

Körperkommunikation: Das Auftreten falscher Mitglieder der Dynastie im frühneuzeitlichen Russland. By Daniela Mathuber. Göttingen: Vandenhoeck and Ruprecht Verlage, 2022. 422 pp. Notes. Bibliography. Index. €70.00, hard bound. doi: 10.1017/slr.2024.57

Daniela Mathuber's *Körperkommunikation* investigates the early and middle stages of Russia's long engagement with *samožvanstvo*, or royal imposture, commencing with the advent of the First False Dmitrii in the early seventeenth century and ending with the proliferation of False Konstantin Pavloviches in the second quarter of the nineteenth. Mathuber opens by suggesting that the behaviors of Russia's many imposters were surprisingly similar to each other. In explanation, she posits the existence of channels of communication, which shaped the performance of imposture; she particularly highlights the role of rumors, which were orally transmitted and often transmuted into folk literature.

For Mathuber, performance is a liminal phenomenon that takes place in the present but simultaneously evokes the past; its primary purpose is to restore the status quo ante. Within the context of *samožvanstvo*, performance functions to uncover the mysterious will of God vis-à-vis dynastic succession (in this regard, Mathuber views Russian practice as different from that of western Europe, where succession generally proceeded along the lines of primogeniture). As with any other performance, the performance of *samožvanstvo* involved both performers (imposters) and audiences (their supporters), and here Mathuber makes an important contribution to the literature of *samožvanstvo*. Many scholars have studied famous imposters; comparatively few have attended to the less famous ones or, for that matter, to their supporters. Mathuber, by contrast, devotes scores of pages to both.

Matters become less clear, however, when Mathuber turns to the question of connections among the various impostors' performances. For example, she readily admits that each successive pretender during the Time of Troubles modeled his behavior on that of his predecessors, but she also indicates that later clusters of pretenders, such as the false Peter IIIs and false Konstantin Pavloviches, often developed their own, quite heterogeneous behavioral scenarios. Mathuber carefully documents likenesses in performance and ascribes them to the possibility that pretenders assimilated their behavior to contemporary rumors regarding the nature of the "true" monarch. And yet, in spite of explicating these likenesses at length, she ultimately disclaims sequential chains of influence and privileges differences among the various pretenders over similarities.

While Mathuber does an admirable job reconstructing the rumors that purportedly inspired both imposters and supporters, she has a harder time adducing concrete evidence that individual pretenders molded themselves in accordance with them. Additionally, she believes that imposture was not directed outward, toward real-life circumstances, but inward, toward the performances that gave individual impostors the opportunity to improve their places in early modern Russia's social hierarchy. In other words, she argues that the majority of imposters supported the established hierarchy and gave no thought to overthrowing it. This, in turn, causes her to label both Emel'ian Pugachev and the First False Dmitrii as atypical, since they manifestly did intend to topple social hierarchies. While Mathuber's recognition of the dissimilarities among and between pretenders is laudable and, up to a point, necessary, it ultimately undercuts the arguments she makes for congruities across the phenomenon of *samožvanstvo* as a whole. Additionally, many of Mathuber's examples of "typical" pretenders are men and women we know next to nothing about, as Mathuber herself readily admits, which leads her to generalize based on limited information.

Mathuber does a meticulous job of researching her topic, making abundant use of archival materials as well as of secondary sources, and branching out, when appropriate, into discussions of royal imposture in western European traditions. Paradoxically, this is both a major strength and an occasional weakness. On the one hand, readers will profit from comprehensive treatments of the who, what, when, where, how, and why of Russian royal imposture. On the other, they will occasionally be frustrated by the overabundance of detail; the book originated in a dissertation and retains some of that genre's trappings. More than one discussion hares off in a fascinating but ultimately distracting direction, and Mathuber's treatment of secondary sources can be unduly prolonged and finicky. From time to time readers become entangled in the trees at the expense of the forest. That said, the digressions are always penetrating and informative.

In summary, while readers may disagree with some of *Körperkommunikation's* operating assumptions, they will undoubtedly be grateful for its discussions of lesser known aspects of *samo-zvanstvo* as well as for the new perspectives it brings to bear on better known ones.

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Regiony Rossiiskoi imperii: Identichnost', reprezentatsiia, (na)znachenie. Ed.

Ekaterina Boltunova and Willard Sunderland. *Historia Rossica*. Moscow: Novoe literaturnoe obozrenie, 2021. 304 pp. Notes. Bibliography. Illustrations. Tables.

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Regiony Rossiiskoi imperii, edited by Ekaterina Boltunova and Willard Sunderland, discusses the history of various regions of the Russian empire between the 1760s and 1910s, including central Russia, the Urals, Siberia, and the Caucasus. It understands regions as constructs, dynamic and changeable systems of political, cultural, social, and economic relations, and investigates how they were produced and changed. As formulated in the introduction by Willard Sunderland, the book sought to further develop a regional perspective on the Russian empire, building on the research by Anatolii Remnev, to whom the book is dedicated. One of the volume's central arguments, formulated in Sunderland's introduction (26) and reaffirmed throughout the book, is that regional histories were intricately connected to those of the imperial center and the empire as a whole.

The twelve research chapters were organized into five parts. The first two chapters offer broader outlooks. Vladislav Boiarchenkov investigates the development of a regionalist approach to Russian history in the 1850s–60s by Afanasii Shchapov, Mykola Kostomarov, and other intellectuals who opposed statist and centralist perspectives. Boiarchenkov concludes that they did not succeed in establishing solid foundations for such an approach. Katherine Pickering Antonova offers a regional outlook on economic development, focusing on territorialized textile production in European Russia, and argues against a teleological understanding of industrialization.

The ensuing two chapters investigate regional aspects of social hierarchies. Olga Glagoleva studied the participation of Moscow, Tula, and Orel provincial nobility in the elections to the Legislative Commission in 1767. She demonstrates that it had no single mode: whereas some nobles preferred to vote in Moscow and St. Petersburg, others opted for using the elections for local self-organization. Ekaterina Boltunova discusses the transportation of Alexander I's remains from Taganrog to St. Petersburg