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ALEXANDER KAZANKOV

The “Last Times”: The Perception of Time by Residents of the Russian Province in the First Half of the Twentieth Century

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This article presents a phenomenological interpretation of the experience of time by the inhabitants of villages and small towns in the western Urals. The study draws upon primary sources from the Perm State Archive of Contemporary History. The author's aim is to analyze investigation files of Orthodox clergy and other “church people” and to identify mental structures related to the perception of time. The primary structure that defined the basis of time orientation was the tradition of the annual Church calendar of feasts and fasts. The secondary structure was the idea of the “three ages of life,” sometimes marked by rites of passage. A special feature of the perception of time was a clear rise of apocalyptic expectations at the turn of the 1920s–1930s (“the last times are coming”).

Keywords: Orthodox Church, the clergy, “church people,” time, Soviet Russia.

THE *anthropological turn* taking place right before our very eyes in the humanities in Russia allows us to formulate questions that would be impossible within the framework of other research strategies. Here, for example, is one such question: How is

religion present in the believer's life beyond actual worship practices or food prohibitions? Alternatively, this question can be expressed as follows: What kind of "centers of gravity [*Schwerpunkte*]" has faith occupied in the domain of everyday life, what kind of influence has it shown and does it show on the "pattern" of usual, habitual behavior (*habitus*) of this or that individual?

This question opens up extremely broad scientific horizons. Recently in personal conversation with researchers on Protestant-Pentecostal communities I asked what was distinctively "Pentecostal" in their way of life and received an answer that amounted to the following: "They don't drink, they don't smoke, they hold prayer meetings." Beyond this answer the question remains whether their faith influences rhythms of work and rest, their production, communication, and leisure practices, whether (and *how*) it influences their consumer strategies, their choice of a place of residence, marital or sexual partner, reading matter, and so forth.

A meticulous description of all the aspects of daily life indicated above would have undeniable value, and such a description presupposes the development of a specific anthropology that closely encompasses the believer — even, perhaps, not one but multiple anthropologies, distributed by confession and denomination, by place, time, and gender, and pertaining to different lifeworlds.

In fact, the concept of "lifeworld" was also developed at a certain point in the phenomenological tradition to describe the reality "given" in lived human experience in anthropological terms. In other words, the prospect lies open for the fruitful "grafting" of phenomenological anthropology onto religious studies. The *thick description* of mentality — of the general orientations and habits of people's consciousness, of their "psychic instrumentation," their "spiritual equipment," in the words of Aron Gurevich — assumes special significance in this context. It is precisely this mentality that plays the role of the unique "translator" or "exchange mechanism" between religious doctrine and everyday practices, encoding the basic meanings of human experience (for example, see Astakhova 2013).

The development of these anthropologies in Russian religious studies is certainly underway. Among the works closely related to the present topic I wish to note that of Aleksei Beglov (Beglov 2008), in which he presents an interpretation of daily life as seen through the eyes of "church people." Beglov's interest has definitely shifted toward the time period following the Second World War. Elena Kondrashina's publication provides an example of a gender approach (Kondrashina 2014).

Pavel Protsenko's research constitutes an excellent foray into the use of the biographical method, dealing with everyday life and the horizons of the lifeworld (Protsenko 2010). Protsenko had rare good fortune — Bishop Varnava (Beliaev), a product of the “learned monasticism” of the pre-revolutionary era, practically prepared the materials for his biography himself in that he kept a diary through his whole life and actively engaged in photography; Protsenko had what proved to be authentic sources of personal provenance at his disposal.

This latter case, however, points to specific difficulties of this sort of research agenda. The standard anthropological approach, oriented toward a close or thick description of the world of meaningful, everyday practices, and working with such delicate materials as the lived experience of the perception [*vospriiatie*], or experience [*perezhivanie*] of natural and social reality, the structure of mentality, and the like, requires a certain quality (and indeed quantity) of sources. Human identity (subjectivity) in its utmost individuation must be implicit in these sources. Sources that meet these requirements can be divided into two groups: sources of personal origin and the findings of participant observation, which involve lengthy discussions with informants.

