because of the service it renders." Byzantine icon painting did not copy nature. Rather by technical and artistic elements it tried to allow believers to become familiar with the spirit of the icon. Through exceptional abstraction, icons depict the more inspiring meanings of Orthodoxy.

These basic ideas of Orthodox icon painting are the main obstacles to our appreciation of icons. When we look at icons, we are struck by their apparent simplicity, by their overemphasized flatness, unreal colors, lack of perspective, and strange proportions. As we are realizing this, we should stop and remind ourselves that we are expecting of icon paintings the same factors that allow us to enjoy the works of the Italian masters of the Renaissance. We're conditioned by the art of the Renaissance and later periods to appreciate the architectural details rendered in mathematical linear perspective, to admire the beauty of the human body, the lush landscapes stretching far towards the horizon, and the still lifes with lights, shadows, and three-dimensional shapes so real that we can almost pick a glass from a table or an apple from a platter. In a word, we are used to seeing on the surface of a canvas or panel something familiar, easily recognizable, something which we can adequately analyze by using familiar categories of perspective, color scheme, point of view, light and shadow, and volume. Unfortunately, these do not apply to icon painting because, in contrast to the art of later periods, icon painting is not illusionistic, that is, it does not try to convince the viewer that the world depicted on the panel is real. On the contrary, tries

to make sure by all the means it possesses, that the represented is unreal, idealistic, and dematerialized. Icons are images intended to aid in contemplative prayer, and in that sense they're more concerned with conveying meditative harmony than with laying out a realistic scene.

Rather than sizing up the figure in an icon negatively by judging its distortion level, look instead at the way the lines that compose the figure are arranged and balanced, the way they move your eye around. If you get the sense that the figures are a little haunting, that's good. They weren't painted to be charming but to inspire reflection and self-examination.

In looking more closely at icon painting, it first strikes us by the frontality of the figures. The figures face outward bringing the figures in direct relationship with the viewer and giving the fullest expression to the faces.

The faces of the saints have large, almond-shaped eyes, enlarged ears, long thin noses, and small mouths. Icon painters attempt to indicate that each sensory organ, having received the *Divine Grace*, was sacred and had ceased to be the usual sensory organ of a biological man.

Icon painting deliberately disregards the principle of natural perspective in order to avoid the illusion of three-dimensionality. Instead, it gives the impression of complete flatness and the lack of perspective. Since icon painting is not realistic, it shows no natural source of light and does not represent shadows. The only light in icons is the inner light of sacred figures and the divine light of Christ.

Icon painting has the ability to represent several moments of the same action (story) on one panel. For example, in a scene of the Nativity we would see not only the birth itself, but also the arrival of the Magi, the shepherds spreading the good news, Joseph being tempted by the devil, and even the servant women washing the baby. Scholars call this the "continuous style."

Now lets take a closer look at some icons and then we will talk about the different schools:



The Virgin Orans Great Panagia (1114)

This image of the All-Holy Virgin in Orans pose, which means with hands reaching upwards, copies the common iconographical type of the Virgin found in many Eastern Orthodox churches in the apse of the sanctuary, where it symbolically relates to her position as an intercessor between people and Christ. This icon, also called The Kiev Panagia is a splendid example of the early period of Russian icon painting. The icon is originally from Constantinople and is strongly influenced by the Byzantine art of the period, particularly in the solemn and static posture, in the folds of the garments, and in the pensive look on the Virgin's face. The composition is extremely balanced, it's almost symmetrical. On either side of the Virgin's head are two archangels who seem to be looking over her and perhaps expressing astonishment at the great miracle of Christ's birth. Christ is shown in a roundel around the Virgin's chest to indicate symbolically that he is in her. Notice how the hands of Christ are stretched out in blessing and connect to the hands of the Virgin. The roundels with the archangels, the halo of the Virgin, and the roundel containing the image of Christ form a triangle, and this triangular shape, "framed" by the position of the Virgin's hands and a particularly deep crease in the folds of her garment, pushes the Virgin's body down and anchors it firmly to the decorative red ground. The mantle falls down at an angle which counteracts the downward push of the triangle and balances the composition. The folds of the drapery define her body, but they seem to disconnect her from her feet. The gold background helps to accentuate the red of the ground and the browns and blues of the cloak.



