

Steindorff, Ludwig; Auge, Oliver (Hrsg.): *Monastische Kultur als transkonfessionelles Phänomen. Beiträge einer deutsch-russischen interdisziplinären Tagung in Vladimir und Suzdal'*. Berlin: Oldenbourg Verlag 2016. ISBN: 978-3-11-037822-1; IX, 446 S.

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The collected volume reviewed here resulted from an interdisciplinary conference held in Vladimir and Suzdal' from 11 to 14 September 2012. It is very much a German-Russian cooperative endeavor: the organizers of the conference decided to publish all of the proceedings in two separate volumes, one in Russian (which, at the time of this review, still has not appeared), and the other in German. The Russian contributions focus on the 16th and 17th centuries while their German counterparts focus on the late Middle Ages of the Medieval West. The editors politely justify this pairing as a „non-contemporaneity of the contemporaneous“ (*Ungleichzeitigkeit der Gleichzeitigen*), in which similar historical developments unfolded in different periods. Though this approach generally works, it is also at times an infelicitous arrangement, especially since the individual authors almost never attempt to explicitly compare the two respective monastic cultures.

In general, the essays on Russian monasticism offer fascinating insights to readers more familiar with the Latin Christian variant of monasticism. The standard work on Russian monasticism, oft-cited in the volume, remains to this day the German monograph of the Russian émigré-scholar Igor Smolitsch (1898–1970), published in 1953, with a Russian translation appearing in 1997.<sup>1</sup> Yet scholarship on Russian monasticism over the last three-quarters of a century, including one of the co-editors' work on the commemoration of the dead in the monasteries of Rus' and the Duchy of Muscovy<sup>2</sup>, has nuanced or even refuted some of Smolitsch's ideas.

Several of the Russian contributions touch upon the role of social status in Rus'. Elena V. Romanenka's essay on the social and cultural status of the founders of Russian monaster-

ies presents statistics which demonstrate that the founding of Russian monasteries gradually shifted from being a phenomenon in which the aristocracy in the 14th and 15th centuries played a prominent role (of the saint-founders whose social status is known, 50 percent were of aristocratic origin) to one dominated by peasants in the 17th century (of the saint-founders whose social status is known, 82 percent were of peasant origin) (pp. 32–33). The decline of the nobility in monasticism is evident for a later period as well, as Gleb M. Zapal'skij's article on the social background of abbots in the 18th and 19th centuries shows. Yet while peasants managed to comprehensively occupy the upper echelons of monastic administration only in some provinces, in general the rise of children of priests and monks is more discernable, who went from 31.25 percent of leadership positions in the period 1700–1762 to 83.33 percent in 1825–1861 (p. 280).

The role of women and female convents in both Rus' and Muscovy as well as the Medieval West is one of the areas of the volume where the comparative approach works best. Though, as Ludwig Steindorff points out (p. 287), female convents were never as numerous and important in Rus' as they were in the medieval West, contributions from historians from both periods and regions tend to display broad similarities. In both contexts female monasticism was a largely aristocratic and bluestocking affair: Cristina Adenna and Elena B. Emčenko show in their essays how royal nuns were granted significant concessions in both East and West in order to live in their convents. Thus the treatment accorded Baroness Ul'jana, widow of the brother of the czar Jurij Vasil'evič, who was waited upon in the New Convent of the Virgin by the children of boyars as well members of the chancellery and court and allowed cellars, ice-cellars and kitchens (pp. 138–139), differed in detail rather than kind from that of Sancho of Naples, who resided at her foundation of Santa Croce with ten persons, including her

<sup>1</sup> Igor Smolitsch, *Russisches Mönchtum: Entstehung, Entwicklung und Wesen 988–1917*, Würzburg 1953.

<sup>2</sup> Ludwig Steindorff, *Memoria im Altrussland: Untersuchungen zu den Formen christlicher Totensorge*, Stuttgart 1994.

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personal physician (p. 158).

Extending one's purview from women to the family, one finds interesting parallels as well as differences between Early Modern Russia and the Medieval West. One aspect of monastic culture not discussed in the essays which likely was considerably different in the two contexts is the age at which men and women entered monastic institutions. Although in the Medieval West the practice of becoming tonsured shortly before one's death became popular especially among the nobility and royalty in the late Middle Ages, it was far more common that monastics entered their institutions already as children. This was manifestly not the case in Rus' and Muscovy, where many persons entered monastic life after a first secular career. The contribution of Elena È. Ševčenko, for example, highlights the role played by former *d'jaki* (scribes of the ducal chancelleries) as copyists in the monasteries of Rus'. Svetlana V. Nikolaeva shows that many of the workers for the Trinity Lavra of St. Sergius later entered the monastery as pensioners (pp. 254–258).

The economic role of monasteries is the subject of a number of essays from both historical contexts. Winfried Šich writes one of the only explicitly comparative essays in the entire volume, examining the contrasting economic views of Russian monasticism with those of Cistercian monasteries: while the former emphasized manual labor and craftsmanship, the latter valued the maximizing of economic surpluses, and thus had no problem subcontracting labor to non-monastics (pp. 356–357). Yet despite the emphasis on manual labor in the normative monastic literature, the economic role of Russian monasteries eventually became immense: Vladimir I. Ivanov in his contribution cites statistics compiled by Ja. E. Volodarskij, whereby at the end of the 17th century in Muscovy there were 618 monasteries, of which 214 were satellite monasteries. They possessed 115,000 farmsteads, with a population of around 1.08 million people, thus around 21 percent of all feudal land and 16 percent of all arable land (p. 369).

Though the similarities and differences between the monasticism of the late Medieval West and that of Rus' and Muscovy are interesting and worthy of examination in and

of themselves, there was little direct contact between the two cultural spheres. The only essay to hypothesize cultural borrowing is that of Leonid A. Beljaev, who posits that the New Jerusalem Monastery of the Resurrection, which is modelled on the Church of the Holy Sepulcher, was inspired by western *sacri monti*, and perhaps in particular the famous Polish model of Calvary at Kalwaria Zebrzydowska (1602–1617). In doing so he emphasizes the lack of Byzantine models for this phenomenon, which is where Russian historians and art historians often first look for precedents in Rus' and Muscovy (pp. 217–218).

In this light it is somewhat surprising, and indeed a missed opportunity, that Byzantium, which served as the model of Russian monastic culture and whose own monasticism stemmed, along with that of the Medieval West, from a shared late antique heritage, is hardly mentioned, outside of the essays of Andreas Müller and Günter Prinzing. The lack of more Byzantine contributions detracts, however, only a little from what is an impressive collected volume, in particular for those otherwise unfamiliar with Russian monasticism. It will be of interest to medievalists, Byzantinists and especially to those interested in comparative monasticism.

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