The present research focuses on the *perception (or experience) of time in provincial everyday life in the first half of the twentieth century*, but the “surveillance camera” will be fixed on a very specific group — Orthodox “church people” of the Western Urals, now Perm Krai. First, I shall present the arguments that motivated this choice. Most notably, the perception of time is one of the basic structures of mentality, a sort of “anthropological constant” shaping a person's external as well as internal experience. Furthermore, the territory of present-day Perm Krai can be considered as a sample Russian province; in this respect the Western Urals are conveniently situated midway between the capital centers and extremely remote outlying regions. I chose the first half of the twentieth century for understandable reasons — in Russia this was an era of social, political, and cultural transformations on a colossal scale that touched the very foundations of human existence and therefore inevitably engendered repercussions in everyday experience and ordinary practices. And finally, my “focus group” was defined not by chance but in connection with the extremely critical (from the perspective of research planning) problem of sources.

A person can voluntarily convey his everyday experience in discourse, leaving “clues” for future researchers, as if questioning himself. In such a case the person shares experience of the past in diaries, writes letters, collects photographs in albums, or writes memoirs (in which,

incidentally, the author often consciously lies and fantasizes). Unfortunately, I had no such sources at my disposal. It is difficult even to imagine a memoir by a peasant of a village such as Asovo or Ust-Kishert, or a diary by a resident of the Alexandrovsky or Yugovsky factory settlement, established in the first half of the twentieth century. Nor did I possess even similar descriptions composed by outside observers.

But another situation is possible: one can question someone (an informant) under compulsion. Those who had the right and even were obligated to interrogate people were the inquisitor and the investigator. The experience of Emmanuel Le Roy Ladurie and Carlo Ginzburg working with the Inquisition archives also attests that the work of inquisitors of all sorts is to some extent related to anthropology (see Le Roy Ladurie 2001 and Ginzburg 2000). Now it becomes clear why the milieu of “active church people” presents an ideal “observation post.” I shall introduce the sociopolitical context in order to decisively “leave it aside” hereafter. “Church people” (parish priests, deacons, psalmists [*psalomshchiki*, i.e., chanters], former monks and nuns, “church activists,” itinerant preachers, holy fools, beggars and the like), finding themselves in a situation of permanent social catastrophe in Soviet Russia and balancing on the narrow, barely perceptible edge of legality, had to possess a keen sense of the events happening in the world around them. As we shall see, an astonishing mobility, common to the marginalized, distinguished them. That being said, thanks to their strong peasant roots and rich lived experience they enjoyed a huge reserve of vitality that permitted them to adapt to the most trying conditions of existence. Indeed, for two decades they were subject to repression with surprising regularity, in the course of which extensive and at times very informative “interviews” were conducted — the reports of these interrogations, moreover, were authorized, insofar as at the end of each was placed the phrase: “This report of my words was written down accurately and read by me, to which I affix my signature.”

A final comment concerning sources: The “inquisitors” of district offices of the NKVD in what is today Perm Krai were poorly educated, not very curious, very biased and impatient. They did not wait until “heresy” found expression in the spontaneous talk of the one being questioned, but boldly introduced the heresy into the conversation. Fortunately, it is not difficult to set aside this layer of discourse introduced into the speech of those being interrogated from radio broadcasts, lead articles in newspapers, party meetings, and courses for junior officers. First and foremost, stammering and an abundance of dialecticisms (*galakhi* [tramps, vagabonds, drunks], *kaliuzhina* [a garbage pit], *spu-*

chit [to blow] and the like) and idiomatic expressions (of the type “Sovetskaia vlast’, necha v kvashonku klast’” — “Soviet power [leads to the fact that] there’s nothing to put in your kneading bowl”) distinguished “spontaneous” everyday speech. Imitating this was outside the brief of an NKVD investigator. Instead, the most prevalent technique in an interrogation was precisely the coerced “recoding” of everyday discourse.

