

Workshop

The Paradox of Monastic Bishops. A Comparison between the Eastern and Western Churches in the Middle Ages

Dresden, 1 and 2 April 2025

Workshop as part of the DFG project „Heilige Mönchsbischöfe. Zu Diskursen über die Vereinbarung von Mönchtum und Bischofsamt in Heiligenviten des 11.-13. Jahrhunderts“ / “Holy Monk-Bishops. Discourses on the Compatibility of Monasticism and Episcopacy in Hagiographic Vitae (11th-13th Centuries)”

Monks had already been elevated to bishops since the 4th century; nevertheless, monk-bishops were judged controversially in medieval Latin Europe. They were both idealised and repeatedly criticised, as monasticism and episcopacy were often seen as incompatible. The often sceptical attitude in the Latin West stands in an interesting contrast to the Eastern churches, in which the monk-bishop became the dominant ideal during the Middle Ages. The differences between Eastern and Western ideals and practices regarding the monk-bishop have hardly been researched to date. The workshop aims to offer initial approaches to closing this research gap and to encourage further studies on the topic.

Description of DFG project

<https://gepris.dfg.de/gepris/projekt/511766496>

Venue

TUD Dresden University of Technology
FOVOG – Forschungsstelle für
Vergleichende Ordensgeschichte

📍 Budapester Str. 34b
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Funded by:

DFG Deutsche
Forschungsgemeinschaft

Member of: **DRESDEN
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Pictures:

Hartmann Schedel, Liber cronice cum figuris et imaginibus
(= Nuremberg Chronicle), Nuremberg: Anton Koberger
1493 [Munich, Bavarian State Library, Rar. 287].

Hugh of Grenoble: fol. 194r

Basil the Great: fol. 133r

Constantinople: fol. 129v-130r

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The Paradox of Monastic Bishops

A Comparison between the Eastern and Western Churches in the Middle Ages



Tuesday, 1 April 2025

9:00 | Arrival at FOVOG

9:15–9:45 | Daniela Bianca Hoffmann (Dresden):
Welcome and introduction

Monk-Bishops in the Latin Church – From the Early to the High Middle Ages

(Moderator: Nathalie Schmidt, Dresden)

9:45–10:30 | Shigeto Kikuchi (Tokyo):
Monk-Bishops in the Frankish Kingdom(s) under the Carolingians: Praxis and Perception

10:30–11:00 | Break

11:00–11:45 | Stephan Bruhn (London):
A World Full of Monks? Early English Bishops between *vita activa* and *vita contemplativa*

11:45–12:30 | Jesse Harrington (Dublin):
The Problem of Monk-Bishops in Twelfth-Century Ireland

12:30–14:30 | Joint lunch

Monk-Bishops in the Latin Church – The High Medieval Empire

(Moderator: Victoria Smirnova, Dresden)

14:30–15:15 | Matthias Weber (Bochum):
Monastic Bishops in the Roman-German Empire – Career and Impact with Special Reference to the 11th Century

15:15–16:00 | Johannes Luther (Zurich):
'Because the Poverty of Men is Particularly Fruitful in this Region'. Monk-Bishops in the 12th Century Kingdom of Burgundy

16:00–16:30 | Break

Monk-Bishops in the Latin Church – The Religious Orders in the High and Late Middle Ages

(Moderator: Mirko Breitenstein, Dresden)

16:30–17:15 | Daniela Bianca Hoffmann (Dresden):
The Paradox of Carthusian and Cistercian Bishops. Models for the Combination of Monasticism and Episcopacy in Hagiographic Vitae (12th/13th Centuries)

17:15–18:00 | Ralf Lützelshwab (Berlin):
Controversial, but Necessary? Remarks on the Assumption of the Episcopal Office by Carmelites in the 13th and 14th Centuries

18:00–18:30 | Final discussion:
Latin monk-bishops

Joint dinner

Wednesday, 2 April 2025

Monk-Bishops in the Eastern Church – Byzantium, Russia, and Africa

(Moderator: Jörg Sonntag, Dresden)

9:00–9:45 | Sebastian Kolditz (Berlin):
Monastic Virtues and Episcopal Duties in Byzantine Lives of Holy Bishops (and Other Sources)

9:45–10:30 | Victoria Smirnova (Dresden):
The Elephant in the Room? Russian Orthodox Bishops and the Problem of Monastic Vows

10:30–11:00 | Break

11:00–11:45 | Dirk Jäckel (Bochum):
From the Desert to the City: The Coptic Monastic Bishops

11:45–13:45 | Joint lunch

Monk-Bishops between East and West – Serbia and Southern Italy

(Moderator: Mirko Breitenstein, Dresden)

13:45–14:30 | Boris Stojkovski (Novi Sad):
Sava Nemanjić and his Successors. The Monastic Foundation of the Autocephalous Serbian Orthodox Church

14:30–15:15 | Meta Niederkorn (Vienna):
Barlaam of Seminar[i]a (c.1290–1348). From Orthodox Monasticism to Catholic Bishopric (Euclid – Compotus – Filioque – Hesychasm)

15:15–15:45 | Final discussion:
Eastern monk-bishops and comparisons to the Latin ones

Afternoon and evening: Visit of Dresden and joint dinner

