

# MONKS AND MONEY IN THE EARLY MODERN MUSCOWY: VOW OF POVERTY AND MONASTIC TESTAMENTS

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Preserved from the seventeenth century, a corpus of documents that relates to Muscovite monasticism is vast and embraces a range of manifold texts such as acts, literary works, formal and official records, correspondence and testaments<sup>1</sup>. The latter bring to the foreground various issues of interest, both for a historian and a philologist. Above all, the very fact of an ascetic monk legally bequeathing money and possessions and documenting it in a will demonstrates a certain gap between formal monastic rules, which on a regular basis included the vow of poverty and non-possession, and real monastic practices. On the one hand, as we see from archived sources, it was not uncommon for a monk to compose and get approved a testament, thus bringing his worldly life into order before death; on the other hand, these monastic testaments were obviously to come into a conflict with a holy order of testator and with existing monastic rules, either oral or written. My principal goal in this article is to enhance our understanding of practical and conceptual aspects of monastic life of the seventeenth-century Muscovy through discussing real practices of observation, neglect, and re-interpretation of the vow of poverty and non-possession by individual monks, as represented in their testaments – acts of last will. The study focuses on a peculiar document – a testament of a monk Simeon of Polotsk (1629-1680), a court poet and preacher of the Tzars Aleksei Mikhailovich (1629-1676) and Fedor Alekseevich (1661-1682). Simeon's testament illustrates one of the ways in which monks used to reconcile worldly riches with keeping the vow and gives a glimpse of the everyday life of a monk, highlighting the ways in which money was earned and spent in monasteries.

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<sup>1</sup> For a digitalized corpus of seventeenth-century texts see for example "Vostochnaya Literatura" [Eastern Literature]. Available at: <http://www.vostlit.info/Texts/Dokumenty/Russ/xvii.htm> [access: 12-09-2016].



# 1. XVIIITH-CENTURY MONKS AND MONASTERIES: INCOME, POSSESSIONS, AND WEALTH

In the Orthodox monastic tradition, a vow of poverty and non-possession is one of three vows taken by novices when tonsured, and one of the essential maxims of monastic life. The perception of the vow amongst monastics and Church leaders changed dramatically over centuries and local traditions. Monastic rules of pre-Petrine Russia demonstrate various attitudes towards the vow – from a complete and absolute non-possession imposed on an individual monk to tolerating large monasteries becoming influential economic actors. Whilst no universal monastic rule existed and codes of conduct were often oral, defined by custom and tradition, real monastic practices of dealing with earnings, income, money, and possessions could and did tremendously differ from theoretical conceptions and ideas. The everyday life of individual monks and monasteries as institutions included various economic activities, some of which could sometimes go far beyond vital necessity and earning a living.

In general, pre-Petrine Russian monasteries had two principal sources of income, that varied greatly depending on the epoch: they were monastery estates and state provision. Chantries, contributions of newly accepted novices and monks; private donations coming from the royal family, nobility and peasants also formed significant, though unstable and highly unpredictable earnings. Famous and widely known convents received more donations while small and less famed monasteries often experienced a lack of money and had to survive by trade, craft, and occasional donations.

By the second half of the seventeenth century, large convents were growing in power as active economic actors – they owned and managed large estates, entered into lawsuits, maintained and augmented their monetary and material wealth. Though a monetary profit was not the goal of a monastery activity, certain convents would often not only trade but lend out money to peasants and lower nobility, usually with interest. Receipts and payment books of Russian monasteries of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries preserve numerous debt documents from which we learn that monasteries, that acted as corporations, and even individual monks [primarily Fathers Superior, treasurers, cellarers, but sometimes also common monks and monk-priests] lent money to people living around and thus earned money and accumulated wealth.

The Moscow Novodevichii nunnery could serve as a vivid example of such a convent of the discussed period. Run by energetic Mothers Superior from Belarus, the nunnery, where dwelt more than 150 nuns, enjoyed vast estates over



which it entered various lawsuits with other landlords. As sources show, one of the lawsuits, over a fishing holding, was finally lost by the nunnery, but the procedure lasted for four years and during that period the fishing holding was in the use of the nunnery<sup>2</sup>.

