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NETWORKS OF PIETY AND HOLY FOOLS IN MOSCOW, 1700-1750

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The Orthodox Church Council of Moscow of 1666–1667 and the Petrine church reforms sought to eliminate holy foolishness (iurodstvo), one of the traditional modes of the Orthodox pious ascetic life. Under Peter the Great and his immediate successors, state officials arrested and punished iurodivye as parasites and charlatans. Nevertheless, some holy fools, including those who adhered to the two-fingered sign of the cross, succeeded in gaining the patronage of monasteries and devout Orthodox noble families. In some cases, holy fools operated within networks of piety that connected institutions such as the Sarov hermitage with wealthy religious patrons. Drawing on political and heresy trials, this paper examines the networks of traditional piety, including Old Believer piety, that honored holy fools in Moscow in the first half of the eighteenth century.

Keywords: holy foolishness, Andreian Petrov, Quaker heresy, khristovshchina, monasticism, holy fool, popular Orthodoxy

СЕТИ БЛАГОЧЕСТИЯ И ЮРОДСТВО В г. МОСКВЕ, 1700–1750

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Православный церковный московский собор 1666—1667 гг. и церковные реформы первого российского императора Петра были направлены на искоренение юродства, одного из традиционных укладов православного благочестия. При Петре Великом и его преемниках государственные чиновники арестовывали и наказывали юродивых как паразитов и шарлатанов. Тем не менее некоторым юродивым (в том числе старообрядческим) удалось завоевать покровительство монастырей и благочестивых православных дворян. В некоторых случаях юродивые действовали в сетях благочестия, которые связывали такие учреждения, как Саровская пустынь, с богатыми религиозными покровителями. Опираясь на судебные процессы по политическим мотивам и ереси, в данной статье исследуются сети традиционного благочестия, в том числе старообрядческие, почитавшие юродивых в Москве в первой половине XVIII в.

Ключевые слова: юродство, Андреян Петров, Квакерская ересь, христовщина, монашество, юродивый, народное православие

The possibility of a direct, unmediated relationship to the divine has been a significant element of Christianity from the time of the apostles. In his letters, Paul boasted of the supernatural visions in which he had seen the risen Christ and ascended into the third heaven (1 Corinthians 15: 8; 2 Corinthians 12: 1-7). As he insisted to the

wavering Galatians, he had received the gospel directly from Jesus, not from anyone else (Galatians 1: 12). Likewise, in the canonical gospel of John, Jesus promises to give his disciples the Holy Spirit, who will lead them into all truth (John 16: 13-14). In a post-resurrection episode, he bestows this gift upon them, ensuring that they will have a direct connection with God the Father (John 20: 22). In subsequent centuries as the Christian community developed institutions that mediated access to God through the sacraments and hierarchy, the possibility of a personal relationship with the Almighty, who could speak directly to the individual believer, inspired fertile and powerful spiritual movements, including monasticism. Strategies for individual sanctification, such as isolation, intense and extensive prayer, fasting, and sleep deprivation, did not require any institutional validation.

As Sergei Ivanov has argued in a series of monographs [Ivanov 1995, 2005], iurodstvo or holy foolery first emerged around the sixth century as a particularly intense form of Christian asceticism that could be practiced in an urban context [Ivanov 2006: 104]. Whereas traditional ascetics, like Anthony of Egypt (ca. 251-356) left population centers to battle their demons in the desert, the holy fool invited public humiliation by feigning insanity and performing ascetic feats in the center of the city. Holy fools courted the contempt of the urban crowd by performing scandalous acts such walking naked in all seasons. Two Byzantine ascetics Symeon of Emesa and Andrew the Fool, whose vitae placed them in the sixth century, became the canonical exemplars of this spiritual path. By the sixteenth century, iurodstvo had become an important part of Orthodox Christianity in Muscovy, as the English visitor Giles Fletcher observed in the 1580s:

They have certeyne eremites . . . who use to go stark naked, save a clout about their middle, with their haire hanging long, and wildely about their shoulders, and many of them with an iron coller, or chaine about their neckes or middes, even in the very extremity of winter. These they take as prophets, and men of great holines, giving them a liberty to speak what they list, without any controulment, thogh it be to the very highest himselfe [Fletcher 1964: 274].

