

THE PSKOVO-PECHERSKY MONASTERY IN THE CULTURE OF THE RUSSIANS AND SETO OF THE PECHERSKY DISTRICT OF THE PSKOV REGION: MONASTERY IDENTITY AND LOCAL PRACTICES

The article analyzes the narratives about the Holy Dormition Pskovo-Pechersky Monastery collected among the population of the Pechersky District, both Russians and Seto. Interest in this subject is caused by the uninterrupted activity of the monastery, which has never been closed since its foundation in the late XV century. The research is focused not on monastic or pilgrimage practices but on the worldview concepts and activities of the local population, the so-called “natives”. One hundred interviews reflecting the situation in the Soviet period after the Second World War and Post-Soviet time in the town of Pechory and its outskirts are supplemented by archival evidence. The research is based on the concepts of “lived religion” and local identity. Analysis of narratives revealed that the population perceived the monastery as a sacred locus, a monument of history and architecture, an object of pilgrimage and tourism, an enlightener, employer, sponsor, a keeper of ideological and economic resources. As a constant backdrop of local realities, it produced not only religious but also various secular practices. Thus, the convent identity of the local population was shaped independently of individual’s conscience. In spite of the significant restriction of monastery influence in the Soviet period, in particular the prohibition for children and young people to visit the convent, it continued to play a key role in local culture as a religious center, historic dominant, an object of pride for local historians, a recreation zone, a source of information, etc. The attempt to transform the town of Pechory from a monastery center into an industrial settlement failed due to the collapse of the USSR and the economic crisis. In the Post-Soviet period, the monastery started to reestablish its influence rapidly as a symbolic master of the Pechorsky District.

Keywords: *Russians, Seto, Pskovo-Pechorsky Monastery, identity, monastery culture, Soviet period, Post-Soviet period, religion, daily life.*

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