



# **RUSSIAN ICONS OF SAINT MARON IN FINLAND**

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(Editor)

**The Maronite Research Institute (MARI)**  
and  
**The Monastery of the Transfiguration of Christ New Valamo in Finland**

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and  
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## I. Preface

*By Guita Hourani<sup>1</sup>*

This monograph introduces the Miraculous Icon of Saint Maron and other icons of the saint found in Finland. This miraculous icon had been part of the collection of the Monastery of Valaam, on the Island of Lake Ladoga, located across from the city of Saint Petersburg in Russia. Later, its monks, and what has survived of their religious cultural material, were relocated to a monastery which became known as New Valaam or Valamo, in Finland.

This monograph is part of a project that encompasses two other monographs: one on Saint Maron's Church in Russia, and the other on the relationship between the Maronites and the island of Malta. Research for these three monographs was to be completed between 2001 and 2002 and published by MARI in 2003. Regrettably, the attacks of September 11 and the subsequent world events affected this project and delayed research. Individuals selected to conduct these different research projects were understandably troubled by the unfortunate events. As a consequence, I was forced to travel to Finland, Russia and Malta myself and to undertake the research to the extent possible.

In 2002 while in Russia conducting research on St. Maron's Church in Moscow, I flew to St. Petersburg in an attempt to visit the island of Valaam. Unfortunately, adverse weather conditions were such that no tourists were visiting the island; the only way to visit would have been to charter a private plane, which was neither financially feasible nor according to common sense.

It is my am privilege to put in the hands of our readers this humble effort to introduce and make public these icons of Saint Maron in Finland. I hope that this monograph will inspire those who are experts in the field of iconographic studies to examine these icons and shed additional light on their origin, meaning, style, and history.

The Maronite Research Institute (MARI) and the Monastery of the Transfiguration of Christ New Valamo are grateful to the Koch Foundation of Florida in the United States of America and Mr. Nero Kalil of Our Lady of Lebanon in Johannesburg, South Africa, for contributing matching funds, which were indispensable in carrying out the research for this monograph, and without which it would not have seen light.

Gratitude is also due Hegumen Sergey who leads the brotherhood of the Monastery of the Transfiguration of Christ New Valamo, and whose openness and cooperation allowed this

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<sup>1</sup> Founder and Chair of the Maronite Research Institute (MARI), Washington, D.C., USA and owner of the largest photo and icon image collection on Saint Maron.



collaboration to materialize. I am much obliged to all the members of the brotherhood, and the staff of the monastery, for their warm reception and cooperation.

Too, I am appreciative of the contribution of Archmandrite Arseni, especially for sharing with me the other two icons of Saint Maron and for his short notes on each one; Ms. Helena Nikkanen for providing me with information on the restoration of the Miraculous Icon of Saint Maron; and Brother Seraphim of Valamo for his support and friendship.

My gratitude to Paula Genis of Washington, D.C. for facilitating the initial contacts with the monastery in Valamo, Fr. Seraphim of Valamo for his support and scholarship, Ms. Nina Kruger of Valamo for initial translation of the inscriptions of the icon of Saint Maron. Special thanks go to Fr. Youhanna Sader for his guidance and comments on an earlier draft of it, and Dr. Nada Helou, professor at the Lebanese university for her remarks. I also thank Mother Elizabeth and Sister Azar, of the Mother of Light Benedictine Monastery in Harissa, Lebanon and Jacky Ascott, iconographer of the Maronite Bishopric of Cyprus, for their encouragement. Much appreciation is due to Dr. George Abdelnour for copy editing an earlier draft and to Mr. Stephen Parker for copy editing this final version.

I am most obliged for Mr. Ghadi Boustani, a Lebanese who lives in Helsinki, without whom we would not have known of the existence of the miraculous icon of Saint Maron in Valamo. While on a business trip to the Monastery, Mr.

Boustani became aware of the icon and made this knowledge available to the Maronites through a videotape which was aired in Lebanon in the mid- 1990s.

My sincere appreciation goes to the Koch Foundation, Florida, USA, and to Mr. Nero Kalil of Our Lady of Lebanon, Johannesburg, South Africa, for their contribution to the funding of this project.



**Figure 1. Hugemen Sergei, Head of the Valamo Monastery, Finland**



To *all* those who were instrumental, directly or indirectly, in assisting me to complete this monograph, I wish to express my gratitude.

Finally, responsibility for the content of this study remains entirely mine.



## II. Placing Saint Maron's icons in the historical context of the old Valaam and new Valamo Monasteries

By Guita G. Hourani

### *The Dawn of Christianity in Russia*

It is believed that Christianity began to expand in Russia when "Patriarch Photios intensified the missionary work in the 860s A.D and when Vladimir prince of Kiev was converted to Christianity and made it his state's religion."<sup>2</sup> Consequently, a bishopric was founded "in Novgorod about 990 A.D. and its first incumbents were Greek monks, who brought to northern Russia Greek priests and monks for missionary and artistic work."<sup>3</sup> In 1037 Prince Yaroslav of Novgorod ordered "the building of churches in all the towns and centers of habitation and for priests to be sent everywhere to preach and teach the people. This also meant intensification of the missionary work among tribes of Finnish origin within the sphere of influence of Novgorod."<sup>4</sup>

The Valaam Archipelago was destined to play an important role in the founding of monasteries and in endowing Russia with many of its saints. It would become the northern Mt. Athos, and the spiritual center of Russian Orthodoxy.<sup>5</sup>

### *The Old Monastery of Valaam*

The Valaam Archipelago is a group of islands located in the northwestern part of Ladoga Lake. The archipelago took the name of its largest island, Valaam. (See photo). The archipelago covers an area of approximately 36 sq. km and consists of 50 islands, the largest, Valaam, being 27.8 sq. km. The archipelago is 227 km off the shore of St. Petersburg, and being isolated from the rest of the world, is a haven for those seeking seclusion and a life of solitude and prayer.<sup>6</sup>

The original date and founder(s) of the Valaam Monastery is not certain. It is thought, however, that "Saint Andrew the First-Called, the apostle of Christ who is believed to have brought Christianity to the Slavs and the Scythians, visited the island. According to belief, he demolished the pagan shrines of local tribes and erected a cross on one of the cliffs."<sup>7</sup> However, according to oral tradition which was recorded early in the nineteenth century, effective Christianization did not take place until the tenth century when a Greek monk,

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<sup>2</sup> Valamo and its Message 1983: 25.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.* p. 26.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.* p. 26.