## 2. MONASTIC TESTAMENTS OF THE XVIIITH CENTURY TRADITIONS AND INNOVATIONS

Interpretations of the vow of poverty and non-possession and attitudes towards it are hard to study due to the character of sources we have at hand. Information provided by respectively well-preserved official documents on the topic, such as ecclesiastical compilations of laws, decrees of Patriarchs and so on, give a one-sided view of the problem since they record an ideology and prescriptive; in other words – how it should be, that was not necessarily equal to the actual situation. Financial documents of convents and monasteries contain factual data, with no explanation or interpretation, and could serve as supportive evidence only. Compared to the first group of sources, these documents stand on the opposite side of the scale, for they reflect how the things were, leaving aside ideological matters. Private documents such as memoirs, diaries, and correspondence that could help in bridging the gap between the two, are almost inaccessible for the Russian seventeenth century for two principal reasons: non-occurrence of these genres in the Russian literary culture of the time and low preservation of sporadic private writings such as letters, for example. The only sources that could serve our goal in understanding private lives and the economic behaviour of monks and clergy are their testaments<sup>3</sup> or written last wills.

These fragmentary studied and highly informative documents reflect real, private monastic practices of dealing with money and possessions in the context of the vow of poverty and non-possession. Monastic testaments and testaments of clerical authorities, together with testaments of peasants and lower nobility, form one of the most numerous groups of preserved wills from the seventeenth century. Part of these documents originates from South-Western regions

2 M.V. CHISTIAKOVA, *Monakhini s «Beloi Rosi» v Novodevich'ém monastyre* [Nuns from «White Russian» in Novodevichii nunnery], Moscow 2000, 59.

3 In literature testaments are often called «the most private documents». Look Iu.M. ESKIN, «Zaveshchanie kniazia Dmitriia Pozharskogo» [The Testament of kniaz' Dmitrii Pozharskii], *Otechestvennaia istoriia* 1 (2000) 144. U. AUGUSTYNIAK, «Wizerunek Krzysztofa II Radziwiłła jako magnata-ewangelika w świetle jego testamentów», *Przegląd historyczny* 81(1990) 461-477.



of Muscovy, i. e. from the territories of present-time Ukraine and Belarus. It should be noted here, that monastic life in the mentioned territories considerably differed from that in the Muscovy state. Whilst experiencing a long and rather strong influence of the Catholic church, Orthodox clergy in these territories developed an individual tradition, that in some aspects reflected those of the Polish Catholic clergy.

Clerical status of a testator in many respects predefined linguistic layout and juridical aspect of a testament. Wills of common monks and clerical hierarchs differed greatly, with the former being private acts and the latter – public documents. Vow of poverty and holy order together with a significant position within the church hierarchy imposed more limitations on contents of testaments of metropolitans and Fathers Superior than on testaments of regular monks. Obligatory usage of certain document structures and linguistic formulae was prescribed mainly by a custom, not by a testator's status.

Thus, testaments of Church and monastic leaders were characterised as «publicistic in nature and socially important in contents and goal, since they were addressed to public»<sup>4</sup>. These testaments were not private acts, but rather socially important documents. Their title, «a spiritual charter», [*dukhovnaia gramota*] closely reflected their contents – almost purely spiritual in character. Testaments of the Church and monastery authorities could embrace, besides spiritual instructions blessings, and forgiveness, commandments to fellow clergy and congregation<sup>5</sup>, or even to a secular government; rules for a convent or a monastery; last requests of the testators. Feodosii, the Father Superior of Maniavskii v chest' Vozdvizheniia Kresta Gospodnia Skete monastery, divided his testament into twenty chapters containing instructions about love, humility, placability, obedience, patience, various craft and making bread<sup>6</sup>. Money matters were usually marginally mentioned, sometimes with the reference to inventories, which co-existed with testaments and were meant for economic and household arrangements. The Russian Patriarch Ioakim in his vast testament wrote about his cell belongings, naming among them only «money and clothes»<sup>7</sup>.

4 PANICH T.V., «Drevnerusskie dukhovnye zaveshchaniia XV–XVII vv. v agiograficheskom povestvovanii» [Old-Russian Testaments of the XVth–XVIIth Centuries in Autobiographic Narrative], *Gumanitarnye nauki Sibiri* 3 (2013) 34.

5 PANICH, «Drevnerusskie dukhovnye zaveshchaniia XV–XVII vv. v agiograficheskom povestvovanii», 34.

6 See *Akty, otnosiashchiesia k istorii Iuzhnozapadnoi Rusi* [Acts related to History of South-West Russia], ed. P.A. Petrushevich, Lviv 1868, 56–98.