Despite the Muscovites' high regard for holy fools, Fletcher also noted that some iurodivye had been exposed as charlatans. For example, one fool who pretended to heal a lame man was imprisoned in a monastery for his deception. In the seventeenth century, church reformers who wished to cultivate greater solemnity and reverence in church services criticized holy fools for blasphemously disturbing worshipers. In a decree of August 1636, Patriarch Ioasaf (r. 1634-1640) condemned those who feigned insanity in church, as well as would-be ascetics with unkempt hair wearing penitential chains [Arkheograficheskaia ekspeditsiia 1836: 3: 402, no. 264].

Despite the long tradition of devotion to holy fools in Russia, the Moscow Church Council of 1666-1667 condemned urban charlatans who tried to gain a reputation for sanctity through their public ascetic displays, which included wearing heavy chains and hair-shirts as well as wandering about naked and barefoot:

Сутьнѣкоторїнлицемѣрнїий преле́стники, и́жеживу́тьпосредѝ градẃвь, и̂ сє́ль, во̀ о́бразъѿше́лника, н̂ затво́рникаволоса́ти, и̂ в' мона́шескойсви́тцѣ. И̂ні́ижен̂ в' желѣзахъско́вани. Та́кождеи иа́гни бо́сихо́датьпоградwий се́лwмъв' мі́рѣ, тщесла́вїара́ди, да̀ воспріимутьсла́вуѿнаро́да, и̂ да̀ почита́ютьихъво̀ сты́хъ, ко̀ пре́лестипросты́мъи̂ невѣждамъ[Subbotin 1893: (second pagination) 27ob.-28].

There are certain hypocrites and confidence artists who live in towns and villages and dress up in monastic clothing as though they were hermits or hairy ascetics. Others bind themselves in irons. In like manner, they go about naked and barefoot in towns and villages in the world for vanity's sake so that they can receive glory from the common people who honor them as saints, charming the simple and ignorant [Subbotin 1893: (second pagination) 27ob.-28].

The Church Council went on to define and attack the problem of wandering asceticism and holy foolery more directly. Those who wished to renounce the world should enter a monastery, where they could engage in a disciplined life of fasting, abstinence, and prayer. The Council condemned those contemporary hermits [otshelniki] who made a show of their piety by wearing heavy penitential chains. True holy fools, such as the canonized saints Andrew the Fool and Symeon of Emesa, did not seek worldly fame or fortune; they were not the welcome guests of the wealthy and powerful, and they fled from others who sought to praise them [Subbotin 1893: (second pagination) 28-28ob].

In the 1690s, Patriarch Adrian issued an order (now lost) to arrest wandering ascetics engaged in behavior typical of the iurodivyi: those who walked about naked or who wore hair shirts [volosenichniki] and chains [verezniki] were subject to detention [Lavrov 2001: 433]. As part of a broader program of social reform, Peter and his immediate successors continued and expanded the suppression of holy foolery. After 1716, a bishop had to promise to turn over holy fools to the civil authorities as part of his vows at consecration [Zhivov 2004: 204]. Six years later, the newly formed Holy Synod introduced a similar clause into the vows taken by monastery abbots, who were not to welcome such hypocrites and charlatans into their communities [PSPR 2 (1722): 68-69, no. 426]. In March of the same year, the Synod ordered pseudo-holy fools to be placed in monasteries, where they could perform useful labor for the remainder of their natural lives [PSPR 2 (1722): 130-131, no. 477]. Peter's successors continued legislation against iurodstvo. In a resolution of 14 July 1732, the Holy Synod forbade public displays of holy foolery [PPSZ 8: 891-892, no. 6136]. Five years later, the Synod ordered iurodivye to be sent to civil courts for prosecution.