<sup>5</sup> *Valaam*, brochure, Publishing House of the Valaam Monastery, Russia, 2001, n.p.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*



later known as Saint Sergius, arrived in Valaam and began to preach the Gospel to the Karelian inhabitants and to live as a hermit.<sup>8</sup> The Karelian convert Herman later succeeded him. Afterward both Sergius and Herman were considered founders of Valaam and were called Valaam Miracle-Workers, and eventually venerated. Their icon was painted as early as 1160 and in the sixteenth century they were proclaimed saints of the whole Russian Church.<sup>9</sup>

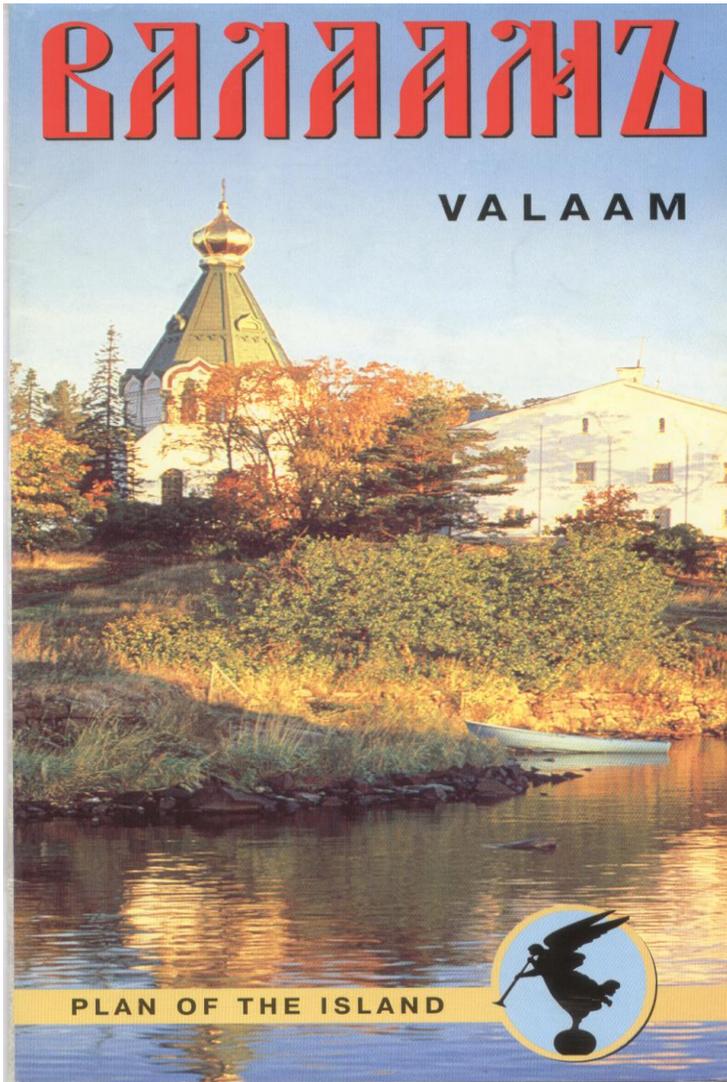


Figure 2. Monastery in the Valaam Island, Valaam, Russia

The date of the founding of Valaam Monastery, then, is not truly known. However, placing its origin in the middle of the twelfth century fits with the broader historical context of the period: “The rivalry between Sweden and Novgorod over Finland was becoming more animated and the missionary work from both sides was expanding. Sweden is believed to have made its first crusade into Finland in 1133 and strengthened its power in Finland proper. It was natural that Novgorod tried to strengthen its sphere of influence in Karelia and to make its missionary work among the Karelians more effective. The monasteries were the best bases for missionary work, and these were arising in various parts of Russia. The founding of Valamo around the middle of the twelfth century is historically consistent.”<sup>10</sup>

Valaam Monastery became the center for Christian missionary

work and church culture in Ladoga Karelia, with a Byzantine tradition of ascetic discipline, chant and art. However, as Russia began to form its own national religious and artistic

<sup>8</sup> Valamo and its Message 1983: 26.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.* p. 27

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.* p. 27.



identity and acquire Slavic traits, Valaam as well began to be influenced by Karelian and Slavic traditions.<sup>11</sup>

The monastery and its monks played an important role in spreading the Gospel to the different parts of Karelia. Consequently, Valaam “became a highly esteemed center of Christian life, with a reputation that spread far into Russia and the Baltic.”<sup>12</sup>

The monastery flourished with pious monks who founded most of the monasteries in northern Russia, and some of whom were later venerated as saints.<sup>13</sup> The monastery suffered great calamities throughout the centuries, from war, fires, and epidemics to political unrest. During what is known as the Long Hatred, the Swedish and Finnish troops launched attacks on the Valaam lands and in 1581, following a massacre of monks and laymen, the remnants of the brotherhood fled to Russia. When peace was restored the monks returned and “with funds granted by the Tsar the monastery was rebuilt.”<sup>14</sup>

In 1611 the monastery and all that belonged to it was destroyed or looted when the Swedish-Finnish troops again attacked and razed Valaam. Only the holy relics of the founders of the monastery and some books and portable items were carried out by monks and saved.<sup>15</sup>

The monks had to wait about one hundred years, until 1711, when Peter the Great occupied Ladoga Karelia, to return to their homeland. The rebuilding of the monastery began in 1716 upon the orders of the Tsar. However, its revival as a spiritual center would not take place until after the peace treaty of Uusikaupunki (Nystad) which was concluded in 1721.<sup>16</sup> A fire burned down the monastery and all its buildings in 1754, and the rebuilding process had to be started again. However, the spiritual renewal and the stability of the inner life of the brotherhood would see a renewal in 1781 upon the appointment of Abbot Nazary as head of the monastery. Starting with his abbotship, a long period of internal revival and stabilization began at Valaam.... During his time, and that of his successor, Innokenty (1801-1823), an extensive building project was carried out at the monastery and the number of those pursuing religious vocations began to grow.<sup>17</sup>

In 1812, “Valamo monastery became officially part of Finland when Karelia was joined to it. The eighteenth-century Swedish constitution that was then in force in Finland did not even

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<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.* p. 29

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.* p. 29

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.* pp. 5, 29

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.* p. 32

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.* p. 32

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.* p. 32

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.* p. 35



give monasteries the right to exist. According to a decree of the Diet in 1779, and a royal proclamation made two years later, people of foreign faith (which included the Orthodox) could not establish monasteries nor have monastic communities in the kingdom.” However, “the monasteries which were already in existence were tolerated.”<sup>18</sup>

After the Northern War at the beginning of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, the cloister was revived and by the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century it had become one of the richest and most famous monasteries in Russia. Most of the buildings still standing at Valaam were erected during the 19<sup>th</sup> century by the Superior of the monastery, Hegumen Damaskin.<sup>19</sup>

Valaam Monastery had its own icon-painting atelier dating back to the beginning of the nineteenth century. The atelier was opened to icon painters from outside. Famous iconographers such as V. M. Peshekhonov from St. Petersburg, who worked at the monastery as an invited master, and produced icons for several churches of the island.<sup>20</sup>

In 1843, a regular boat service to the island was started. This attracted many Russian artists and students, particularly from the St. Petersburg Art Academy, to explore the beauty of the Valaam islands and the peace and serenity to be found there. Visitors began to spend their summers painting the island: its nature, inhabitants and monasteries. Abbot Damaskin, “who was the Hegumen at the time, was favorably disposed towards these artists and students, so he gave them the use of a separate building. The artists, grateful for the friendly reception, presented their paintings to the Abbot....”<sup>21</sup>

Throughout the modern existence of the monastery writers, poets and painters visited the island. St. Bishop Ignaty Bryanchaninov, the great ascetic and spiritual writer, visited the island, as did writers and poets. Painters such as F. Vasiliyev, I. Shishkin, A. Kuindzhi, M. Klodt, A. Guine, P. Dzhogin, N. Roerich, P. Balashov, I. Davydov, K. Protopopov, L. Serebryakov, V. Sokolov, P. Borel and A. Gornostaev immortalized Valaam and its monasteries in their paintings and drawings. Valaam and its islands also inspired Finnish artists, the best known being T. Sallinen, G. Auer, J. Roukokoski, M. Wedelin and G. Von Swetlik.<sup>22</sup>

After the revolution of 1917, Valaam became part of the newly-founded and independent Finland. During the Winter War of 1939-1940, the monastic activities ceased at Valaam and the residents of the island, both lay and clergy were relocated to present-day Finland.<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.* p. 37

<sup>19</sup> *Valaam* 2001: n.p.