7 I.E. ZABELIN, *Zhitie i zaveshchanie sviatishhego patriarkha moskovskogo Ioakima* [Life



Testaments of Muscovite monks from the seventeenth century primarily dealt with personal items [clothes, dishes, sometimes books] and debts: money they owed to somebody and money owed to them; funds collected in such a way were supposed to be spent on funeral ceremony. For example, an elderly monk Iosif Koptev from Prilutskii monastery wrote in his testament in 1608: «And I, an elderly monk Iosif, do not owe anything to anybody, I do not have any debt, onerous or nor»<sup>8</sup>.

In the seventeenth century, under the influence of Baroque and West European, particularly Polish, cultural traditions, testaments of clergy and laity began to change, acquiring features unusual for the traditional Old-Russian style. Now testaments were perceived as an indispensable attribute of the conception of *ars bene moriendi* – good, or proper, death of a faithful Christian. It was believed that a person who remembered about death during all his life and who thus did not sin, was well-prepared for the eternal life. Written wills allowed a person to finalise and put into order all their worldly deeds and to prepare for an after-life. Testaments as literary and official texts embodied two conflicting spheres of human life – material and spiritual. While *dispositio* (distributions made by the testator) formed an economic core of the testament, preamble and conclusion framed money matters with the testator's confession and repentance. Confessional introduction combined with a careful, business-like listing of funds, belongings, beneficiaries, and distributions constitute the conceptual nature of the testament as a genre, providing a rich source for studying. It is interesting to note, that Muscovite monks and monastic leaders who usually served as mediators in transfer of a new, Baroque art style from West Europe and Poland to Russia, almost escaped its influence themselves, and only those who were close to an ecclesiastical and secular elite, assimilated new style late in the seventeenth century.

### 3. SIMEON OF POLOTSK: A MONK AT THE TZAR'S COURT

The second half of the seventeenth century witnessed several waves of population migration to Muscovy from regions of present-time Belarus and Ukraine, caused by often military campaigns and religious instability. At that time, Polish

and Testament of the Holy Patriarch Ioakim]. Saint-Petersburg 1879, 113.

<sup>8</sup> ARKHEOGRAFICHESKAIA KOMISSIIA. *Akty iuridicheskie, ili sobranie form starinnogo deloproizvodstva* [Juridical Acts, or a Collection of Forms of Ancient Records]. Saint-Petersburg 1838, 459.



traditions were coming into vogue at the court of the Russian Tzar, and educated and crafted migrants from the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth (*Rzeczpospolita*) were particularly welcomed by the Muscovy elite.

At that time, many convents and individual monks moved to Moscow «at the Tzar's name» (the phrase literally meant «with the Tzar's permission»). The large Epiphany convent of Kuteino, that played an important role in the cultural life of the South-West region, was relocated to Muscovy together with its printing facilities. With the blessing of the Russian Patriarch Nikon<sup>9</sup> part of brethren, the Father Superior and the printing facility of the convent moved to Valdaiskii Iverskii Monastery. The monastery's printing facility was later moved to the Moscow Printing House (*Pechatnyi Dvor*).

Individual monks, with the permission of their Fathers Superior and the Patriarch, or often even invited by the Tzar or his courtiers, moved to Moscow in search of a better life. However, after the campaign, when Malorossija was annexed to Russia, relocations for monks was simplified, and many of them moved to Muscovy monasteries even without special permissions<sup>10</sup>. In 1656, during his Riga war campaign, the Russian Tzar Aleksei Mikhailovich visited many monasteries and convents in Belarus, including the Kuteino Epiphany monastery and the Polotsk Epiphany monastery. Two wood carvers were invited into the service of the Muscovite Tzar from the Kuteino monastery. In Polotsk, the Tzar Aleksei Mikhailovich met a young and well-educated monk, Simeon Petrovskii-Sitnianovich who taught in the primary school at the Polotsk Epiphany monastery. Together with the Father Superior, other brethren, and school students, Simeon gave to the Tzar a welcome oratory address, composed in a Polish Baroque style. Aleksei Mikhailovich enjoyed the performance, and several years later Simeon relocated to Moscow, where he became the first Russian court poet and preacher.

