

Posted to H-EarlySlavic Sat, 5 Apr 2014 11:10:15 -0400

Three new publications in the academic “discipline” of petrovedenie

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Three new publications in the academic “discipline” of *petrovedenie*.

Below are review notices of three recent books:

**Puteshestvie po Evrope boiarina B. P. Sheremeteva 1697-1699*

*D. Iu. Guzevich. *Zakhoroneniia Leforta i Gordona*

**Petrovskoe vremia v litsakh—2013 (Trudy Gos. Ermitazha, LXX)*.

Puteshestvie po Evrope boiarina B. P. Sheremeteva 1697-1699. Izdanie podgotovili L. A. Ol'shevskaia, A. A. Reshetova, S. V. Travnikov. [ser.: *Literaturnye pamiatniki*]. Moskva: Nauka, 2013. 511 pp. ISBN 978-5-02-038103-2.

For decades we have all benefitted from the text publications in this venerable series, known for its careful editions, interpretive essays, and extensive commentaries. The scholars responsible for this volume have also produced “companion” ones, containing the account of the European travels of Petr Andreevich Tolstoi during the same years Boris Petrovich Sheremetev was abroad and that of Ioann Luk'ianov, who went to the Holy Land in 1701-1703. Often the works published in *Literaturnye pamiatniki* are ones available in many earlier editions and in translation. The long redaction of Sheremetev's narrative is no exception, having first appeared in print in 1773 (!); it is also known in French and Polish translations. As the editors point out here, none of the earlier editions might be termed “scholarly.”

This new volume offers four different versions of the text: *prostrannaia*, *sokrashchennaia*, *osobaia* and *kratkaia*, the last two being made available for the first time. The long text reproduces Novikov's 1773 edition (with variant readings from an 18th-century manuscript copy based on it), for it seems that the original manuscript he used that had been held by the Sheremetev family may have been destroyed when Novikov's papers were confiscated after his later arrest.

While the various shorter versions of the text contain occasional material not found in the long version, for the most part they will be of interest as evidence of how Sheremetev's text was treated by posterity. The condensed (*sokrashchennaia*) version probably was created while Sheremetev was still alive, its feature being to eliminate some of the formal reportage that Sheremetev would have included in his official report (*stateinyi spisok*) on his return to Russia,

and thereby to create a text that might have interested a more general readership. This contrasts with the fate of P. A. Tolstoi's narrative, which seems never to have been intended for broader distribution. The editors posit that someone close to Sheremetev who had accompanied him on his travels was responsible for the alteration of the text. The *osobaia* redaction, involving a different kind of condensation and based on the condensed redaction, has survived in a single copy, the work attributed to a functionary who worked for a merchant in Simbirsk in the 1730s or 1740s. Lastly, the short version of the text reflects the work of someone who had a particular interest in traditional religious pilgrimage accounts; hence it selects in the first instance Sheremetev's many descriptions of visits to shrines and the relics they contained. This redaction eliminates most of the longer text's descriptions of diplomatic affairs.

The hundred-plus-page essay on Sheremetev by Ol'shevskaia and Travnikov is going to add little to what we know about this important man, based as it is largely on some of the earliest biographical accounts of him and on well-mined documentary collections. There is no pretense here at providing a full biography. His life prior to his departure on the "secret" mission Peter authorized is but sketched out, with some of the most interesting issues such as his education (about which, granted, we know little for sure) left vague. His later career as an important army commander is not relevant here. Much of the essay is simply following in his footsteps as he traveled, summarizing his narrative account, but helpfully for the general reader placing the events on a broader canvas. Thus, there are digressions on some of the political questions which his mission was intended to address. Of some interest are the comments about what Sheremetev knew concerning their history and the broader canvas of current events (how he knew such subjects is not discussed though).

Travnikov is presumably the one responsible for the interesting section of the essay discussing the genre of the account (somewhere between a *stateinyi spisok* and a medieval pilgrimage narrative), a subject on which he wrote in his kandidat dissertation and a book based on it (*Putevye zapiski petrovskogo vremeni [problema istorizma]*. M., 1987). Both the specific content and the descriptive devices raise the question (which others have addressed previously) as to whether Sheremetev himself wrote the account. The editors here hypothesize that his son may have been responsible for a lot of the text.