<sup>20</sup> *Valamo and its Message* 1983: 196, 201.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.* p. 195

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.* p. 196.

<sup>23</sup> *Valamo and its Message* 1983: 5.



The brethren took with them “many of the precious things: the archives, the library, icons, and service plate.”<sup>24</sup> They founded in Finland a new monastery on the estate of Papinniemi, 100 kilometers from Kuopio, which became known as New Valamo.<sup>25</sup>

It seems that the Miraculous Icon of Saint Maron was among the icons that the brethren took with them to Finland.

During the Soviet era, the monastery buildings in Valaam were made into a naval school and later a home for the disabled.<sup>26</sup> The brotherhood returned to Valaam on December 13, 1989, on the Feast of the Apostle St Andrew the First-Called. In 1991, the monastery was granted stauropegial status, meaning it would be under the direct control of the Patriarch. From then on its Father Superior and Hiero-Archimandrite would be His Holiness Patriarch of Moscow and All Russia.<sup>27</sup>

At present, there are over a hundred monks and novices living in the monasteries of Valaam; coenobitic, cloister and hermitic life is being preserved, and buildings restored.<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> *The Stauropegion Valaam Monastery of the Transfiguration of the Savior*, n.d.: n.p.

<sup>25</sup> *Valaam* 2001: n.p.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*



### III. Veneration of Saint Maron in the Russian Orthodox Church and the icons of saint Maron in Finland

*By Archimandrite Arseni of Valamo<sup>29</sup> and Guita Hourani*

The Russian Orthodox Church venerates the memory of Saint Maron on the 14th of February in the old calendar and the 27<sup>th</sup> in the new one. Dimitry, the Holy bishop of Rostov<sup>30</sup> wrote a 12-volume series on the lives of the Saints. The following short hagiography of Saint Maron is to be found in the February volume:

*"Saint Maron chose as his way of asceticism the hermit's unsheltered life. In that purpose he climbed a heathen-revered mountain and found there a forsaken temple. This he sanctified to God. He inhabited the temple at first, but later on he built himself a small hut of wooden sticks and dry branches.*

*Although ailing himself, he helped other people with illnesses and complaints and many such came to see him. Soon the holy man gained reputation for healing fevers, ague and many other ailments with sheer prayer. Moreover, he was blessed with the gift to banish evil spirits.*

*The Saint founded a number of monasteries and quite a few monks fasted in them, reaching out for God's redemption. Thus, through his hearty asceticism, Saint Maron healed the human body and the soul simultaneously. Having suffered from many kinds of diseases, the Saint, after a short illness left his life in God's hands. This happened in the 4th century. Among his pupils were Jacob [James] the Hermit<sup>31</sup> (Nov 26th), Limaeus<sup>32</sup> (Feb 22nd) and Domnina<sup>33</sup> (Mar 1st)."<sup>34</sup>*

Saint Maron was revered in Russia especially as a healer, to whom prayers were said for those with fevers and ague. The industrial revolution in Russia of the 1870's was followed

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<sup>29</sup> Archmandrite Arseni is a monk in the Monastery of Valamo and is the most knowledgeable about St. Maron's icons in Finland.

<sup>30</sup> Saint Dimitrii, Metropolitan of Rostov, arrived at the Rostov cathedral in 1702, and first of all visited the monastery of Sainted Jakov, Bishop of Rostov (Comm. 27 November and 23 May). At the cathedral church in honor of the Conception of the Most Holy Mother of God he celebrated liturgy, after which before all those present in the temple he pointed out on the right side the place of his future burial with the words: "Behold my repose, here settle I for eternity". Dimitrii died on 28 October 1709.

<sup>31</sup> The [Monk James the Hermit](#) was a disciple of Saint Maron and is commemorated on November 26 in the Orthodox Church.

<sup>32</sup>The [Monk Limnaeus](#) was a disciple of Saint Maron and is commemorated on February 22<sup>nd</sup> in the Orthodox Church.

<sup>33</sup> The [Virgin Domnina of Syria](#) was a disciple of Saint Maron and is commemorated on March 1 in the Orthodox Church.

<sup>34</sup> Itiya Sviatyh 1905, 288-289



by the rapid increase in the number of city inhabitants. The horribly tight-crammed living conditions and failing, practically non-existent sanitary conditions in the workers' suburbs and temporary dwellings brought about epidemics of cholera, for example. It is most likely that under such circumstances people turned to Saint Maron and other healer-saints, for these helped, healed and cured poor people entirely free of charge. In Valamo it was believed that Saint Maron could be of help, not only in fevers, but in toothache as well.<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>35</sup> Verbal report from Eero Lahtinen, Ph.D. on January 27th 2002. He said he had heard from Priest Monk Antoni in the 1970's that in Valamo it was held Saint Maron heals toothaches. More often, though, Saint Antipas was the one to turn to with that complaint.



#### IV. Saint Maron's miraculous icon of the new Valamo monastery

##### A. The Icon

*By Guita Hourani and Archimandrite Arseni of Valamo*

**Name:** N°1 Saint Maron Miraculous Icon of Valamo

**Holy (Divine) Saint Maron<sup>36</sup>**

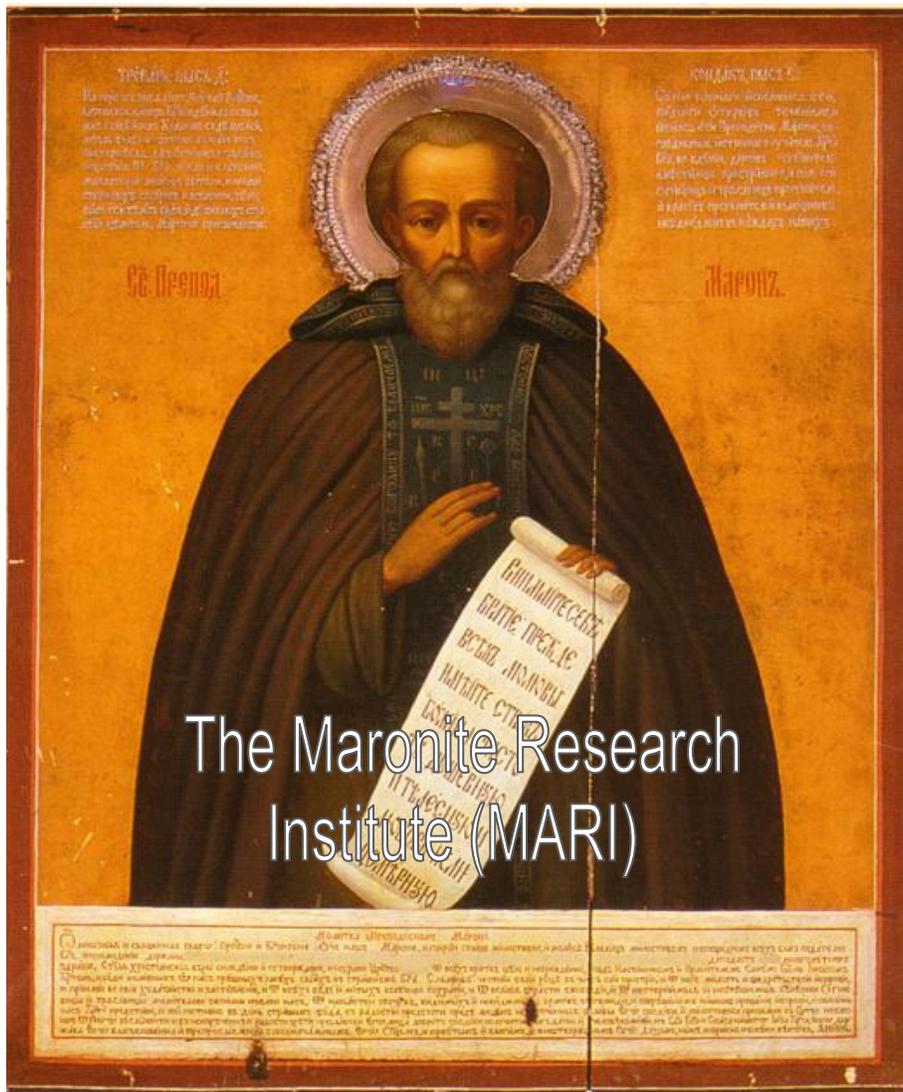
**Place:** Monastery of the Transfiguration of Christ New Valamo