When addressing the accused or a witness, the investigator explicitly indicated to the interviewee *how to label correctly whatever was under discussion*, drawing the person into a peculiar language game. For example, after a story about an ordinary, everyday drinking bout, there followed the question: “Who else was present at your *counter-revolutionary gathering*?” And upon a story about “an explanation of the Antichrist” came the question: “Who directed you to conduct this *anti-Soviet agitation*?” In the majority of cases the interviewee accepted the proposed nomenclature, but did not change the testimony’s content — the drinking bout looked like a drinking bout, and the sermon — just like a sermon.

Another recognizable device was the “novella,” composed by the investigator and subsequently imported into the statement. A distinctive sign of the “novella” was always the presence of topical political vocabulary and the author’s unquestionable possession of at the very least minimal — if not bookish, then “newspaper” — culture. In a note the priest I. Kotel’nikov articulated well the relationship of a typical representative of the village clergy in the Western Urals to reading: “Read the Gospel the acts the epistles of the Holy Apostles but other books do not read, other books are all fit only for wiping your backside on the toilet yes only the baper in them is rough” (PermGANI, f. 641/1, op. 1, d. 8768, t. 1, l. 10–ob.) (preserving the orthography and punctuation of the original).¹

The key circumstance is this: The “inquisitors” were not particularly zealous in falsifying testimonies before August 1937 — the moment when large-scale operations began. Therefore, the present article uses as sources the testimonies of sixty-seven priests, deacons, church elders, and the like, involved in individual and group cases as the accused and as witnesses.²

1. This English version attempts to approximate the misspellings and absence of punctuation in the original. It renders “paper” as “baper” because the Russian word for paper, *bumaga*, is written as *gumaga* — Translator.
2. The documents used in the present article are derived from archival investigative files held in the Perm State Archive of Contemporary History in collections (*fondy*) 641/1 and 643/2. These documents directly bear witness to the application of repression against citizens for political reasons: arrest warrants, decisions concerning pre-trial

Analysis of statements about time in these sources makes it possible to distinguish quite definitively three meanings that this difficult-to-isolate phenomenon had in provincial everyday life in the Western Urals in the first half of the twentieth century. To start I shall interpret each of these meanings separately and then in their connection with each other and with the arena of everyday experience. *First*, there is the “little cycle” of time, defined by the annual rhythm of church holidays and fasts. *Second*, there is the “big cycle,” experienced as the ages of life. And, finally, *third* there is the “universal cycle,” linked with the sense of the approach of the last times, the end of the world, and the coming of the Antichrist.

In 1937, while answering an investigator’s question about events that occurred two years earlier, semiliterate peasant woman Pelageia Novoselova (from the Novoselovo village), née Zomareva, makes an interesting amendment to her statement. She dates her brother Varlaam’s return from exile incorrectly, and she corrects herself: “I must ask pardon from the investigator because in regard to Varlaam Zomarev I gave the wrong evidence when I said that he arrived from exile in 1934. In fact Zomarev returned from exile in *1935 around Easter — in the third or fourth week of the fast*” [Here and hereafter italics are mine. — A. K.] (PermGANI, f. 641/1, op. 1, d. 12702, t. 1, l. 113ob.). Naturally, she is conversant with the calendar and knows the months and the days of the week, but Pelageia Vasilevna can remember the exact date of an individually significant event only having “tied” it to a semantically privileged event of the Christian annual cycle — Easter.

The testimony of the priest of the village Ust-Kishert, Vasily Maksimov, gives a similar picture, as he explains when the itinerant preacher Mikhail Morskovatykh appeared among them in church the last time: “He was with us at the end of 1932 *on St. Nicholas’s Day, about December 19*;³ he stayed for about two days and at the same time in 1933 he stayed for about two to three weeks” (PermGANI, f. 643/2, op. 1,

restrictions, forms on those arrested, reports of searches and interrogations of the accused and of witnesses, secret dispatches, memoranda, indictments, sentences, petitions from the accused, applications for case reviews, decisions on rehabilitation, and the like. A special group of documents from these closed criminal cases consists of so-called “hard evidence” — leaflets, appeals, letters, programs with “counterrevolutionary content.” All the cited documents were written by hand with an ordinary fountain pen on low-quality paper and only sometimes were copied in type.

