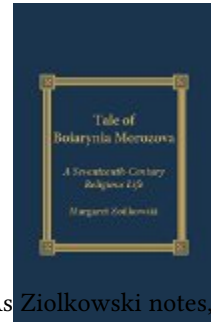


# H-Net Reviews

in the Humanities & Social Sciences

Margaret Ziolkowski, ed. *Tale of Boiarynia Morozova: A Seventeenth-Century Religious Life*. Lanham: Lexington Books, 2000. 144 pp. \$55.00 (cloth), ISBN 978-0-7391-0177-3.

Reviewed by Nadieszda Kizenko (Department of History, University at Albany (SUNY))  
Published on H-Russia (September, 2004)



Almost everyone who teaches either history or literature needs translations of primary sources that are short enough to be read in their entirety, long enough to be substantial, important enough to be read at all, and well written enough that students will actually read them. If the source crosses a variety of disciplines, if it is accompanied by a thorough introduction and judicious annotations, and if it is moderately priced, it is a natural for course use.

Margaret Ziolkowski's translation of the *Tale of Boiarynia Morozova*, accompanied by Archpriest Avvakum's "Lament for the three martyrs" and excerpts from Feodosia Morozova's correspondence with Avvakum and his family, succeeds on just about every count. The sources she translates and comments on shed new light on the Old Believer schism, the importance of women in the Christian religious tradition, and the transformations a religious symbol can undergo over time. As the texts come to just under fifty pages, Ziolkowski has room for a relatively long (forty-seven-page) introduction and extensive annotations. The index is thorough and the bibliography well selected.

Feodosia Morozova played a central role in the seventeenth-century religious schism known as Old Belief. Together, with her sister Princess Evdokiia Urusova and their fellow noblewoman Maria Danilova, they formed part of the aristocratic elite that objected to the religious reforms of Patriarch Nikon. In 1672, all three were arrested and tried. They were later sent to a far-off monastery and died, probably of starvation, in an *oubliette* in 1675.

In a relatively limited space, Ziolkowski introduces several complex and suggestive themes. The first is the historic importance of wealthy women, particularly wid-

ows, in times of religious ferment. As Ziolkowski notes, most boyars avoided getting involved in religious disputes. Morozova, as the widow of one of the richest men in Russia, had the freedom of movement that most others did not. Because she was not a man with an official court position, she had few public obligations that would have forced her hand far earlier (in the same way that a disproportionate number of early Christian martyrs were military men). Because she was a widow, she did not have the restraints imposed by parents on unmarried daughters living at home or those imposed by husbands responsible for family honor. Like the defenders of religion, (Suzanne Desan describes them in the French Revolution and Lynne Viola describes the peasant women resisting collectivization under Stalin), Muscovite women were held less responsible for their actions and generally met with less harsh punishment than their male counterparts.[1] This relative autonomy meant that Morozova and her companions could escape the long arm of the Moscow establishment for a longer time.

Another larger implication emerging from Ziolkowski's book is that sanctity often runs in families (the holy families of St. Gregory of Tours, and SS. Basil, Macrina, and Gregory Nazianzen come to mind). Feodosia's sister, Evdokia was as religiously committed as her sister, leaving her husband and children to share Feodosia's martyrdom. A husband's untimely death, moreover, can serve as the catalyst for the widow's piety (as also happened with the eighteenth-century holy fool, Blessed Xenia). Finally, there is the importance of motherhood, which was a crucially important factor in Russian women's lives, as recent studies of gender in Russia remind us.[2] As the New Testament enjoins, love for Christ must surpass all others, and Morozova uses her love for her "only-begotten son" (the liturgical connota-

tions increase the force of her point) to stress this (pp. 31, 57). Seen from this point of view, Morozova takes her part in extending the venerable Christian tradition of the holy family.

Through Morozova, Ziolkowski reminds us that a holy woman's wit could be appreciated. Ziolkowski cites St. Catherine of Alexandria, Princess Olga, and Fevroniia as precedents for the lively *boiarynia*, but one might also include Cassia the hymnographer and Iulianiia Lazarevskaia. In this connection, the level of seventeenth-century liturgical knowledge is especially important, for Nikonians no less than Old Believers. As Ziolkowski notes, when Tsar Alexei's sister, Irina interceded for Morozova, she urged her royal brother to remember not only Saints Boris and Gleb but specifically the service to them (pp. 19, 69). What does this suggest about the reception and comprehension of the long services attended by the Muscovite elite, knowledge of Church Slavonic, and the assumptions of women's illiteracy?

