

Title: Saints in Medieval Calendars as Facebook Friends

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Because the medieval Eastern Orthodox Church had no central canonization or beatification procedure, individual medieval Eastern Orthodox calendars of saints vary widely in their assignment of specific saints to specific days of the year, and in their very selection of saints. These vast differences from manuscript to manuscript have made it notoriously difficult to trace calendar families and to identify Slavic calendar traditions.

An electronic project is underway to explore the the use of menologies, or full-year calendars of saints, as a tool for clustering the manuscripts into families and formulating hypotheses about textual transmission and diffusion. The project treats manuscripts that share calendar entries (i.e., commemorate the same saints or holy events on the same dates) as analogous to people in the modern world who share Facebook friends, and employs social network software to examine these networks of “friendships.” The project focuses particularly on “Loser Saints”, a term we use facetiously to refer to those rare saints who do not have many “friends”: that is, those saints that occur in one or only a few calendars in the corpus of medieval Slavic and Greek manuscripts. The greater the number of shared “Loser Saints” between two manuscripts, the greater the likelihood that the two manuscripts experienced a measure of shared textual transmission. The project seeks to determine, on the basis of one or more “Loser Saints” shared between calendars, whether it can be predicted which other “Loser Saints” those same calendars share.

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