Despite these efforts to eradicate holy foolery, the phenomenon persisted, in part thanks to sympathetic networks of patrons who provided comfort, shelter, and support for the iurodivye. Monasteries served as important nodes of these networks. As centers of piety, pilgrimage, and trade (many monasteries operated regular fairs), monasteries brought together like-minded believers with potential patrons. As Aleksandr Sergeevich Lavrov has shown, the holy fools arrested during Patriarch Adrian's reign (1690-1700) traveled from one monastery to another. Ivan Kalinin, the son of a tentmaker who adopted the vocation of a holy fool, lived in the Trinity-St. Sergius Lavra and the Kirillov-Belozerskii monastic inn [podvor'e] located in the Moscow Kremlin. Likewise, the holy fool Ivan the Naked, also known as Paramon, found refuge in the Florishcheva hermitage near Kiev [Lavrov 2000: 259]. Monasteries offered more than just a haven for wandering ascetics; they also provided potential contacts with their elite patrons and with sympathetic merchants. The records of police investigations into the political opposition to Peter's reforms and, later, to Feofan Prokopovich's influence on church and state reveal these networks and illustrate how

they supported this version of traditional piety, so alien to the spirit of the well-ordered state

For example, the holy fool Mikhail the Barefoot served as a messenger between Peter I's first wife, Evdokiia Lopukhina (1669-1731), who had been forced to take monastic vows in 1698, and her sympathizers, the tsarevna Mariia Alekseevna (1660-1723) and Bishop Dosifei (Diomid Glebov) of Rostov (r. 1711-18). Dosifei, who descended from servants of the Lopukhin family, remained loyal to Evdokiia and regarded her as the rightful czarina; he prophesied Peter's death, and the accession of Evdokiia's son, the tsarevich Aleksei, to the throne. As a holy fool, Mikhail was able to move from the Pokrov convent in Suzdal', where Evdokiia lived as the nun Elena, to Mariia's home in Moscow, and to the diocesan headquarters in Rostov. Mikhail's contacts with members of the conservative Moscow elite were extensive: according to the reports in the Preobrazhenskii Prikaz (Peter I's political police), Mikhail the Barefoot was welcomed in the homes of several high-ranking boiars and hereditary princes. In 1718, the extensive treason investigation against the tsarevich Aleksei brought Mikhail's role to light. His nostrils were slit, and he was condemned to serve the remainder of his life as an oarsman on a military vessel [Lavrov 2001: 440-442].

In the first decades of the eighteenth century, many members of old aristocratic families, such as the Meshcherskiis, the Shcherbatovs, and the Khovanskiis, were opposed to Peter's Westernizing measures and proved sympathetic to expressions of traditional piety. Perhaps because of his religious vocation, the holy fool Andreian Petrov (b. 1717), who was arrested in the 1740s in the government campaign to suppress religious dissent, was uniquely able to mobilize such networks of the pious elite, who contributed financially to his spiritual endeavors. Andreian Petrov was born in Zolotoruch'e village in 1717, close to the town of Uglich. Andreian's home village, which had existed since the beginning of the fifteenth century, was also located near the property of Kassianova Hermitage, a center of the pietistic movement known as the khristovshchina or the "Quaker heresy" [Ivina 1985: 63, 96].

As A. A. Panchenko [2004] and K. T. Sergazina [2017] have shown, the khristovshchina originated in the broader movement of Old Belief. A. G. Berman [2020] has suggested that the early khristovshchina shows significant similarities to the Old Believer Spasovite movement. Seven monks and five peasants belonging to the Kassianova hermitage were among the 303 people condemned for their adherence to the faith in the trials of 1733-39 [Nechaev 1882: 83, 162]. Growing up in an area where the khristovshchina was especially active, Andreian Petrov probably had heard their message about the power of the Jesus prayer and the second baptism of the Spirit by the time his parents died. Once he became an orphan, Andreian left his village to join the ranks of the wandering tramps. Initially staying close to home, Andreian travelled in Uglich and Iaroslavl' Districts, where he survived by begging at the many local monasteries and fairs. The sixteenth century had seen a vast increase in the number of monasteries in these two districts, and many of these monasteries continued to support themselves in part by hosting fairs [Ivina 1985].