To a considerable degree this essay reflects the discomfort we still find among scholars who have yet to reach a consensus on how to treat figures such as Sheremetev who were very much anchored in Muscovite tradition (especially in their deep religiosity) even as they served the Tsar-Reformer and perforce had to learn new ways. Significant parts of the narrative concern visits to churches and shrines and descriptions of the important relics they contained. Can we simply characterize all this as evidence of the curious dichotomy or "contradictions" of Baroque culture, where the secular and sacred could coexist, comfortably, it seems, in the same person? Does that kind of interpretation (repeated here from standard treatments including ones by D. S. Likhachev) really work very well in helping us to understand Sheremetev? At least now we have a readily accessible edition of his important travel narrative, which may help in re-examining such questions about the culture of the Russian elite in the Petrine era.

Dmitrii [Iur'evich] Guzevich. *Zakhoroneniia Leforta i Gordona: mogily, kladbishcha, tserkvi. Mify i realii*. Sankt-Peterburg: Evropeiskii dom, 2013. 336 pp. + illustrations. ISBN 978-5-8015-0305-9.

If *petrovedenie* is anything like an academic “discipline,” then I suppose its institutional home, as much as anywhere, is in the Institut Petra Velikogo (headed by the eminent specialist E. V. Anisimov), whose imprimatur stands at the head of the title page here and on two other volumes which Paris-based D. Iu. Guzevich has produced (co-authored with Irina D. Guzevich): a 900-page analytical bibliography of publications about Peter’s “Great Embassy” of 1697-8 and a nearly 700-page monograph on it. The Institute (which receives funding from several academic and cultural organizations) is not only supporting original scholarly publication but also sponsoring Russian translations of important Western scholarship. On the face of it then, there was every reason to expect the current volume to be of substantial interest, given the prominence of both Franz Lefort and Patrick Gordon among Peter’s most trusted early collaborators.

Unfortunately, my expectations here were not met, largely because the book has no real argument (beyond the simple conclusion we don’t currently know where either Lefort or Gordon’s remains are, or whether they even still exist), and it consists at least metaphorically (in an age where people presumably no longer use note cards) of little more than a stack of such cards thrown at the printer without any serious attempt to edit out a great deal that is hardly relevant to the ostensible subject of the book. My annoyance here is compounded by the references by number, to the 615 consecutively numbered items in the bibliography (in many cases separate volumes in a single series having been given separate numbers), which then require so much back and forth if one is interested in reading the extensive endnotes and knowing what their sources are. Short titles, please!

Guzevich’s diligence in searching out sources is certainly to be admired, ranging from a close examination of everything we know about the earliest Protestant and Catholic churches and cemeteries in Moscow to searches in the Lefort family papers in Switzerland. One of the main points here is that the analysis can educate the reader in how historical myths are created and how one must therefore peel away layers of mis-understanding and error and get back to the most basic sources in order to discover the truth. But to a considerable degree here the “myths” that are being dispelled don’t amount to much — someone misunderstood or mis-represented where the bodies were interred (or where they were moved) and then the error was repeated and compounded in general accounts that may have had no pretense to original research. There is no real interest here in what we might learn about the larger issue of the mythical aura that grew around Peter and his companions. The search for the facts boils down to determining where the cemeteries were or might have been, which churches existed when and whether there is evidence about remains having been moved when the possible burial places were destroyed or rebuilt. True, for anyone interested in the history of the Protestant and Catholic communities in early modern Russia, there is something new to be had here. Also, for this reader, it was some interest to see how the deaths and funerals of Lefort and Gordon were reported by contemporaries (the reports finding their way into Dutch newspapers).

An appendix contains a revised version of the author’s earlier article on Lefort’s illness and death (updated with some new analysis by medical experts). Those interested in the history of

Russian medicine of the time will find this of value. Another appendix is in the form of a dialogue between Guzevich and Irina Kuvshinskaia, who had written a critical review of the book manuscript and disagrees with some of the author's conclusions.