A monk Simeon Petrovskii-Sitnianovich, Samuil by his secular name, was known to his contemporaries and researchers as Simeon of Polotsk, the first in Russia court poet. Simeon was one of the most unique figures at the Muscovy Tzar court of the last quarter of the seventeenth century. Born in Polotsk, Belarus in 1629, he got his education in Kyiv and then in a college somewhere abroad

9 S.E. SOMOV, *Orthodox Convents and Monasteries of Belarus*, Minsk 2003, 91-92. Available at: <http://orda.of.by/lib/pmb/3> [access: 25-08-2016].

10 K.V. KHARLAMPOVICH, *Malorossiiskoe vliianie na velikoruskuiu tserkovennuiu zhizn'* [Malorussian influence on Muscovite Church Life], 1, Kazan 1914, 251.

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[presumably Vilno college in the Grand Duchy of Lithuania]<sup>11</sup> and, back to Polotsk in 1656, he took his vows and was accepted as an instructor at a school of the Epiphany Monastery.

Simeon's social status at the feudal and still in many respects medieval court of the Muscovy Tzar was far from being common. Throughout his life Simeon remained in the status of a hieromonk, or a monk-priest, one of the lowest positions in the monastery hierarchy. Nevertheless, when in Moscow he was appointed a teacher of the royal children, he got a permission to found his own typography, where he printed books without patriarchal licence, and was admitted to the selected company of boyars and Church authorities.

His financial situation and behaviour, examined in the context of his holy order and therefore – of his vow of poverty and non-possession, deserve a special attention, since they demonstrate how monastic rules could be accommodated to real practices and life style. Unlike other monks, Simeon did not rely for his living on the Zaikonospasskii monastery [a monastery he was assigned to when in Moscow]. We know from Simeon's petition letters to the Tzar<sup>12</sup> that he received a modest monetary allowance. In addition to that, Simeon was entitled to a material pension that included everything necessary for living such as food, forage, paper and so on. It is also possible to suggest that Simeon may have received some monetary aid from his home Polotsk Epiphany monastery. In the *intitulatio* of his testament Simeon states: «I, a sinful servant of God, Simeon Petrovskii-Sitnianovich a monk-priest of the Polotsk monastery of the Saint God's Epiphany»<sup>13</sup> [*cursive is mine*]. In the seventeenth century, monks could travel to other convents and another places with the permission of a Father Superior and stay there for a defined period of time; however, Simeon's relocation was not a mere visit, or a trip, or a pilgrimage – he moved to Moscow in order to stay there for the rest of his life. In that case, the juridical aspect of such relocation is rather unclear – did he continue to be formally affiliated with the Polotsk monastery where he took his vows? What then was his status at the Moscow Zaikonospasskii monastery? Was he allowed to take up any post in that monastery [some of

11 A.N. ROBINSON, *Simeon Polotskii i ego knigoizdatel'skaia deiatel'nost'* [Simeon of Polotsk and his Book-printing Work], Moscow 1982, 9.

12 Pis'ma Simeona Polotskogo [Letter of Simeon of Polotsk], *Vestnik Evropy* 162 part 17 (1828) 43.

13 State Historical museum, Moscow. Department of manuscripts. Collection of the count A. S. Uvarov, № 247-4\* (GIM OR Uvar. sobr. №247-4\*). Testament of Simeon of Polotsk. f. 10 r. Hereinafter the folios from the manuscript are indicated in brackets in the text. Translation is mine.



Simeon's biographers state that he was the head of the monastery<sup>14</sup> or even a Father Superior<sup>15</sup>. In any case, the position of Simeon, as well as his financial situation, in the Moscow society of the second half of the seventeenth century was unique; and preserved sources about Simeon's life in Moscow contain precious information on the vow of poverty and real monastic practices.

#### 4. «LET NOT MY VICIOUS POSSESSIONS PERISH VICIOUSLY»

Unfortunately, only few documents concerning the material side of Simeon's life survived until our day. They are limited to his epistolary legacy [more than 200 various letters and epistles<sup>16</sup>] with petition letters to the Tzar containing requests for money and food allowance being the most informative<sup>17</sup>; two records from the court chronicle<sup>18</sup> about gifts Simeon got from the Tzar; and finally, the testament of Simeon – a unique document, that provides a glimpse at his economic practices in the context of the monastic vow of poverty.