**Iconographer:** Anonymous

**Date:** Late XVIII century

**Type:** Tempera on wood

**Size:** W.: 71.5 cm; H. 92.5 cm



The Maronite Research  
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Figure 3. Saint Maron Miraculous Icon of Valamo, Finland

<sup>36</sup> Holy or Divine is the title given to Saint Maron by Theodoret of Cyr.



Saint Maron's Miraculous Icon of Valamo is housed in the main church of Valamo Monastery, The Transfiguration of Christ Church, on the left (northern) *kleiros*, in a revered spot. Its size is 71.5 cm in width and 92.5 cm in height. It is not known from where the icon came to the monastery. What we do know is that the brotherhood brought it along with the rest of the icons when they were evacuated from Old Valaam.

According to oral tradition, the miraculous icon of Saint Maron in Valamo had a beneficent power emanating from it. Several curing miracles occurred, but were not recorded.

The icons of Saint Maron presented in this article were all painted true to the traditional method, in egg tempera on wood. They do not date very far back in history, although they represent Russian ideals of medieval art in general, as to stylistic sense of expression. Each and every one of them contains elements rich in the prevailing style of its era.

Deducing from its style and craftsmanship, it seems likely that the Miraculous Icon was painted late in the XVIII century. Evidently the iconographer was in prayer and great reverence when painting the icon; it emits a very profound spirituality and a divine energy, visible to the eyes of the viewer.

In the icon there aren't many characteristics differentiating Saint Maron from other saints such as Saint Serge, or others of the same rank. That is to say, the icon does not represent Saint Maron as he is described in his hagiography by Theodoret of Cyrrus, the only full reference we have to Saint Maron's life.

The narrative diagram of this icon shows the saint standing with the face of the saint painted in a very realistic style. He is depicted in a three quarter image of a bare-headed *Stavrophor* monk - a cross-bearer, who wears the *polystavrion*, a symbolic garment that reminds the monastic of the obligation to enter deeply into his Christian vocation. The Saint is represented standing and in a strictly frontal manner. The saint is wearing a *skema* (monastic hood) or scapular indicating a supreme degree of asceticism. In his left hand, he holds a parchment scroll that means that he was the founder of a monastic order. His cheeks are hollowed. The saint is wearing a brownish green cloak, a black *mantia* and, on top of everything a *skema*, as previously mentioned. This *skema* resembles an *epitrachelion*, a dark blue garment with a hood, embellished with the Cross of Christ and patterns of other lesser torture equipment to indicate the passion of Christ. The *omophorion* garment is lined with text in bluish gray, words from the Church Hymn to Our Lady: "It is very meet to bless thee who didst bring forth God ...." The Saint is shorthaired. His beard is of half-length, rounded out underneath, gray in color, like his hair. The facial expression is earnest and, simultaneously gentle and severe. A simple silver nimbus surrounds the head, dressed with silver filigree.



The inscriptions in red letters read *Saint Maron the Hermit*. In his left hand the Saint holds an open scroll and he holds his right hand in a gesture of blessing. The scroll states in Church Slavonic:

"Be attentive, brothers, above all I beg of you: Fear of God be yours, as well as bodily and spiritual purity, and an unpretentious love."

The background of the icon is gilded. The inscriptions in the upper part of the icon are of formal calligraphy with a clear inscription. On the viewer's left, there is a *troparion*<sup>37</sup> written on the uppermost half of the icon, and on his right, a *kontakion*.<sup>38</sup>

The *troparion* (4th tone) reads:

*"Like Moses, O Saint, thou hast settled on a mountain, filling a heathen temple with recognition of God and sanctifying it in His name as His church. Like a second Job, enduring severe illnesses, O Blessed One, thou hast received the gift of God to heal fevers and ague. Founder of many monasteries, teacher of legions of monks, thou wast a healer of soul and body, O Ever-Remembered Maron."*

To the right, the *kontakion* (6th tone) announces:

*"Thy asceticism revealed thee filled with supreme power. Thus thou, Saint Maron, became a grand successor of the true master of watchfulness, Christ the Lord, and turned to a vast vessel of the charisma of our Consoler. Thy strength lay in repelling and banishing fever, ague and enemies, and thou wast a hearty aid."*

The name of the person depicted is painted in dark red color underneath the *troparion* and *kontakion*: "Holy Saint Maron". A prayer dedicated to Saint Maron is written in black on a cream-colored background close to the bottom of the icon:

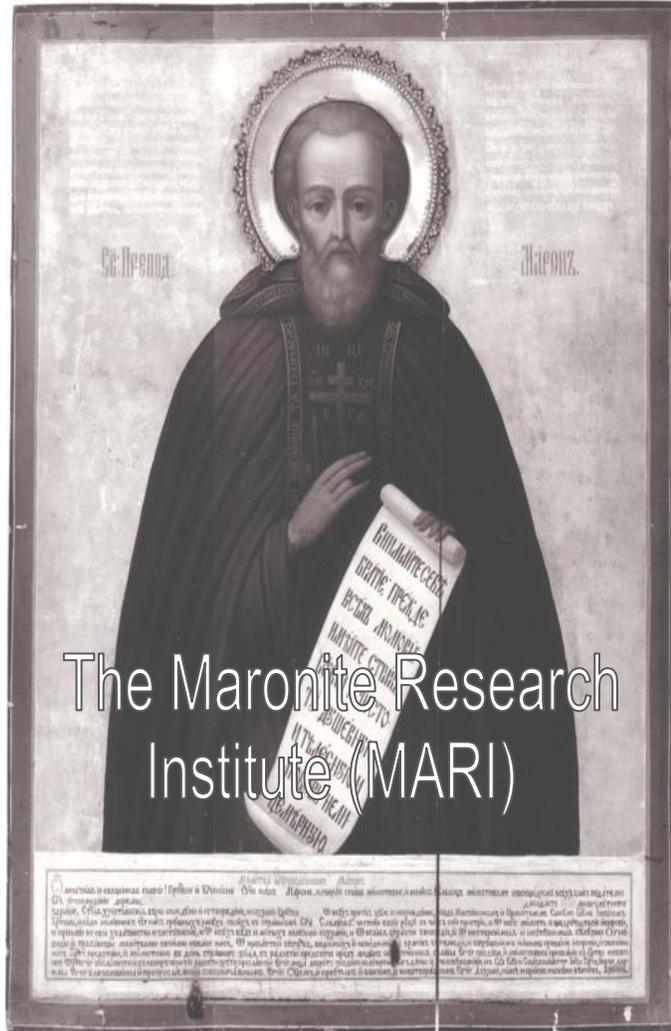
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<sup>37</sup> [Troparion](http://www.mliles.com/melkite/kontakion.shtml) "is a short poetic hymn referring to the Feast of the day. On Sundays, the Troparia are hymns praising the Resurrection. There are eight resurrectional Troparia corresponding to the eight modes of Greek chant used in the church. Also, there are Troparia for each day of the liturgical year. Some Troparia ask the Saints of the day to intercede for the people of God. Other Troparia extol the mystery celebrated on a major feast day. Generally, the Troparia in honor of the Patron Saint of the church is sung. Troparion is the singular of Troparion" (Source: Melkite Greek Catholic Church Information Center, <http://www.mliles.com/melkite/kontakion.shtml>).