There is a chronology of the main dates concerning the buildings of the Protestant Reformed and Roman Catholic churches in Moscow. There is an index of personal names, and 43 good quality black-and-white illustrations, to which, however, there is no explicit cross-referencing when the material in them is discussed in the text. There is little to help us understand the relevance of illustrating two versions of the famous *lubok* of the mice burying the cat. On the other hand, for the discussion of the buildings in Moscow's Foreign Suburb and their later fate, some of the images, maps and modern photographs are of real interest, if for no reason other than the fact that they illustrate how much has been irretrievably lost and how difficult it is to trace their history.

In conclusion Guzevich suggests possible lines for further inquiry about the burials. One can share his pessimism about possible new discoveries, a pessimism that perhaps is intended to throw cold water on schemes by enthusiasts to start digging around in the way the myths about Ivan IV's supposedly rich library continue to inspire calls for actual excavations. May Lefort and Gordon rest in peace.

Petrovskoe vremia v litsakh—2013. K 400-letiiu Doma Romanovykh (1613-2013). Materialy nauchnoi konferentsii / Personalities from Peter the Great's Time—2013. To Mark the 400th Anniversary of the Romanov Dynasty (1613-2013). Proceedings of the Conference. (= Trudy Gosudarstvennogo Ermitazha, LXX). Sankt-Peterburg: Izdatel'stvo Gosudarstvennogo Ermitazha, 2013. 340 pp. ISBN 978-5-93572-531-0.

Starting soon after its extensive restoration and reopening, the Menshikov Palace Museum in St. Petersburg (a branch of the Hermitage) began hosting an annual conference generally devoted to a topic connected with the Palace itself and its original owner or to the Petrine era more broadly. Initially, short summaries of these conferences were published under the main title *Petrovskoe vremia v litsakh* (the first I have found cataloged appeared in 1998), that choice of title illustrating what Ernest Zitser in a review article several years ago (*Kritika* 6/2 [2005]) pointed out as one of the laudatory features of the new outpouring of scholarship on the Petrine period, namely a focus on individuals' and families' histories, where the subjects were not just the famous few or the monarch himself. Starting around 2004, the proceedings of these conferences have been published more fully, the current volume containing a number of rather long essays alongside short communications. I shall not attempt here to comment on each and every one.

Such collections of conference papers rarely can be expected to inspire a fundamental shift in historical analysis. That certainly is true here, where the meticulously documented essays for the most part either focus on what may seem inconsequential detail or add "more of the same" to what is already pretty well known. If there is a guiding "theme" it has to be the rather worn cliché about the Peter the great reformer, but that is hardly the main point here, even if we come away with interesting insights into his personal involvement in matters as inconsequential as

where Dutch tulip bulbs were to be planted in the Summer Garden. Many of the articles are a pleasure precisely because they cast light on the familiar and largely well studied. Recalling strolling through the Summer Garden in St. Petersburg and visiting the lovingly restored rooms of the Menshikov Palace, I greatly enjoyed reading several such pieces. Sergei Olegovich Androsov writes about the recent re-discovery of two of the Italian sculptures Peter's agent Savva Raguzinskii had purchased for him in Italy but which had later disappeared (one now in a private gallery in St. Petersburg, the other in a private collection in Paris). Galina Aleksandrovna Khvostova offers an engaging "history of an object," an account of the "misfortunes" (*zlokliucheniia*) of a single statue, the allegorical depiction of Beauty that had been in the Summer Garden, which was damaged and badly restored several times before finally ending up in the Mikhailovskii Palace museum when all the remaining original statuary of the garden was replaced *in situ* by replicas in 2009-12. Viktor Abramovich Korentsvit's re-examination of several plans for the Summer Garden and the correspondence concerning its design argues strongly that Peter's personal preferences (and even perhaps preliminary sketches) had the determining role in its initial design. Until I read Boris Sergeevich Makarov's essay here, I had no idea gardeners had been hired in Sweden by Peter's agent and had substantial careers in Russia. A documentary appendix to this article includes interesting documents about how one of them traveled on commission to the Netherlands to buy specific trees to bring back to St. Petersburg. We even have here the log of his trip, indicating times of travel and arrival in each city as he went West across Europe. Supplementing L. P. Dorofeeva's earlier good work in studying the Dutch tiles which still decorate several of the rooms in the Menshikov Palace, Ekaterina Aleksandrovna Andreeva provides a more refined classification of the basic types (following the standard Dutch study by Jan Pluis), illustrating each with good photographs.