There are two known copies of the document, all dating back to roughly the same time period, from 1679 to the very end of the seventeenth century<sup>19</sup>. Both are scribal copies without seals and signatures, no original document is known. The first copy has been known to researchers from the second half of

14 In the pre-Petrine Russia we have several terms that stand for a Father Superior; hegumen, archimandrite and a monastery builder. The latter was used to indicate a head person of a monastery who contributed much to the monastery construction or whose monastery was under the command of another convent. Here in the article we use the term "head of the monastery" for the matter of simplicity. The difference between a hegumen and archimandrite was recorded only in the eighteenth century, when monasteries were divided into three classes, and Fathers Superior of the lowest class convents were called hegumens. Again, for the matter of simplicity, the term Father Superior is used in the article.

15 A. KOVALEV, *Istoricheskoe opisaniie Zaikonospasskogo monastyria v Moskve* [Historic Description of the Zaikonospasskii monastery in Moscow], Moscow 1887. P.M. STROEV, *Spiski ierarkhov i nastoiatelei monastyrei Rossiiskoi tserkvi* [Lists of hierarchs and Fathers Superior of the Russian Church], Saint-Petersburg 1877, 158.

16 State Historical museum, Moscow. Department of manuscripts. Synodal collection. №130-2° (GIM OR Sin. sobr. №130-2°).

17 1828. Pis'ma Simeona Polotskogo [Letter of Simeon of Polotsk], 43.

18 *Dopolneniia k Tomu III-mu dvortsyrykh razriadov* [Supplement to the 3<sup>rd</sup> Volume of the Court Records], ed. II otdelenie sobstvennoi Ee Imperatorskogo Velichestva Kantselei, Saint-Petersburg 1854, 474.

19 State Historical museum, Moscow. Department of manuscripts. Collection of count A. S. Uvarov, №247-4° (GIM OR Uvar. sobr. №247-4°).



the nineteenth century<sup>20</sup>. I found the second copy<sup>21</sup>, from manuscript №167-4°, collection of the count A. S. Uvarov, State Historical museum, Moscow, that was written presumably later than the copy in the manuscript №247-4°, and was copied from another draft version of the testament to serve as a sample [numerals were written there as figures, various titles and names were abbreviated].

From the literary point of view, the layout and genre of Simeon's testament stands out from Muscovy monastic and clergy testaments of the time. Presumably, the structural and linguistic layout of the testament, chosen by Simeon, originates in the South-West Russian [Ukrainian and Belarussian] and Polish traditions. Unlike the wills of Muscovite Church and monastery authorities, which were discussed above, testaments of metropolitans and Fathers Superior from the South-West Russian territories combined both spiritual and money matters in a single text. For example, the last will of the Father Superior Iliia Torskii had both distributions and didactic instructions for his brethren<sup>22</sup>. This tradition of composing a testament was brought to Muscovy by relocating monks and was partly adopted by a Muscovite clergy elite and some regular monks. Simeon's testament has a theological and a slightly biographical introduction, a preamble, and a clearly structured executive part that deals with money bequeathed to funeral matters [funeral ceremony, charity, chantries], etiquette contributions to convents and monasteries, monetary donations to family and friends, and personal belongings bequeathed to various parties. The testament concludes with a damnation to those who would dare not to obey the testator's last will.

20 I. A. Tatarskii, *Simeon Polotskii: (Ego zhizn' i deiatel'nost')* [Simeon of Polotsk: (His Life and Work)], Moscow 1886, 319-322.

21 For detail see my articles A.A. PREOBRAZHENSKAIA, «Prezhde smerti naipache vnezapnyia i naprasnyia»: dukhonaia gramota Simeona Polotskogo [«Before Death Sudden and Vain»: a Testament of Simeon of Polotsk], *Drevniaia Rus'. Voprosy medievistiki* 2 (2015) 115-132. Available at: [http://www.drevnyaya.ru/vyp/2015\\_2/part\\_10.pdf](http://www.drevnyaya.ru/vyp/2015_2/part_10.pdf) [access: 28-08-2016]. A.A. PREOBRAZHENSKAIA, *K interpretatsii odnoi dukhovnoi gramoty XVII veka: chastnaia zhizn' Simeona Polotskogo* [To the Interpretation of One Testament: Private Life of Simeon of Polotsk], ed. Srednevekovaia lichnost' v pis'mennykh i arkheologicheskikh istochnikakh: Moskovskaia Rus', Rossiiskaia Imperiia i ikh sosedi: materialy nauch. konf. Institut rossiiskoi istorii RAN, Beliaev L. A. [Medieval Personality in Written and Archaeological Sources: Muscovite Rus', Russian Empire and their Neighbors: Proceedings of an Academic Conference of the Institute for Russian History of Russian Academy of Science], Moscow 2016, 178-183.