<sup>38</sup> [Kontakion](http://www.mliles.com/melkite/kontakion.shtml) "was originally a long poem. Kontakion consisted of a short preliminary stanza and was followed by some 18 to 24 strophes, each known as an ikos. The stanza and the ikos concluded with the same refrain. Today, all that remains is the stanza followed by the first ikos. Also, there are Kontakia for each day of the liturgical year. The Kontakion is sung after the Troparion. Kontakion means "from a pole". Originally, this long poem was rolled up on a pole. Kontakion is the singular of Kontakia" (Source: Melkite Greek Catholic Church Information Center, <http://www.mliles.com/melkite/kontakion.shtml>).



*"O dear and blessed advisor, Saint and Theophor Maron our father, look down on us and pray to Our Graceful Lord, Giver of All That Is Good - to the Lord God. Pray for the protection of our country - God grant her years and plentiful health - and pray for Christian belief to develop and strengthen, and save the country from the enemy's attacks, and maintain her unharmed and intact, guided and ruled by Christ Our Lord Himself. Be our intercessor, praying for us, thy sinful servants, before the fearful Lord God Sabaoth! Even now, stretch out your hand and beg of Him grace and mercy. Protect us under thy watchful eye, and save us from all evil and perseverant ailments. Redeem us from all lust, and heal us with thy prayers from unbearable fevers and ague. Protect us against the Devil, against attacks from visible and invisible enemies, and pray forgiveness for our sins, and bring us forth redeemed before Christ. In the Day of Doom, make us appear favorable in God's Eye that we may stand in mercy and joy before His incomprehensible Honor. Make us worthy to hear the call to God's Realm and in an unspoken joy to see the Most Honorable Goodness of His Face, by the Grace and Love for Man of Christ Our Lord, whose realm is honored and praised with His Eternal Father and the Holiest of Holies, the life-giving Spirit, now and ever and ever. Amen."*



**Figure 4. Saint Maron Miraculous Icon of Valamo (Black and White), Finland**

Examining closely the icon we detected corrections made to the prayer whereby some sentences and words were erased without being replaced. We also found that in the lower part of the icon, there are several burn marks from candles, testifying of the icon's past heavy use in prayer.

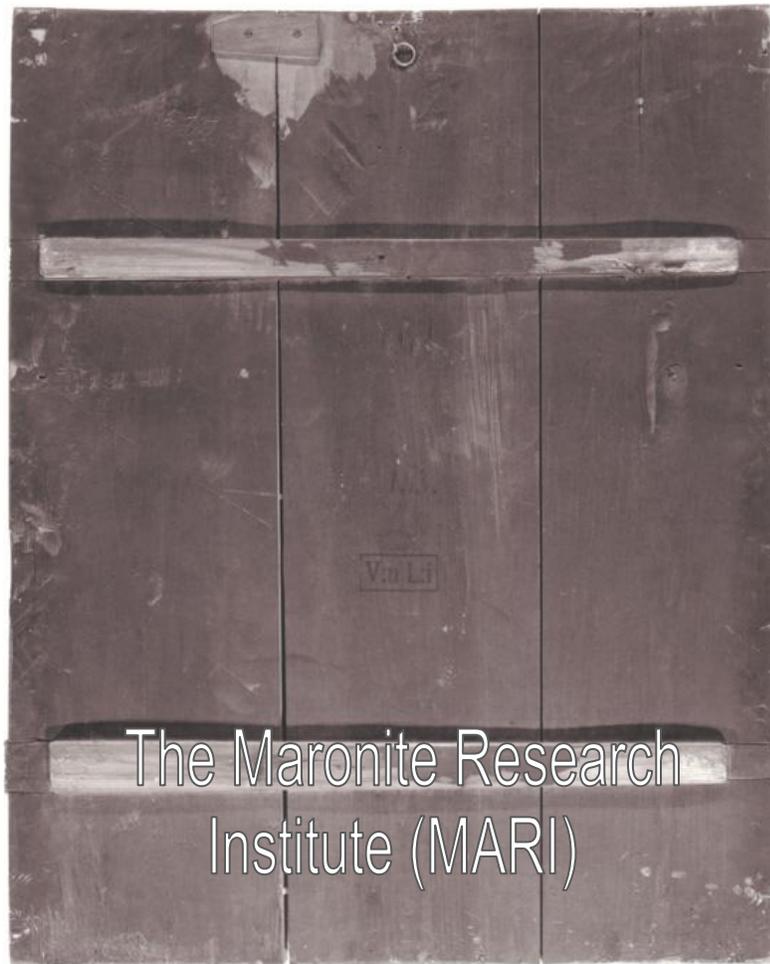


## B. Restoring Saint Maron's Miraculous Icon

By Helena Nikkanen<sup>39</sup>

The icon of Saint Maron was evacuated from the Old Valaam Monastery during World War II. It was later hung on the wall of the *Konevitsa* Mother of God Icon Chapel, in the new church built in 1977, in Valamo, Finland. The Saint Maron icon had been previously repaired and did not belong to that group of the evacuated icons that badly needed urgent conservation.