3. From February 1918, when the Soviet state mandated the use of the Gregorian calendar (the calendar in use in the West), the Russian Orthodox Church continued to use the Julian calendar, which was thirteen days behind the Gregorian calendar in the twentieth century. Thus St. Nicholas’s Day (December 6 on the Church calendar) occurred on December 19 — Translator.

d. 28183, t. 1, ll. 151–54). The priest remembers precisely that Morskovatykh — a conspicuous, disreputable figure in his time and place — arrived in Ust-Kishert exactly on St. Nicholas's Day, but he finds it difficult to relate that to the calendar — “about December 19.”

Comments of this sort are interesting because they demonstrate the mechanism of “hitching” the impersonal calendar cycle to a meaningful, “deeper” level of time perception — the church-holiday level, which refers the discussion directly to the culture of traditional society. This is because, if Emmanuel Le Roy Ladurie's conclusion based on European data is correct, by the fourteenth century, “the peasant calendar was dominated by the church calendar: religious acculturation in this sphere became irreversible (even today in our society that considers itself agnostic the arrangement of the calendar continues to be that of the church)” (Le Roy Ladurie 2001, 339). The second part of the French historian's thesis is not completely valid for Russian society — the Soviet era succeeded in “recoding” everyday time perception, leaving behind its signs and symbols in the form of the “First of May (*Pervomai*),” “FebMarch (*Fevramart*)” and the like, which stubbornly “hang about” there to this day, despite all attempts at a second recoding.⁴

One encounters simpler examples of the direct correlation of events to the church calendar at every step. Here is an example in which the chair of the Salomatovsky village soviet Stepan Tretiakov, by no means a church person, slanders the priest hieromonk Nifont (Agafonov) and the deacon Mikhail Ovchinnikov: “On July 9 on the feast of the Tikhvin Mother of God they with Hieromonk Nifont were guests of Ivan Maksimovich Shulikhin, the disfranchised kulak from the little village Zaozere, where they got so plastered that the deacon and monk fell asleep right there at the table and got sick all over everything” (PermGANI, f. 641/1, op. 1, d. 8891, l. 14). Tretiakov has no difficulty remembering both the date and the church holiday corresponding to it; in this case, the shocking behavior of the “deacon and monk” is the more memorable link, joining them into one. Here let me note that this presents us with an intriguing interpretive prospect — to what extent the sight of clerical individuals drinking heavily was an everyday occurrence in the residents' experience at that time.

Note, for example, that Mikhail Morskovatykh explains that not all Sundays are the same, which he easily relates to the calendar: “I was

4. *Pervomai* refers, of course, to the May Day holiday. *Fevramart* refers to the period between the paired holidays of Soviet Army and Navy Day (now Defenders of the Fatherland Day) on February 23, and International Women's Day (March 8) — Translator.

in the apartment of the priest of the village Novaia Osetrova about three times, the first time in February 1934 on an *ordinary Sunday*, and the second time somewhere in the first days of April 1934 on *St. Thomas's Sunday [Low Sunday]* (PermGANI, f. 643/2, op. 1, d. 28183, t. 1, ll. 88–96).

All attempts to uncover references to time periods smaller than this or that day have come to nothing. There is no “morning,” nor “evening,” “before lunch,” “at dawn,” “at noon” or the like in the sources. This creates the impression that in the everyday life of that time such categories simply did not exist, and this is all the more strange, given that in the lists of items confiscated during searches watches or clocks appear from time to time. For example, found in the possession of the itinerant preacher Foty Mikhailovich Petrov were: “a loaded, single-barreled pistol, books — Gospels — of different sizes — sixteen items, a *silver pocket watch*, a passport and assorted correspondence” (PermGANI, f. 643/2, op. 1, d. 28183, t. 1, l. 14). The dean (*blagochinnyi*) Semen Apollonovich Nekrasov possessed “an old *wall clock*” (PermGANI, f. 641/1, op. 1, d. 12702, t. 1, l. 135). A “*wall clock with a chime*,” worth fifteen rubles, along with a “female goat named Manka,” belonged to Pavel Alexandrovich Shliapnikov, who had formerly been a priest; in 1937 he was a tailor in an artel for the disabled (he was a dwarf; in his arrest form in the section for special remarks, “height 140 centimeters” was noted) (PermGANI, f. 641/1, op. 1, d. 12702, t. 1, l. 251). By the way, fifteen rubles was a very modest sum — lined felt boots, an utterly ordinary object of everyday use in Ural winters, cost approximately three times as much.