The Virgin Eleousa of Vladimir (12th c.)

This icon, called the Virgin of Vladimir, is possibly the most famous icon of Russia. It is however, not a Russian icon, but rather a gift brought from Constantinople to Russia in 1131. Prince Andrei Bogoliubskii moved the icon from Kiev to the city of Vladimir in 1155. In 1395 the icon was permanently transferred to Moscow; amazingly, the transfer took place on the same day as the withdrawal of Khan Tokhtamysh's forces besieging Moscow. From the very beginning the icon was considered a work of such an outstanding quality and power that it was constantly copied, producing numerous variations on the theme. The composition is known as the Virgin Eleousa meaning of Tenderness. The Virgin holds the Child in her right arm and points at him with her left hand, while the Child puts his left arm around the Virgin's neck and presses his cheek against hers. Although the gestures indicate a close relationship, the Virgin's face does not so much express maternal affection as it does slight melancholy, as if she were foreseeing the death of her son, prefiguring in this respect a later, related icon type in which the implements of Christ's Passion were added. The almond-shaped eyes, the narrow, elegantly drawn nose, the dark olive green shadows in the face ... all these features have a dematerializing effect, stressing the Divine.



St. Nicholas the Miracleworker (12th-13th c.)

The third icon among our examples, St. Nicholas the Miracle worker, with Scenes from His Life, also comes from Sinai, but it is a later work, from the end of the twelfth or the first half of the thirteenth century. The saint is an amalgamation of two St. Nicholases, a bishop of the fourth century and a pious monk of the sixth. By the twelfth century St. Nicholas has become one of the most beloved and popular saints, not only in the Byzantine Empire but in Russia and the West. He was considered the patron of sailors, seamen, and fishermen, scholars, students and teachers, merchants, traders, marriageable maidens, bankers, and even robbers and thieves. This hagiographical (which means biographical) icons of the saint presents his bust in the middle and a selection of episodes from his life and from his posthumous miracles around the border. The icon includes 16 episodes, from his birth to his death. The monumental (which in icon terms means basically a close up of the figure) character of the central panel is softened by an addition of interesting decorative details. The hair and the beard of the saint are fancifully outlined by flowing white curls and the crosses on the saint's omophorion (that's the little stole around his shoulders) show intricate design. Next to Nicholas' head are two small figures: on the left Christ with a Gospel book, and on the right the Virgin with an omophorion. These two figures allude to the story of the saint's presence at the First Ecumenical Synod in Nicaea in 325. According to the story, Nicholas, angered by the heretic Arius's blasphemous words against the Holy Trinity, slapped him in the face. For this, he was put in prison and his bishop's attributes, the Gospel Book and the omophorion, were taken from him. However, at night, Christ and the Virgin appeared in his prison cell and returned the Gospel book and the omophorion to him, forcing Emperor Constantine to free the saint and reinstate him as a bishop. In Russia, St. Nicholas became the most popular saint of all, depicted in literally thousands of icons, ranging from simple busts to very elaborate hagiographical icons with more than forty border scenes. Since so little is known about St. Nicholas first hand. These icons become a valuable teaching tool about his life.

Let's talk a little about the schools:

Kiev (The Virgin Orans Great Panagia)

This school was active from the end of the 10th century, the time of Christianization of Russia, until Kiev was sacked and burned by the Mongols in 1240. And even though there might have been some icon painting in Kiev after the fall of the capital, the center of icon painting had really moved to the north, to Novgorod and Pskov. If you assume a purely chronological approach then the earliest Russian icons, no matter in what city they were created, should be attributed to the Kievan School. Most Kievan School icons were painted in darker, more somber tones and were often large in dimensions because they were hand hewn with an axe from a large piece of wood.