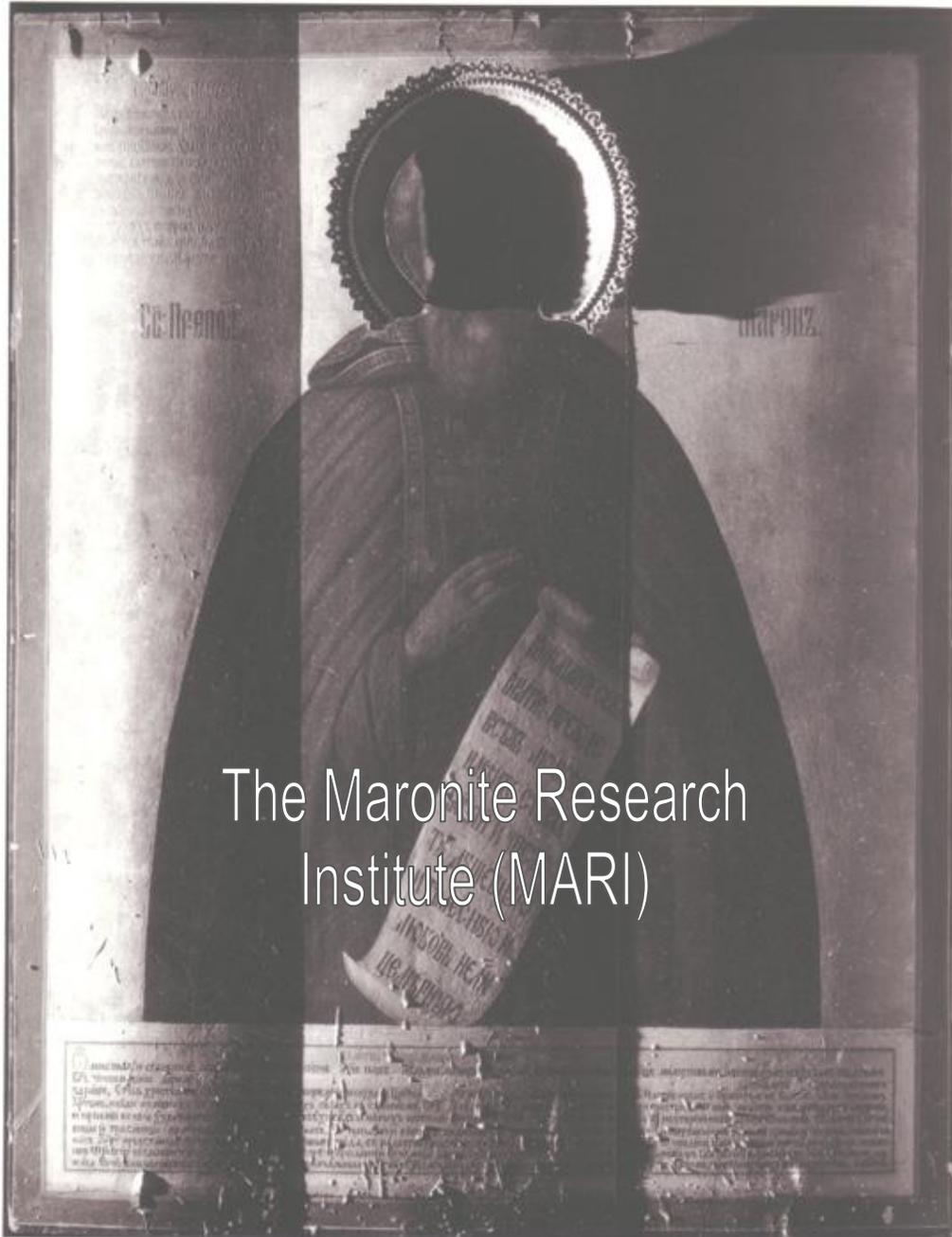
Later, renovations were done to the new church. That is, the Chapel of the Icon of Mother of *Konevitsa* was transformed into the altar for the winter church, and the icon of Saint Maron was taken off the wall. On that occasion, the icon was brought to the Valamo Art Conservation Institute for inspection of its condition and for possible conservation work in April 1991.



The icon of Saint Maron is a traditional icon painted on wood. The size of the panel is 92.5 cm x 71.5 cm x 2.5 cm. The support is composed of three boards, united with horizontal battens inlaid on the reverse. The battens become narrower towards the right edge of the reverse. There are also the stamps of the Valamo Monastery, the Garderobe of the Valamo Monastery, and the inventory number 133.

**Figure 5. The Wooden panel of Saint Maron's icon, Valamo, Finland**

<sup>39</sup> She is the Head Conservator at the Valamo Art Conservation Institute, Uusi-Valamo, Finland.



## The Maronite Research Institute (MARI)

**Figure 6. X-Ray of St Maron's Miraculous Icon of Valamo, Finland**

When observing the face side of the icon, that the support is composed of three boards is very clearly seen. Each of those three boards is curved, forming three gentle waves. The joint between the two boards on the left is intact, but the joint between the central and the right panel has opened. From the edges, the *pavoloka*, the linen canvas under the gesso preparation, can be observed.



The actual visible paint layer is obviously overlain on another; other paint can be seen underneath in damaged areas (for instance, under the bluish *epittrakili* and garment there is dark red, under the brown broad framing there is a light ochre, and under narrow brown edge line, vermilion). Also, the gilded background has been overlain with gold paint. The original icon painting is dated to the turn of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and presumably the overpainting was carried out one hundred years later.

The silver halo was added to the painting - judging by the indistinct labels in the halo - at the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

In April 1991, it was noted that there were areas of old damage to the icon, such as candle burns on the lower part of the icon (see picture 2).

Changes in the relative humidity in the church had caused some shrinking in the panel; the paint layer had cracked in the upper and lower edges along the grain of the panel wood, and was flaking and needed consolidating (see the picture 3). There were also splashes of candle wax on the surface, which were removed.

In the effort to stabilize the condition of the Saint Maron icon in April 1991 only necessary conservation actions were taken: the flaking colors were fixed with a solution of dilute sturgeon glue. The overpainting, the candle burns, the thick overpaint covering almost the whole second line of the prayer text in the lower part were left intact in order to show the various historical phases of this icon.

To prevent future damage, the icon was enclosed in a frame under glass, sealed and buffered against changes of relative humidity. The icon has been placed in the monastery's main place of worship: The Transfiguration of Christ Church. The interior of an Orthodox Church is divided into three main sections. The Narthex (or Vestibule) is the first part upon entering the church. In ancient times it was the place where the Catechumens received instruction while preparing for baptism and where penitents excluded from Holy Communion stood. The Nave is the second and largest part of the church. The walls of the Nave are decorated with icons and murals, before many of which lit lamps are suspended. The Nave is separated from the Sanctuary by an icon screen called the Iconostasis. The Sanctuary is the place where the Altar is placed. It is the most holy and only the priests are allowed there.

As is evident from the photo of the Church (see below), Saint Maron's icon is placed on the left wall of the Sanctuary next to an icon of the Three Hierarchs: Basil, John and Gregory.