Two of the articles bear directly on some of my current research concerns. Artem Alekseevich Andreev describes the embassy sent by the Emir of Bukhara (it was his initiative) to St. Petersburg in 1716-1717. The other also relates to Petrine diplomacy—Svetlana Romanovna Dolgova introduces and publishes the contemporary Russian translation (and provides a picture of the obverse of its German source, a printed sheet) of a "program" for a costume ball which Peter and his entourage attended (and for which they went in costume) at the Habsburg court in Vienna in 1698. We know which "role" each of the named Viennese grandees had; while anonymous, the Russian participants were also listed among the *dramatis personae*. Peter apparently sent the printed program back to Russia, where, as with other foreign newspapers, it was translated in the Diplomatic Chancery.

Two other articles here deserve particular comment. One is Elena Vasil'evna Gusarova's sharply worded, long essay laying out the evidence that the French astronomer Josef-Nicolas Delisle, who was persuaded to join the Russian Academy of Sciences, was mainly interested in feathering his own nest and was really in the employ of the French secret service. As a result, he agreed to undertake mapping projects which he never completed, and used the opportunity to obtain as many Russian maps as he could and ship them off to France. Gusarova is incensed that what she (and other serious students of early Russian cartography) consider to be important primary source material is still relatively inaccessible in French collections and that projects for its proper elucidation and publication have to date never succeeded. She has particularly harsh words for N. I. Nevskaiia, considered to be an authority on the early development of scientific

astronomy in Russia, for whitewashing Delisle and, as implied here, obstructing any efforts to publish the Delisle materials.

In a very different vein, Galina Ivanovna Sergeeva devotes her long article to a pioneering museum exhibition organized on very short notice in 1925, in conjunction with a major celebration of the 200th anniversary of the founding of the Russian Academy of Sciences. The exhibition's theme was Russian daily life (*byt*) in the first quarter of the 18th century; the venue was the Petrine summer palace in the Summer Garden. As she emphasizes, the idea of organizing a museum exhibition with the broad goal of illustrating aspects of the lives of various social classes was quite new and served as a model then for a lot of subsequent museum exhibitions in Russia. For those who know him mainly for his "reconstruction" of the medieval "Trinity Chronicle," the role of Mikhail Dmitrievich Priselkov in the conceptualization and execution of the exhibition may come as a surprise. He was at the time the head of the *Istoriko-bytovyi otdel* of the State Russian Museum, which was given the responsibility for the work. In a matter of only a couple of months, the organizers pulled together from a wide range of library, archival and museum sources in St. Petersburg an astonishing array of artefacts (not only their collection but also how they all fitted into the exhibit space seems miraculous). Not the least of the challenges which had to be overcome was that precisely in this period many of the cultural institutions were in chaos, as administrative control was changing, personnel were being replaced, and in some cases the very institutions were being packed up and closed. Since some of the key documentation has been lost (oddly, there is no surviving copy of the guidebook published for the exhibition), part of Sergeeva's task here has been to reconstruct a list what items were included in each of the thematically arranged displays.

In short, this volume (and, I would assume, the earlier ones in the series) has a lot to offer anyone with a serious interest in the Petrine period and in some of the later commemorations of Peter and his times. Apart from the subjects mentioned above, there is much more, including new information on Aleksei Petrovich's childhood, a previously unpublished inventory of Menshikov's possessions and a detailed review of Peter's contacts in Paris in 1717, drawing on new information from French sources including contemporary newspapers. There are clearly written abstracts in English for all of the articles and a table of contents in English. My only regret is that several essays keyed to visual material include no pictures of what is being discussed.