Ziolkowski's description of Morozova's posthumous vicissitudes is a model of its kind. She describes the huge revival of interest in the Muscovite period, and in earlier Russian history, generally by Russian intellectuals, scholars, and clerics in the second half of the nineteenth century. Morozova's rediscovery by Stroevev, Tikhonravov, Zabelin, Mordovtsev, and finally her depiction by the painter Vasilii Surikov made her a household word. Because of these works, both the nineteenth-century People's Will revolutionaries and later writers of the Soviet era (Anna Akhmatova, Varlam Shalamov, and Fazil Iskander are only the most notable) explicitly identified with Morozova and symbolically enlisted her in their own causes of resistance.

Although Ziolkowski usually turns space constraints to her benefit, some statements could be more nuanced. Morozova did not oppose ecclesiastical authority as such, only that which she thought illegitimate (p. 1). Like the early Christian and Western Christian women Ziolkowski mentions, Morozova did recognize the authority of Old Believer clerical leaders, most notably Avvakum, her spiritual father (a term which should be defined). Orthodox Christian assumptions of women's subservience were not necessarily dogmatic (p. 1). Just because a work is couched "in the language and style of saint's Life" does not mean we should be surprised that it evokes an actual personality (p. 2). The Antichrist is more than "a" legendary enemy of Christ; he surely outranks most others (p. 3). Patriarch Nikon, as Lev

Lebedev, Kevin Kain, and others have shown, did not only seek to bring Russian liturgical practices and texts into harmony with those of the Greeks; his vision was much larger.[3] Similarly, Alexei Mikhailovich did not only come to feel that Nikon had exceeded the authority of his office, but he became disillusioned with the ambitious project whose aims he had once shared. Old Believers were indeed persecuted by different tsars, but surely, their trials did not come to an end in 1917 (p. 12).

So fine a book should have been better served by its publisher. If the intended audience is undergraduate students and the general public, *Tale of Boiarynia Morozova* would catch more eyes in paperback with a zippy cover and typeface. If the audience is primarily graduate students and other scholars, the selected bibliography could be longer and Ziolkowski given more opportunity to develop her extensive knowledge of her subject in the annotations. All audiences would welcome color reproductions of the many artistic representations Ziolkowski describes on pp. 33-34, rather than only a black and white fragment of the famous Surikov painting.

These minor wishes, however, do not diminish the impact of Ziolkowski's contribution. She has given the field an elegant, subtle edition of a most useful, too-long-neglected primary source. Along with recent studies by Serhii Plokhyy and Isolde Thyret, she vividly reminds us of the religious ferment of the seventeenth century in Muscovy and Europe generally.[4] Thanks to Ziolkowski, *boiarynia* Morozova can now take her place among the many zealots who were her contemporaries. Anyone seeking an introduction to and thoughtful discussion of seventeenth-century religious culture, the hagiographical tradition, or the appropriation of a religious figure by later secular revolutionaries will benefit from this book.

#### Notes

[1]. Suzanne Desan, *Reclaiming the Sacred: Lay Religion and Popular Politics in Revolutionary France* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1991); Lynne Viola, *Peasant Rebels Under Stalin: Collectivization and the Culture of Peasant Resistance* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996).

[2]. Irina K. Paert, "Gender and Salvation: Representations of Difference in Old Believer Writings from the Late Seventeenth Century to the 1820s," in *Gender in Russian History and Culture*, ed. Linda Edmondson (New York: Palgrave, 2001): 29-51.

[3]. Kevin M. Kain, "Patriarch Nikon's Image in Rus-

sian History and Culture” (Ph.D. diss., Western Michigan University, 2003); Lev Lebedev, *Moskva patriarshaia* (Moscow: Veche, 1995).

[4]. Serhii Plokhy, *The Cossacks and Religion in Early*

*Modern Ukraine* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001); Isolde Thyret, *Between God and Tsar: Religious Symbolism and the Royal Women of Muscovite Russia* (DeKalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 2001).

If there is additional discussion of this review, you may access it through the network, at:

<https://networks.h-net.org/h-russia>

**Citation:** Nadieszda Kizenko. Review of Ziolkowski, Margaret, ed., *Tale of Boiarynia Morozova: A Seventeenth-Century Religious Life*. H-Russia, H-Net Reviews. September, 2004.

**URL:** <http://www.h-net.org/reviews/showrev.php?id=9785>

Copyright © 2004 by H-Net, all rights reserved. H-Net permits the redistribution and reprinting of this work for nonprofit, educational purposes, with full and accurate attribution to the author, web location, date of publication, originating list, and H-Net: Humanities & Social Sciences Online. For any other proposed use, contact the Reviews editorial staff at [hbooks@mail.h-net.msu.edu](mailto:hbooks@mail.h-net.msu.edu).