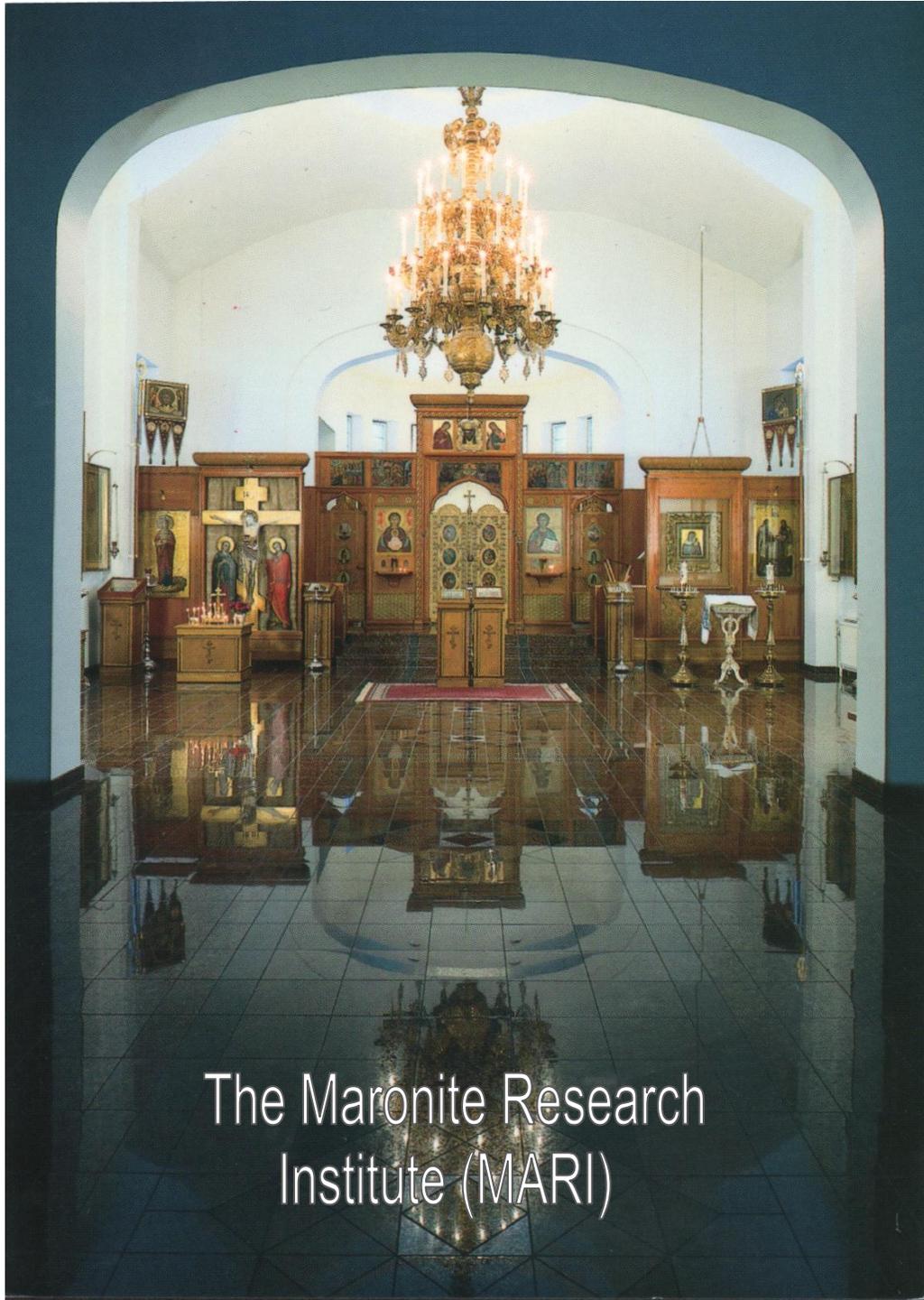


Figure 7. Christ Church of Transfiguration, Valamo, Finland



## V. Other Saint Maron Icons in Finland

*By Guita Hourani and Archmandrite Arseni of Valamo*

**Name:** N° 2 Christ the Pantocrator,

Saint Maron the Syrian Hermit and Saint Artemy (Artemius) of Verkola

**Place:** Valamo Foundation in Helsinki

**Iconographer:** Anonymous

**Date:** Late XVIII century

**Type:** Tempera on wood

**Size:** W.: 30 cm; H. 26 cm

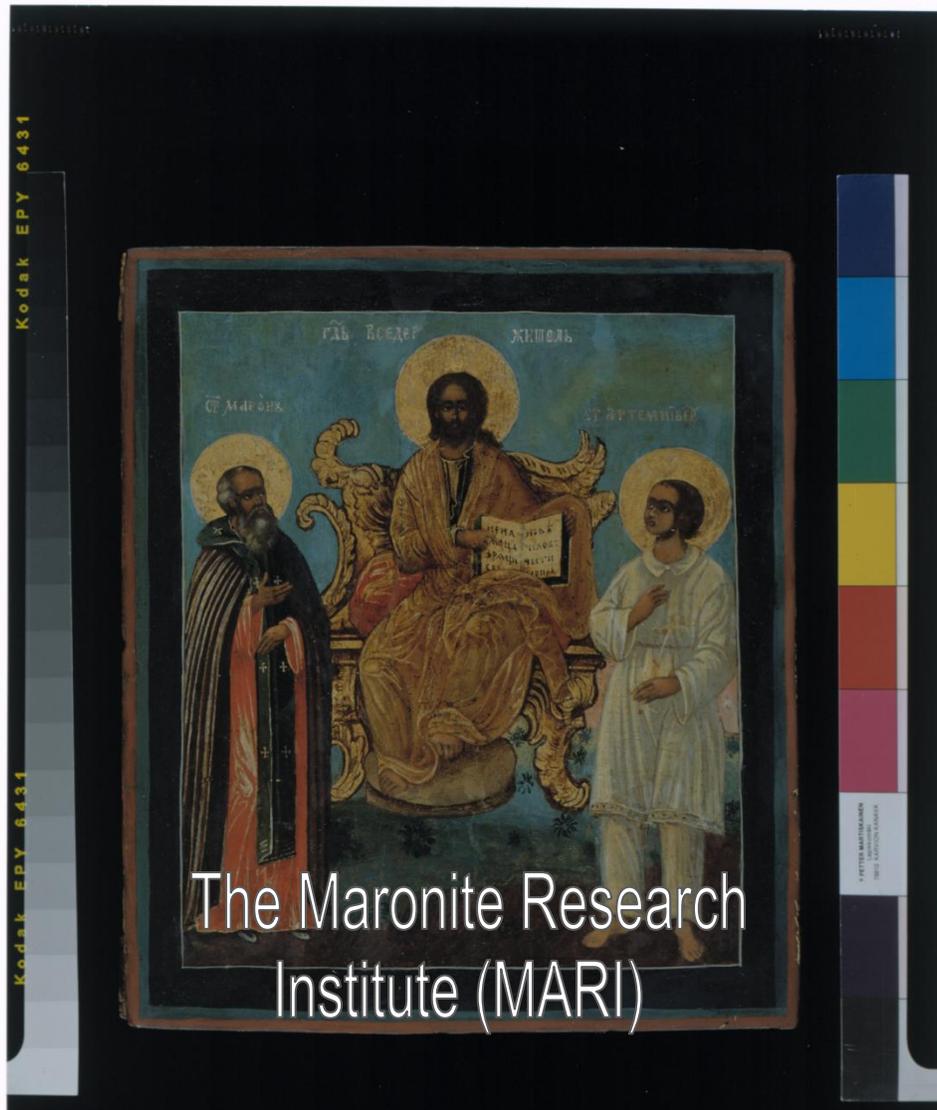


Figure 8. Icon of Christ the Pantocrator, St Maron and St Artemy of Verkola, Finland



In the collection of the Valamo Foundation in Helsinki there is an icon from late XVIII century, size 30 cm in width and 26 cm in height. In it are shown Christ enthroned, with Saint Maron and Saint Artemy of Verkola on either side.