It is possible that this “blurring” of intra-day rhythms was influenced by the resolution of the Presidium of VTsIK (the All-Russian Central Executive Committee) of December 16, 1929, “On the regulation of bell ringing in churches,” which effectively deprived church bells of their voice. Indeed, in the culture of traditional society (which is precisely the cultural image the sources depict), it was the very ringing of bells, according to Jacques Le Goff, that provided the rhythm of alternation between work and amusements, prayer and idleness: “The ringing of the bells, calling priests and monks to service, was the sole means of reckoning the time of day” (Le Goff 2005, 221).

Only once did the literate and church reader Mikhail Morskovatykh, specifying the circumstances of sessions he held on the “coming of the Antichrist,” indicate [time of day]: “Giving explanations of these matters to separate believing workers from the collective farms, to individual farmers, and to groups of up to five people — I usually conducted these group discussions in the Ust-Kishert church between services,

between the morning service and divine liturgy" (PermGANI, f. 643/2, op. 1, d. 28183, t. 1, ll. 82–87). From this it is evident that the "intra-day" chronological partitioning of routine experience in the sole recorded case also follows the church service order. And note that there is no trace of the influence of, let us say, a work ethic ("before work," "after work" and the like).

The deeply internalized "short" rhythms of annual holidays and fasts gradually develop into more extensive cycles that, according to Philippe Ariès, can be called the "ages of life." (See Ariès 1999.) Ariès was able to count four or five of them. In the everyday life of the inhabitants of the western Ural villages and hamlets there were fewer, with only three clearly distinguishable.

It is problematic to designate the first age as childhood, as no one ever labels it that way. Here are typical expressions of the *first age*: "I was born into a family of an independent artisan, a tailor. Until the age of twenty-one I worked in my father's trade — during this time, beginning from the age of eleven, in summers I lived with different peasants as a hired laborer, and in winter I worked in my father's business — and I did other seasonal labor, a raft loader and so forth" (PermGANI, f. 643/2, op. 1, d. 28183, t. 1, ll. 144–45), or the following: "I was born into a middling peasant family; until the age of twenty-two, that is, until 1895, I lived and worked on my father's land. In 1895 I separated from him and worked my own land until 1915" (PermGANI, f. 643/2, op. 1, d. 28183, t. 2, ll. 2–4).

Most likely, to people born into peasant families of modest means, the first period of life, or the first age, denoted by the expression "I lived and worked in my father's trade," had a quite familiar meaning: This was a time when a person was the "property" of his parents. Neither school nor the state laid any claim on the individual, nor was the person "self-employed" (note the counterpoint: "In 1895 I separated from him and worked my own land") but was used for suitable work "wherever they send me."

As for the everyday meaning of the designation "children," "boy," and "girl," first, these terms signify what a person *has*: "I *have* children." Each man and woman indicates his or her children on the arrest form or in the report on the interrogation, expressing certain imperatives concerning them: "so that they would teach *their* children to pray to God" (PermGANI, f. 641/1, op. 1, d. 8768, t. 1, ll. 18–19ob.). To be sure, the meaning of such an assertion is two-fold — the children *exist* as mine (hence they simply exist as children), but I also *own*, I *possess* children. The interpretation given earlier makes the second meaning more likely.