22 O. BODIANSKII, *Letopisets o pervom zachatii i sozdanii sviatyia obiteli monastyria Gustynskogo v leto bytiia mira 7108, ot voploshcheniia zhe boga slova tysiashcha shestisotnoe* [Chronicle about the First Origins of Gustynskii Monastery in year AM 7108, in year AD 1600], Moscow 1848, 46.



The preamble of Simeon's testament is not extensive and includes a laconic discussion of the testator's possessions and funds, supported by elaborately selected quotations from the Bible<sup>23</sup> and a work by Saint Augustine<sup>24</sup>. The preamble defines an emotional and conceptual mood of the whole text, explicitly demonstrating and at the same time accommodating for an acute conflict of a holy order of the testator and his vow of non-possession and poverty and amount of bequeathed money and belongings. The first biographer of Simeon, Ierofei Tatarskii mentioned this preamble, which he called an introduction, in his study, claiming its unique character: «This introduction is crafted in fervent rhetoric and is so vast and peculiar, that one can treat it as a special general part for the whole testament»<sup>25</sup>.

It should be noted that Simeon's preamble stands out from both the Russian and Polish testamentary traditions, though clearly following the latter. Whilst a motif of *memento mori* is included in the narration, the mystery of death or the Day of Atonement are not discussed. However, a Baroque literary tradition is still present in the text and manifests itself in the image of the testator and the entire narration. The testator is presented as a person who neglected his vows during his earthly life and did not remember about death and the Day of Atonement, but who suddenly realized that his life was coming to an end and who then repented his sins: «I did not remember about the last: death, the God's judgment, the hell and the heaven; and lived as if I would never have to pay the debt of death» (f. 9 r.). Realization comes to the testator in a peculiar way: he hears a prophet that speaks to him eye-opening words: «[I] have remembered the prophet calling» (f. 9 r.), states Simeon. He directly states that he has neglected his vows: «I have disdained my holy order, and have cherished my fortune, though when taking my vows I promised to keep poverty and non-possession» (f. 9 v.).

The preamble also contains the reason why the testament was written – an *arenga*. In order to state his motives, Simeon uses a very specific formula, not found in other contemporary wills, that takes into consideration and balances both his holy order and the purely economic goal of the document. An eco-

23 The preamble of Simeon's testament contains the following exact quotations and periphrases from the Bible: Gen 18,27; Lk 1,25; Mt 21, 28-32 or Lk 23, 40-43 or Mt 2, 25; Gen 3, 14; Ps 102, 15. The Psalms here are referred to in Greek numbering.

24 The phrase in the testament, attributed by Simeon to Saint Augustine, was impossible to identify, since Simeon presumably rendered it in his own translation. The phrase could be roughly translated as "there is no time, when one could fill utero with worldly sweets and have at the same time the eternal kingdom in heaven" (f. 9 v.).

25 TATARSKII. *Simeon Polotskii*, 320.



conomic reason for writing the testament is put by the author in such a way that makes it sound a spiritual one. Simeon states that he fears to multiply his sins by leaving his wealth, though vicious, unattended: «before death sudden and vain, fearing to multiply my sins, [I] decided to write this testament, in my own hand. Let not my vicious fortune perish viciously» (f. 10 r.-10 v.).

The extensive executive part of the testament takes nine folios that makes more than half of the whole text. Structural layout and linguistic characteristics of distributions closely resemble those of Polish monks and clergy of the seventeenth century. The very existence of this part in a testament of a regular Muscovite monk highlights Simeon's uncommon position in the Russian feudal society. Being a professional writer and a court servant, Simeon neglected to a certain degree his holy order and acted as a secular person. The information that we learn from the distributions provided sheds light on Simeon's everyday life and demonstrates his attitude towards money and numerous belongings.

It is remarkable how Simeon lists all his distributions and beneficiaries. In his testament, money and possessions turn from a marginal subject to a conceptual core of the text. A scrutiny of the inventory of chantries to monasteries, money and property distributions to relatives are stated directly; no abstract or generalised points are made (compare for example an article on monastery chantries in the testament of the Patriarch Ioakim: «To priests in cathedrals and to appropriate monasteries and convents give from the treasury for the forty days' prayers by the aforesaid custom»<sup>26</sup>).