According to Orthodox tradition, Saint Artemy of Verkola “was born in 1532 in the northern village of Verkola, by the river Pinega, in Russia. His father's name was Cosmas, and his mother's Appolinaria. They led a simple, rather ordinary life, but from an early age it was evident that Artemy was very special in the eyes of God. When he was only five years old, a noticeable change came over him: he no longer wished to occupy himself with the usual activities of children his age, he had no interest in games or other amusements; rather, he wanted to spend all his free time in church. He loved to work and tried in whatever way he could to help with the household chores, eagerly obeying his parents in all things. When there was no work to be done, he would go out where no one could see him and there he prayed. When Artemy was twelve years old, he was helping his father one day in the fields. As they were plowing, a storm suddenly moved in. A thick layer of clouds drew across the sky, and it became dark as night. Moments later a torrential rain began to pound the earth. There was a deafening clap of thunder and a bolt of lightning struck the young Artemy, killing him on the spot on 23 June, 1544. Nature itself claimed God's child, who lived the same pure life like a tree in the woods or a blade of grass in a meadow. His body was placed in a small clearing in the woods, without being buried in the ground. A wooden shell was constructed over it, and a fence was built around it. Thirty-three years after Artemy's tragic death, one of the local deacons, by the name of Agafonik, was gathering wild berries when he saw a light emanating from the place where the youth's body had been laid. The deacon came closer and saw to his astonishment that the body of the boy showed no signs of decay; it looked, in fact, as if the boy was simply sleeping. Above the boy was a radiant light. The deacon hurried to the nearest village and told the priest and the local peasants what he had discovered. They all went to see for themselves and found it just as the deacon had described. Then they carried Artemy's incorrupt body back to the village and placed it in a coffin in the entrance to the church of Saint Nicholas. It had been a terrible year for the whole region. A virulent flu epidemic was going around; some people had already died. The son of one of the peasants in Verkola, Kallinik, was sick with it. Seeking relief for his son, Kallinik prayed fervently to the Lord Jesus Christ, to the Most Holy Virgin, to Saint Nicholas, and to the young Artemy. He venerated the youth's relics and took a piece of the birch-bark covering the coffin. Coming home, he put this piece of birch-bark on his son's chest, and the boy immediately recovered. The father related the miracle to the other villagers, who similarly took pieces of birch-bark and placed them on those sick in their households. These, too, were healed, and soon there was no trace of the epidemic. Miracles continued to flow from the relics of the youth: the blind regained their sight, the lame began to walk, the deaf to hear; old and young, men and women received



healing."<sup>40</sup> [Here ends the hagiography of the saint] Saint Artemy is commemorated on June 23 in the Orthodox Church.

In this icon, the traits and vestment of Saint Maron are similar to those in the Valamo icon. The only difference is that the cloak of the Saint is cinnabar red and that there is an abundance of Baroque influence.<sup>41</sup> In this icon Saint Maron is depicted standing the presence of the Pantocrator introducing the young Saint Artemy.

The icon seems to have been painted in Verkola in Northern Russia, or at least was commissioned there, given the veneration of St. Artemy in that part of Russia. Having both Saint Maron and Saint Artemy depicted in the same icon might be due to the fact that both are healers of an epidemic of sorts and that both are venerated in the northern part of Russia.

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<sup>40</sup>Translated and adapted from Svyataya Yunost, a pre-Revolutionary publication, reprinted in Moscow in 1994. (The Nikodemos Orthodox Publication Society, P.O. Box 383, Richfield Springs, NY 13439-0383)

<sup>41</sup> Thomenius 2000, 32.



**Name:** N° 3 Saint Maron

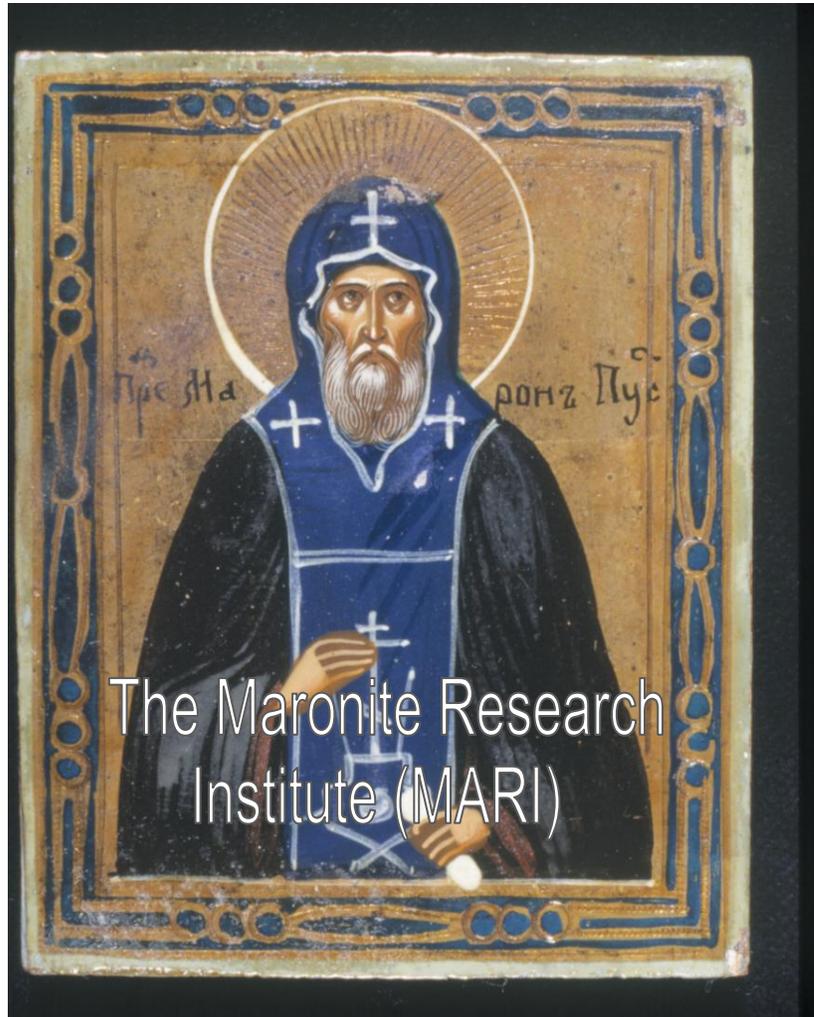
**Owner:** Archimandrite Arseni of Valamo, Monastery of the Transfiguration of Christ New Valamo

**Iconographer:** Anonymous

**Date:** Late XIX early XX century

**Type:** Tempera on wood

**Size:** W.: 8.8 cm; H. 7 cm



**Figure 9. Saint Maron, Valamo, Finland**

An interesting example of the depiction of Saint Maron is a miniature icon in the possession of Archmandrite Arsen. Its size is 8.8 cm in width and 7 cm in height. Most likely it was painted in a Russian monastery or icon painting workshop in the late XIX or early XX century. The icon is graphed, strongly simplifying the presentation, and it was probably intended for distribution to pilgrims.<sup>42</sup>

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<sup>42</sup> Arseni 2001, 73.



The difference in the layout of this icon, with the layout in comparison with the two icons mentioned before, is that Saint Maron's head is covered with a hood of a skema and that the cloak is black.

**Name: N° 4 Christ and the Healers of Ailments**

**Place: Valamo Foundation in Helsinki**

**Iconographer: Anonymous**

**Date: Mid XIX century**

**Type: Tempera on wood**

**Size: W.: 44 cm; H. 37 cm**

Although we were unable to obtain a photo of it, there is an icon depicting Saint Maron, in the Valamo Foundation Collection called "Christ and the Healers of Ailments." 44 cm in width and 37 cm in height it dates back to the mid-XIX century. It is painted in sparse colors, strongly simplifying the subject. In it is Christ Almighty, shown in bust, and alongside the frame, enclosed in circles, thirteen Saints likewise portrayed in bust. These chosen Saints are spiritual healers whose intercessions people turned to in their worries of daily toils and complaints. The text marked above or beside the circles gives the suitable intercessor in each worry. With Saint Maron the text reads: "To Saint Maron - healing fevers and ague."<sup>43</sup>

Even in this icon the Saint's cloak is cinnabar red. There is also an icon almost identical to this one in stylistic detail and craftsmanship, in Jyväskylä, in a private collection.

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<sup>43</sup> Kotkavaara 1989, 28.



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