In addition, the designation “boy” (and for some reason it is just that — a boy and not a girl) can acquire the symbolic, sacred meaning of purity and innocence: “two boys had a vision,” “two boys found a document behind the iconostasis and it said...” and the like. An adult might merit a vision only in an extreme state — during a severe illness, or at the point of death — such as, for example, “the foreman’s vision about collective farm workers and individual farmers.”⁵

And, finally, boys and girls were only just entering the everyday life of the Ural village in the 1920s–30s in conceptual association with *Young Pioneer* and *schoolchild*. In 1935 the policeman Kiriakov from the first precinct of Ordinsky district reported to the head of the NKVD district office:

I bring to your attention that on January 2, 1935, the Usanovsky priest⁶ was going around with holy water in the hamlet of Mikhailovka in the Mezhevsky village soviet. He carried the water in a teapot and stopped at each house, where he asked whether they were Orthodox or not. He stopped at the apartment of Fedor Ivanovich Kiriakov, who has three *schoolchildren*, one of whom is a *girl pioneer*. During the priest’s time in the apartment the schoolchildren began to laugh, and at this the priest tells F. I. Kiriakov that it is not good to bring up *children* this way, and then there’s this pioneer girl with her neck scarf, he said, don’t raise them that way (PermGANI, f. 641/1, op. 1, d. 12702, t. 1, l. 23).

The significance of what happened is quite obvious: a priest (*pop*) “visits” an apartment with a teapot of holy water, and to the schoolchildren and pioneers this is *already* an oddity, evoking laughter. And to the priest the look of the pioneer girl who, by the way, is *going about wearing a pioneer neck scarf in the apartment*, that is, in her own home, is *another* oddity and most annoying. Here everyday life has plainly been rent asunder; the proverbial “reciprocity of perspectives” of A. Schütz is absent, provoking conflict — neither side demonstrates customary, expected behavior. (See Schütz 1988.) In its apparent lack of artifice, this

5. “In Maksimov’s parish there worked a collective farm foreman who during an illness saw a vision ‘in which all the collective farm workers were suffering, and the individual farmers were rejoicing.’ This foreman asked for the priest Maksimov as if for confession, and also summoned all the workers of his brigade, to whom he said that they — the collective farm workers — should all leave the collective farm straightway, and shortly after confession the foreman died” (PermGANI, f. 643/2, op. 1, d. 28183, t. 2, ll. 95–96).
6. In this report the policeman uses mainly a colloquial term for “priest” (*pop*) that by the mid-nineteenth century had become a pejorative. The standard, neutral term is *sviashchennik* — Translator.

scene (the priest and the pioneer girl), as if lit up by a photographer's flashbulb, brings to mind the classics of that era: "All this — tractors and camels — went together very well in a picture frame under the title 'Old and New' or 'Who Whom?'" (Il'f and Petrov 1979, 558).

Another instance of a boy's appearance as a *child* took place in 1934 in the Alexandrovsky settlement: "yes, there was a case in 1934, when some youngsters went into Kholmogorov's vegetable garden. The priest's wife ambushed them in the garden and, seeing a *boy*, cried out: 'I caught the carrot thieves,'" for which they put the whole Kholmogorov family *on trial* (PermGANI, f. 641/1, op. 1, d. 16996, ll. 72–75). They tried the priest (*pop*) and his wife (*popad'ia*) precisely because the boy turned out to be not a "carrot thief" but a pioneer. Here again there is a conflict, and what is more, a double one: first, the Kholmogorov family (actually — Kolmogorov) opposed the "carrot thief"; second, the authorities, asserting the new norm, opposed the priest and his wife. Evidently, the standard relation to childhood being introduced into everyday life (that is, in fact, the construction of childhood) as a "pioneer-schoolchild" stage happened right before the eyes of one generation and proceeded in utterly predictable fashion — traumatically.