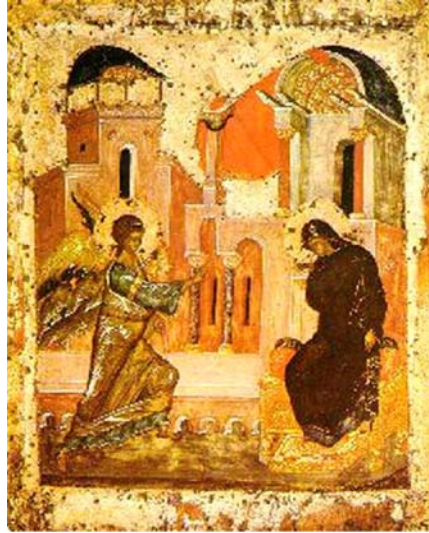
Novgorod (Angel "With the Golden Hair")

In the 13th, 14th and 15th centuries, Novgorod produced some of the greatest works of medieval Russian art. Icons represent Novgorodian art better than any other artistic genre. Their style, which developed through the centuries, was probably based not only on "imported" Byzantine examples but on the existing tradition of popular folk art. Early icons reflect the spiritual strength and beauty of man. They are simple, terse and precise. The compositions are based on contrast between large shapes, the colors are saturated and bright, and the drawings are energetic. In the 12th and 13th centuries the emphasis is put on contrasting colors and simplicity of the image. The late 13th and early 14th century feature a change in style and the introduction of more monumental, flat, graphic qualities together with relative depth of form. The dominant colors are cinnabar, white, ochre, brown and green. The period that follows marks another stylistic change: the 15th-century palette becomes remarkably lighter and the compositions are more dynamic and mobile. At the end of the 15th century Novgorodian art begins to decline as a result of Moscow's political dominance.



Pskov (The Virgin from the Deesis Row)

The Pskov school icons of the 14th and 15th centuries, display less sophistication and artistry in execution than those of Novgorod, but they show a greater degree of poetic inspiration. Pskov icons have their own, particular style. They show a somber, but intense emotionalism. From Novgorod the painters borrowed certain favorite topics and learned the use of strong outlines to increase the graphic quality of their work. The earliest Pskov icons were monumental. The painters skillfully used intense colors (different from the toned-down colors of Kievan School) and created compositions with a strong rhythmic quality, often sacrificing the elegance of proportions for the dynamics of action.



Moscow (Annunciation)

While the Novgorod and Pskov schools reached their peaks in icon painting between the fourteenth and sixteenth centuries, Moscow's development continued and reached its greatest achievements in the sixteenth century. One important development was the change from the severe, harsh portrayal (a residual effect of the Turkish occupation) found in the Byzantine models, to more gentle, compassionate-looking ones. This move towards a gentler and softer style of painting, which puts more emphasis on blending of warm colors than on sharp outlines, is a characteristic of the Moscow school in particular, and the art of Russia in general. The Moscow school of icon painting can be characterized by several common features: increased complexity in compositions and theological symbols; more tender representations of Christ and the saints; considerable elongation of figures and warm, saturated colors and more variation in their selection, including the introduction of pastels.

Modern Day:

Icon painting in Russia has followed strict traditional canons. Icon painters maintained and continue to maintain and closely guard extensive pattern books from which they copy their icons. As a consequence, icons can be so like one another that at times it is almost impossible to distinguish between them. This is why icons representing the same subject, although they were painted centuries apart, can be so similar.



As you can see from this picture taken outside the American Embassy in Moscow, after the events of September 11th, icons are still very much in use in Russia today. Notice how the modern icon closely resembles the icon from the 12th century?

We are lucky to have an Iconographer living and working in Huntsville. His name is Elias Katsaros. His work and some very informative historical information can be found at his web site of www.byzantine-iconography.com. Mr. Katsaros is one of about 8 Iconographers still creating icons for the world, today. Though he mainly produces large icons for the walls of churches, you can find some of his smaller works for sale at the Greek Orthodox Church gift shop in Huntsville.

Should you decide to purchase a new or antique icon, there are a few basic points to keep in mind. The value of an icon depends only partially on it's age. Equally important is the material of which an icon is made, the quality of workmanship, and its overall condition. You should take into consideration the design, color range and aesthetic effect of the icon. The most valuable icons are, without exception, those painted on wood panels following traditional, aesthetic and proscribed requirements. Mechanically produced icons are generally of inferior quality, regardless of their sometimes valuable metallic coverings. When purchasing an antique icon, soliciting the aid of an expert in the field can be extremely beneficial.

