



3041. Virgin of the Don (Donskaya)
Russian, probably Moscow, ca. 1700
Panel: 31 x 26 cm with silver *basma* (applied silver in thin strips.)
Condition: Good
Provenance: private collection, London

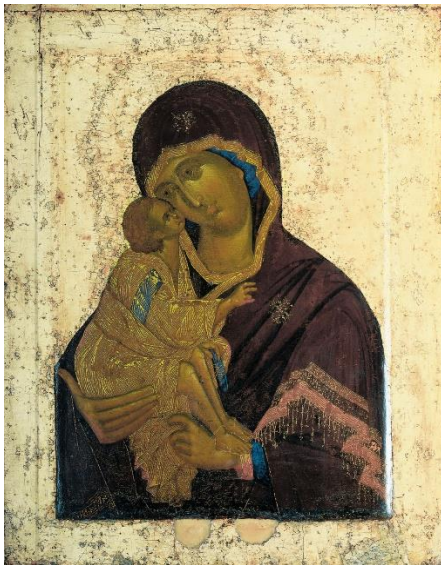
The icon derives from the famous Donskaya icon presented by the Don Cossacks to the Prince of Muscovy, Dimitry Ioannovitch (Dimitry of the Don) on the eve of the Battle of Kulikovo in 1380. Prince Dimitry's subsequent victory over the Tartars has ever since been regarded as a miracle caused by the Donskaya icon.

The original hung for many centuries in the Annunciation Cathedral in the Moscow Kremlin and today can be seen in the Tretyakov Gallery. The icon has been the subject of countless eulogies and 'many legends recorded in epics, chronicles and tales'. The Russian historian N. B. Salko, in *The Illustrious Relic of the Kulikovo Battle* (Aurora Publications, Leningrad, 1978), writes as follows.

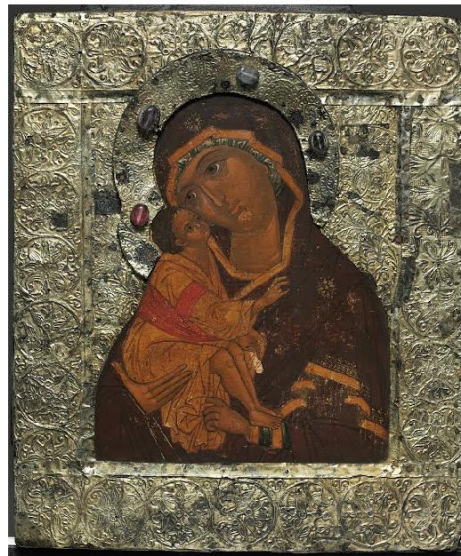
The Virgin of the Don was regarded as the palladium of Russia and Moscow against Tartar invasion. Artists of many generations belonging to the Moscow School of Icon Painting invariably turned to the famous original whenever storm clouds appeared on the horizon. They made new variants of the icon which reminded the people of the significant victory at Kulikovo field. Naturally, each time a painter chose a composition of his own, although based on the accepted iconography, and the new copy bore the stamp of the time. Not infrequently the new variants of the icon coincided with new works of literature devoted to the Virgin of the Don. These were epics, chronicles, tales and sermons connected with certain historical events - invasions or victories. In 1491-93 the monastery of the Virgin of the Don was built in an area of Moscow which was the scene of a battle against the Crimean Khan Khazy Ghirei. After that the veneration of the icon was established.

The present example dates from the end of the 17th or the beginning of the 18th century. Among the comparisons reproduced in Salko's monograph, no. IX, Virgin of the Don, located in the Shchusev Museum of Architecture, Moscow (now rehabilitated as the Donskoi Monastery) is the closest to the present example.

Comparisons



Donskaya. 14th c. Tretyakov Gallery, Moscow.
Attributed to Theophanes the Greek



Donskaya, The Icon Museum and Study Centre.
Clinton, Massachusetts