Having studied the construction of childhood based on materials from Saratov province, Olga Bendina, for example, has drawn an analogous conclusion. There, beginning in the second half of the 1920s until about 1934–35 inclusively, the shaping of the Soviet "first age" occurred, indirectly and tortuously, in several areas at the same time. (See Bendina 2007.) This was in fact an "expansion" of power in everyday life. A campaign to "attract children to school" became the first line of action. The second was the expansion of parents' responsibility (right up to judicial-administrative accountability) for "child neglect." The third was the training of cadres of educators and teachers, the fourth consisted of measures for the "strengthening of the family," and the fifth — the formation of normative pedagogical discourse, and so forth.

Not long before the beginning of the Second World War the Soviet regime completely won the struggle with the family for childhood, that is, for the disciplined and ideologized child. And indeed as early as 1934 a young woman living in Kungursky district, Akulina Blinova, rightly says about herself: "From childhood I have been working for different people as a housemaid" (PermGANI, f. 643/2, op. 1, d. 28183, t. 2, ll. 123–24 ob.). This already sounds like a grievance and a complaint — "exploiters deprived me of my childhood."

The *second age* began differently for men and women. All men in the second and third age unanimously mark their conscription into the

army as a turning point in life, dividing it into a *before* and *after*: “In 1899 I graduated from the village school and I worked on my father’s land without interruption until I was called up, that is until 1909” (PermGANI, f. 643/2, op. 1, d. 28183, t. 2, ll. 39–42); “In 1915 they took me into the old army, where I served until 1917 inclusively as an enlisted man” (PermGANI, f. 643/2, op. 1, d. 28183, t. 2, ll. 2–4); “In 1895 they mobilized me into the tsarist army, where I served until 1898 as an enlisted man” (PermGANI, f. 643/2, op. 1, d. 28183, t. 1, ll. 162–63). Typically, even an unrealized call-up became a milestone in one’s biography:

I was born into a middling peasant family and until the age of twenty-three I lived and worked on my father’s land back home. They released me from the draft and enrolled me as a militiaman of the second category — this was in the twenty-third year after my birth. Having been released from the call-up for military service, in about 1894, I decided to go to monasteries and holy places to pray to God (PermGANI, f. 643/2, op. 1, d. 28183, t. 1, ll. 117–18).

For women marriage served as an analogous turning point, or, in cases in which that was not possible, transformation into a bride of Christ: “I, M. G. Kotel’nikova, was born in 1875 in the small village of Nistukovaia (Perm district, the Lobanovsky village soviet). Until the age of eighteen I lived as a peasant. Our household was a poor one. After the death of my father my mother advised me to go to a convent, since she was not in a position to give me in marriage” (PermGANI, f. 641/1, op. 1, d. 8768, t. 1, l. 14).

Let me state a necessary qualification — once a pioneer (school-going) childhood and a Komsomol (higher education) youth have been established and become familiar in the lifeworld, once they become everyday phenomena, the nature of milestones-transitions necessarily undergoes a transformation (“You passed the strength of materials course — you can get married”). Perhaps this topic merits special investigation. But if the question is the mentality of mature, adult people who lived in the first half of the twentieth century in the Perm hinterlands, then it is surprising to observe that they easily “do not notice” events of world significance — the Russo-Japanese War, the revolution of 1905–7, the fall of the monarchy and the like — but they remember precisely the moment of their call-up and demobilization, or, in the “female” version, marriage.

Perhaps the process of transition into the *second age* was memorable also because signs clearly emerge that confer the characteristics

of an archaic initiation rite on the transition: a change of name (instead of “Grigory Ivanovich” — “Private Sokolov”), a change of attire (a soldier’s uniform, the dress of a married woman, a religious habit), a transfer from one authority to another (from “father-*batiushka*” to “tsar-*batiushka*, “husband-*batiushka*”),⁷ and even a certain alteration of such physical attributes as hair (they *cut the hair* of new conscripts, they *tonsure* monks, they *unplait the braids* of a maiden).