In Iaroslavl', Andreian had a vision which convinced him to take a vow of silence and become a holy fool. In this role, Andreian was able to tap the networks of charismatic religion that still existed within the Orthodox church and some of the old elite families. After his vision, Andreian travelled down the Volga to Arzamas District

and eventually to Temnikov District, where he visited the Sarov Hermitage sometime before 1737. The Sarov Hermitage, founded in 1706, was one of the most important centers of Orthodox hesychasm and charismatic spirituality throughout the imperial period. Moreover, when Andreian visited the monastery in the early or mid-1730s, it had significant ties with both the Moscow nobility and other monasteries and churches which shared its charismatic emphasis. Until his arrest in 1734, the founder of the monastery, Ioann, had carried on an extensive correspondence with Princess Mar'ia Avramovna Dolgorukova [ODDS 14, app. 1, col. 640]. Ioann, as well as some of the 35 monks under his care, travelled regularly to Moscow to take care of the affairs of the hermitage and to ask for contributions from wealthy patrons, which included a very distinguished list of the conservative Moscow elite: Prince Vasilii Vladimirovich Dolgorukii (1667-1746), a member of the influential family which actually ruled Russia during Peter II's reign; Prince Stepan Ivanovich Putiatin, who had served as the governor of Tomsk in the 1690s and vice-governor of Nizhnii Novgorod in 1713; Countess Nastas'ia Ermilova Matveeva, the widow of Count Andrei Artamonovich Matveev; and Prince Ivan Mikhailovich Odoevskii [Chistovich 1868: 534]. Ioann's disciple and successor, Dorofei, maintained these networks after his master's arrest and death.

As a holy fool, Andreian Petrov was well equipped to exploit such networks. The monks of the Sarov Hermitage had a high regard for holy fools, and several of them participated in the cult of Timofei Arkhipovich (d. 1731), a holy fool who was especially popular among some members of this conservative elite. Originally a clerk, Timofei later became an icon-painter and then left that profession to take up his peculiar religious vocation. He achieved great success in his new role; the devout tsaritsa Praskov'ia Fedorovna, the widow of Peter's half-brother Ivan V (r. 1682-1696), housed many of Moscow's holy fools and was especially solicitous of Timofei, despite his propensity for swearing. Once, when he was asked to pray after a meal, Timofei responded, "You are hypocrites," and roundly cursed those who had made the request. His adherents believed that this ostensibly rude behavior revealed their inner spiritual state. Timofei took advantage of the tsaritsa's hospitality for twenty-eight years, from 1703 to his death in April 1731. During the same period, he also occasionally stayed with other prominent members of the elite, such as the Illustrious Prince Aleksandr Menshikov, the favorite of Peter the Great [Chistovich 1868: 537-538, 543, n. 1].

During his stay in the hermitage, Andreian became acquainted with these networks and used them for his own benefit. Sometime between 1730 and 1737, for instance, Andreian travelled to Moscow's Andreevskii Monastery to visit the monk Sofronii, the former Prince Iurii Fëdorovich Shcherbatov (1629-1737) [Nechaev 1889: 121]. In many ways, Shcherbatov was typical of the conservative elite which supported the traditional piety represented by the Sarov Hermitage. The scion of a pious boiar family, Sofronii was the grandfather of the conservative historian Mikhail Mikhailovich Shcherbatov who authored the famous critique of Catherinian society, On the Corruption of Morals in Russia [Shcherbatov 1969]. Although Sofronii had once been one of Peter I's close associates, tasked with the significant responsibility of provisioning Russia's new capital city, St. Petersburg, he sharply disapproved of Peter's cultural reforms [Meehan-Waters 1982: 101]. Nothing revealed his deep attachment to Muscovite customs than his monastic retirement: following the path of

the traditional boiar, Shcherbatov adopted the tonsure in 1730 and ended his life in the cloister [Serbov 1912: 128-129].

Given these spiritual inclinations, Shcherbatov probably looked favorably on the holy fool who came fresh from the Sarov Hermitage, although unfortunately the result of their meeting is not known. On the other hand, Andreian subsequently did succeed in making converts and gaining patrons from members of the gentry. For a while, Princess Dar'ia Khovanskaia (1723-1749), the scion of a noble family, participated in Andreian's community and distributed alms [Nechaev 1889: 121-123, 142]. Like Prince Shcherbatov, Khovanskaia came from an old, conservative boiar family; she was related to the famous Ivan Andreevich Khovanskii who had sympathized with the Old Believers during the riots of 1682. Andreian's ascetic feats—he beat himself with axe-butts and walked barefoot in both summer and winter—so impressed another member of the gentry, Captain Tikhon Smurygin, that the captain confessed all of his sins to the holy fool. Even after being arrested and tortured repeatedly, Smurygin refused to renounce his faith in Andreian for several months [Nechaev 1889: 103-104, 144-145].