The total amount of money Simeon bequeathed to various beneficiaries is rather large for a regular Russian monk-priest of the time. During sixteen years of service at the Tzar's court, he managed to save 700 hundred roubles in silver, 600 golden ducats and some other silver coins, presumably talers; that in total amounts to approximately 1500 silver roubles. Ducates and talers were not in circulation in Russia, but presumably they could be changed into roubles<sup>27</sup>. Most of the money was distributed to monastery chantries, funeral expenditures, to his executors, and only a small amount – to his relatives and friends. How did Simeon manage to accumulate this money?

Let us turn to Simeon's work at the court of the Tzar, in order to learn about his income in roubles. It is known that Simeon did not have any formal court

26 I.E. ZABELIN, *Zhitie i zaveshchanie sviateishhego patriarkha moskovskogo Ioakima* [Life and Testament of the Holy Patriarch Ioakim], Saint-Petersburg 1879, 114.

27 M.F. KOTLIAR, *Narysy istorii' obigu j lichby monet na Ukrai'ni XIV-XVII st* [Essays on history of circulation and count of coins in Ukraine in XIVth-XVIIth centuries], Kyiv 1981, 239.



position or rank, since monks and clergy were not allowed to take up secular posts. However, he got paid as any other courtier: first of all, he received a monetary allowance of 15 kopeks per day thus making 54 roubles per year<sup>28</sup> from the Tzar; secondly, he was now and then presented with money gifts from the Tzar and boyars for his service or on special occasions [celebrations of name-days, baptism]; and finally, it is reasonable to suggest, though no direct indications survive, that he got paid for his literary work [i. e. for composing documents, poems, sermons, etc.].

Simeon's funds in ducats cannot be explained as simply. Two curious and unclear articles found in Simeon's testament allow to suppose that he lent money with interest and kept money deposited by third parties, safe at his lodgings, probably for some payment also. In the preamble, Simeon confessed that he was eager to save and earn money, but he eluded any details. In one of the distributions, Simeon instructed his executors to give away all letters of deposits he had free of charge (f. 14 v.). In the seventeenth century when money was lent, letters of deposits were composed, that guaranteed creditors paying their debts. The scheme was rather simple: a person would get money upon the security of some property: a letter of deposit would document the deal. In addition to that, Simeon had the money of a Philipp Tarasow: «[I] hold money of Philipp Tarasov in safe custody, over twenty ducats, some silver coins, there is my letter with the money, return to him intact» (f. 14 v.).

Another issue that should be addressed in relation to Simeon's finance refers to the attitude of the Muscovy Church authorities to these ways of earning and the situation with a regular monk bequeathing large amounts of money in general. Simeon himself called his fortune «vicious». It is obvious that the court service and literary work could be easily tolerated by the Church, since even metropolitans often turned to Simeon's service<sup>29</sup>. We know that Simeon composed three more testaments in the same style as his own – they were meant for three metropolitans: Pitirim, Pavel, and Ilarion<sup>30</sup>. Lending money with interest, on the contrary, was common for the seventeenth century monasteries but was not regarded as a proper practice. Various monastery documents often contained articles about lending money: «the archimandrite, and the cellarer,

28 State Historical museum, Moscow. Department of manuscripts. Synodal collection, № 130 (GIM OR Sin. sobr. № 130). ff. 181 r.-181 v.

29 TATARSKII. *Simeon Polotskii*, 102, 110.

30 Look for example at N.V. PONYRKO, «Zhitie protopopa Avvakuma kak dukhovnoe zaveshchanie» [Life of the protopope Avvakum as his testament], *Trudy otdela drevnerusskoi literatury*, 39 (1985) 382.

Monks and money  
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and the treasurer, and the avener, and all the brethren lent [us] with monastery public money»<sup>31</sup>.

Money was not the only asset of Simeon: his «viciously acquired» fortune included personal items, some of which were not common for regular monks and thus serve as evidence of Simeon's unique position at the court. He possessed a large library, some household items and church ware, and even a horse with a coach. Horses and coaches usually belonged to a monastery as a community; a monk could not possess them as private belongings. However, for the South-West Russian testaments we know several cases where Fathers Superior would administer monastery property as their own. The aforementioned Iliia Torskii had «a horse with a coach» and bequeathed it in his testament on his own discretion<sup>32</sup>.

