



ISSN: 2158-7051

INTERNATIONAL
JOURNAL OF
RUSSIAN STUDIES

ISSUE NO. 2 (2013/2)

“TSAR AND GOD” AND OTHER ESSAYS IN RUSSIAN CULTURAL SEMIOTICS,. By Ayse Dietrich*, Published by: Academic Studies Press, Boston. Year of Publishing: 2012. Subject Area: History. Book Type: Reference Book. Total Number of Pages: 272. ISBN: 978-1-936235-49-0

This book pertains to the fields of literary studies, social history, cultural history and politics. The book is comprised of a collection of essays by experts in the field, such as B.A. Uspenskij and V. M. Zhivov.

The book was translated from Russian by Marcus C. Levitt, David Budgen and Liv Bliss and edited by Marcus C. Levitt. It is published by Academic Studies Press in 2012.

The book consists of six articles. The title of the first article is “Tsar and God: Semiotic Aspects of the Sacralization of the Monarch in Russia”, written by B.A. Uspenskij and V. M. Zhivov. The aim of the first article is to show how differing attitudes toward the tsar in Russia during various periods of Russian political and cultural history, how diverse aspects of Russian cultural life converged around this question and how in different periods the very same texts could be interpreted as having very different content, as they related to the interests of that particular historical period. Also in this article the religious character of the attitude toward the monarch (such as calling the tsar ‘holy’) and the origin of this tradition, the process of the sacralization are discussed; it concludes that the essence of this Russian religious and political thought was the transference of the functions of the Byzantine *basileus* onto the Russian tsar that could be realized in the conception of Moscow as the Third Rome and in the Byzantization of the Russian state and ecclesiastical life.

The second article “Tsar and Pretender: Samozvanchestvo or Royal Imposture in Russia as a Cultural-Historical Phenomenon” is written by B.A. Uspenskij. It talks about the royal imposture and the nature of it as a psychological and religious phenomenon in Russian culture which made its first appearance with the first False Dmitrii. In the article it is stated that royal imposture is a typically Russian phenomenon; connected with the process of the sacralization of monarchy and part of the tradition of anti-behaviour in Russia.

The third article “Enthronement in the Russian and Byzantine Traditions” is also written by B.A. Uspenskij. This article is concerned with the tradition of enthronement in Russia which began with

the coronation of Ivan IV on January 16, 1547. This tradition originated in the kingdom of Muscovy after the fall of Byzantium and flourished when Moscow was conceived of as the New Constantinople and the Third Rome. In the article it is stated that the Byzantine imperial practice had no substantive influence on Russian tsars' own rite of enthronement.

The fourth article "Europe as Metaphor and Metonymy (in Relation to the History of Russia)", likewise by B.A. Uspenskij, deals with the question whether Russia really belongs to Europe. This phenomenon is explained through the name of Europe itself which may function both as metonymy and as metaphor in Russian culture. It is stated that during the Europeanization process of Peter I Europe became for Russia not a metonymy, but a metaphor. Russia, instead of becoming an organic part of Europe, became a New Europe and Peter I created a cultural contrast between Russia and Europe by building a wall separating Russia from Europe. The negative impacts of Peter I's reforms are also discussed in the article.

The fifth article "Cultural Reforms in Peter I's System of Transformations", which is written by V.M. Zhivov, concerns the Petrine cultural innovations and obstacles that existed in the framework of traditional culture.

The last article, "The Myth of the State in the Age of Enlightenment and Its Destruction in Late Eighteenth-Century Russia" written by V.M. Zhivov, deals with the Age of Enlightenment and its reflections in Russian traditional culture. The basic elements of the new ideology of the state, the mythology of the state and the development of the imperial cult are all discussed in the article.

For anyone concerned with or interested in the topic of cultural development in Russia, particularly during the monarchy, this book would be invaluable, providing as it does in-depth information on the developments and transformations in Russian history, culture, politics, customs and traditions. "*Tsar and God*" and *Other Essays in Russian Cultural Semiotics* is likely to become a primary reference source for future research in the study of the historical transformation of the Russian state and Russian society.

***Ayse Dietrich** - Editor and the founder of the International Journal of Russian Studies e-mail: editor@ijors.net , dietrichayse@yahoo.com . Professor Ayse Dietrich currently teaches part-time in the Department of History, Middle East Technical University e-mail: dayse@metu.edu.tr

© 2010, IJORS - INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF RUSSIAN STUDIES