Women played a major role in these patronage networks. Socially subordinate to the (often absent) males of their families, the wives and daughters of the elite opened their homes and their pocketbooks to holy vagabonds, who could at least provide them with some amusement and just possibly with the kingdom of heaven. Mar'ia Iur'evna Cherkasskaia (1696-1747), the widow of Aleksei Mikhailovich Cherkasskii (1680-1742), numbered among Andreian's most faithful patrons in her last years. As a member of the Empress Anna's cabinet, her husband had condemned several of Andreian's predecessors to death in 1733 and 1734. Yet, as a member of the Trubetskoi clan, an old boiar family, Mar'ia Iur'evna must have been attracted to the increasingly archaic form of charismatic Orthodoxy that Andreian represented. This attraction seems to have run in the family, for Mar'ia's daughter Varvara, who was the sole heir to the Cherkasskii fortune of 70,000 serfs, also supported the holy fool. After her marriage to Pëtr Borisovich Sheremetev in 1743, Andreian had access to the venerable Sheremetev household as well [Reutskii 1872: 42-43; Meehan-Waters 1982: 113].

Clearly, Andreian understood how to profit from his contacts with the Muscovite elite. On Princess Cherkasskaia's Moscow property beyond the Sukharev Tower, Andreian built himself a magnificent six-room apartment and a wooden church with funds from sympathetic contributors. The apartment was well-furnished, with several icons in frames of gold and silver, rugs and wall hangings from the famous Zatrapeznyi family textile factory, and exquisite porcelain vessels [Reutskii 1872: 67]. The apartment was so spacious that for over six years (sometime between 1747 and 1751, and again from 1752 to 1757) the very commission which condemned Andreian and his comrades used the rooms as office, archive, and prison [Nechaev 1889: 100]. In addition to his living quarters, Andreian also constructed a wooden church, the Church of the Holy Trinity, in his courtyard in 1744, the year before his arrest. Needless to say, he had not received the proper building permits required for a church, and the structure remained unconsecrated when the Commission legally confiscated it [Nechaev 1889: 156, no. 94].

His patrons' largess also benefitted others. No fewer than fifteen nuns of the Ascension Varsonof'evskii Convent depended on Andreian for support. Like all the

Moscow monastic institutions, the Varsonof'evskii Convent was idiorrhythmic, and so its inmates had to provide for themselves. To house these followers, the holy fool bought two of the convent's cells and had a third one built [Reutskii 1872: 43; Nechaev 1889: 122]. Monastic cells were not cheap; the prices ranged anywhere from 50 to 150 rubles, or from ten to thirty times the annual wage of an unskilled laborer. Naturally, the nuns did not neglect their own patron, and they faithfully attended Andreian's secret assemblies.

With his patronage network, Andreian was also able to help his co-religionists rise in the church hierarchy. When Andreian visited the former Prince Iurii Shcherbatov in the Andreevskii Monastery, he also met the monk Dmitrii (Danilo Gusev). Subsequently, the holy fool introduced him to several lords. In 1741, these contacts enabled Dmitrii to secure a position as abbot of the Theologian Hermitage in Moscow District [Nechaev 1889: 121].

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Although Peter and his successors in the first half of the eighteenth century sought to transform Russian religiosity and eradicate holy foolery (along with other ascetic practices that the reformers considered dubious and irrational), the phenomenon survived all of their efforts (and even the more brutal repression of the Soviet period). Despite anti-religious persecution, for example, the Siberian town of Ishim, Tiumen' oblast', boasted many holy fools throughout the Soviet period [Kramor 2005: 57–76]. Partly this failure to root out holy foolery was simply because the imperial state had neither the resources nor the will to eliminate iurodstvo; those holy fools who suffered arrest and sentencing were often suspected of more serious political offenses. However, these investigations provide clear evidence of the social networks within which the holy fool operated in the early eighteenth century; the same pious nobles who supported monasteries like the Sarov hermitage also offered refuge to the wandering urban ascetics who imitated such storied saints as the Byzantine Andrew the Fool or Symeon of Emesa.

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