Simeon owned so many things, obviously precious, that even a cellar for keeping them was needed. In one of his petition letters to the Tzar, Simeon asked to provide him with a cellar in the city wall to keep his belongings safe from fires<sup>33</sup>. We could assume that the cellar was needed primarily for Simeon's library. He enjoyed a vast collection of books in Old Church Slavonic, Latin, Polish, German, English<sup>34</sup>. He brought some books with him from Polotsk, the rest were acquired whilst in Moscow. Amongst other possessions of Simeon were several fur coats; many copper and tin dishes, two precious thin Persian carpets, in vogue at that time, and church ware which also originated from Belarus.

In most cases, by providing precise calculations in various currencies and consistent enumeration of distributions, Simeon proved to be not only a learned monk and poet, but also, a good man of business, capable of managing his funds and property.

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Interpretation and implementation of the vow of poverty and non-possession in real monastic practices in pre-Petrine Russian changed over time. Whilst the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries witnessed the rise of ascetic trends, with absolute rejection of private belongings and money of a monk, secularisation and the

31 *Akty feodal'nogo zemledvleniia i khoziaistva. Akty moskovskogo Simonova monastyria (1506-1613 gg)* [Acts of Feudal Landowning and Economy. Acts of Moscow Simonov monastery (1506 – 1613)], ed L.I. Ivina, Leningrad 1983, 166.

32 BODIANSKII. *Letopisets o pervom zachatii i sozdanii sviatyia obiteli monastyria Gustynskogo v leto bytiia mira 7108*, 45.

33 State Historical museum, Moscow. Synodal collection, № 130 (GIM OR Sin. sobr. № 130). F. 181 r.

34 A. HIPPISEY-E.V. LUK'IANOVA, *Simeon Polockij's Library: A Catalogue*, Böhlau 2005.



strong influence of monastic traditions of the South-West Russia and Catholic Poland led to certain neglect of the vow of poverty and non-possession. Monastic testaments preserved from that period demonstrate various traditions of perceiving the vow of poverty by regular monks and monastic leaders. While Muscovite monks included debts in their testaments and Fathers Superior and Church hierarchs barely mentioned any worldly business at all, their fellows from the South-Western regions of Russia composed proper testaments with lists of money and property distributions. Active migration of monks from these territories to Moscow led to a transfer of a new tradition that was adopted by the society's elite. The first in Russia court poet and preacher, a monk Simeon from Polotsk was one of the most active mediators of the tradition in Moscow. Simeon's testament clearly shows an expansion and circulation of a new for Muscovite monasticism of the seventeenth century tradition of interpretation and attitude towards the vow of poverty and non-possession – i. e. the tradition of including money matters in the very texts of a «spiritual charters». His testament embraces both spiritual matters and discussion of a «viciously acquired» fortune – money and property. Whilst purely spiritual issues are moved to the background, the core part of the document deals with distribution and beneficiaries. This mode of writing testaments was later in the century copied by Church hierarchs. However, after the rules and reforms of Peter the Great juridical practices for monastics changed dramatically: written codes of conduct and codes of laws were issued, and testamentary tradition was significantly altered.

### Abstract

With the vow of non-possession being an essential concept in Russian monasticism, real monastic practices of the 17th-century Muscovy, as we can perceive relying on preserved documents, demonstrated certain negligence of the vow. Large monasteries acted as corporations that produced goods and traded them to cover living expenses. Although, in theory a monetary profit was not the goal, certain monasteries would often not only trade, but lend out money, sometimes even with interest.

By the second half of the seventeenth century in Muscovy, there existed not only monastic communities, but also independent monks only formally affiliated with some Moscow monastery. As a rule, they were natives of the South-Western regions of Russia (modern territories of Belarus and Ukraine). In general, they were educated in Poland or in the Grand Duchy of Lithuania, took their vows in home monasteries and then moved to Moscow in search of a better life

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or due to war or social instability in homeland. They would enjoy greater mobility and freedom in their activities than a common monk would – they were employed at the Tzar's court, interacted with boyars and church leaders.

One of the most well-known monks of the type was the first Muscovy court poet and preacher Simeon Polotsky (1629-1680). His manifold background and experiences, as well as his preserved archives, inspired me to look into his financial situation: ways in which he earned and accumulated money, expenditures he may have faced during his life in a Moscow monastery and his service at Tzar's court, currency of his savings. I will address in detail Simeon's last will – a unique document, providing an extensive data on the financial sphere of Simeon's life. The study is meant to be comparative, thus giving a general perspective on Simeon's place in the economic structure of the Muscovy Tzar court and Moscow monastic and clerical communities.