The transition to the *third age* (“old man,” “old woman”) was less pronounced although also noticeable. Here a close acquaintance of Foty (sometimes in the text, *Fotei*) Petrov (Petrov was sixty-three years old) shares an observation: “Earlier, a year or two ago, Fotei Mikhailovich *spoke well* and read sermons, *but, look, now he is already getting old; he’s already so old that he doesn’t spread the news as he did before*, although he also goes around the villages with sermons” (PermGANI, f. 643/2, op. 1, d. 28183, t. 2, ll. 85–87). This statement presents in compact form the essence of the perception of declining years. Foty, who himself defined his occupation with the word “wanderer,” “worked” in a very specific job — he was a sort of mobile radio transmitter. He must have relayed the news beautifully (“well”). And now in the last year he can no longer handle this work, which means his bodily and spiritual strength are deserting him. That is — he has grown old. It was not, as people would say now, “Old age set in, he retired — and having weakened, the ailments of old age appeared,” but in contrast: “He became weak — that means, old age had come. He became old.”

In addition, the advent of the third age of life also had this everyday meaning, the appearance of infantile traits in the person’s behavior — for example, dependence on milk. This is the kind of information an unknown witness reports about the priest Potap Osievich Kiselev (age sixty-five): “He rarely left his house; he kept to himself. When you do see him he grumbles about the authorities and especially that they took his last cow, for ‘without milk I can’t live, I’m an old man,’ he says” (PermGANI, f. 643/2, op. 1, d. 29374, special envelope).

The aged need care as a little child does, and moreover, it is as if they were drifting away, becoming alienated from those closest to them, because of their infirmity dropping out of the circle of the familiar daily routine; they live on what their relatives and good people give them. The hermit monk Iosaf (Nikita Belousov) describes a la-

7. *Batiushka* is a traditional folk expression for “father” — Translator.

dy's age in exactly this way: "A woman pilgrim Evdokiia came to him (she is now sixty years old, a decrepit old woman, who left for Viatsky district to find food two months ago, more precisely — a month and a half)" (PermGANI, f. 643/2, op. 1, d. 28183, t. 2, ll. 24–28).

The materials at my disposal do not permit any interpretation of the phenomenon of an individual's death, although this event undoubtedly appears on the horizon of the lifeworld and in some way, naturally, fits into everyday life, acquiring symbols and rituals, and always having a certain meaning. There is a single mention of the funeral of Bishop Ioaniky, but in the context of internal conflict — a certain priest at the funeral stood to the side separately from all the clergy, and there were numerous laconic remarks such as "he has now died" or "the deceased." Only once, speaking for some reason to an NKVD investigator about the sect of the "Semenushki," the priest Ivan Kotel'nikov (getting confused in his testimony, in the truest sense of the word) declares:

Semen Gladil'shchikov, with the surname "Semenushka," he comes from the little village Novaia in Kungursky district. Recently about forty people lived in this cell in the village of Zhuravlev. As I know, Gladil'shchikov *reportedly died at that time. But when he died, I don't know.* A prosperous peasant from the village Veslianka in the same village soviet (Kungursky district), Yakov Konstantinovich (I don't know his surname), joined this sect. *Gladil'shchikov died in 1926*, and a citizen member of this sect, Nikolai Ivanovich (whose last name I don't know) — he comes from the village Shchelchka in the Vesliansky village soviet in Kungursky district — washed his body. After Gladil'shchikov's death his cross was put on Nikolai Ivanovich who, it seemed, was worthy to be Semen Gladil'shchikov's successor. (PermGANI, f. 641/1, op. 1, d. 8768, t. 1, l. 28–28ob.)

The simple symbolism here is very typical of a traditional society — the passing on of a cross as the passing on of one's fate, one's destiny ("It is for you to bear my cross").

Conceivably, prevailing expectations of a universal finale, of the completion of the world cycle, help one to understand the meaning of an individual life's finiteness. I refer to the experience of living through the "last times" and the "end of the world" — the third modality of the perception of time at the everyday level. This concern is deeply colored by Christian eschatology, surrounded frequently by reinterpreted biblical quotations, and supplied with numerological underpinnings. The

temptation exists to link expectation of the end of the world and the “last times” with the influence of religious ideology, which, no doubt, constitutes an important element of a traditional mentality. But there are grounds for, and most importantly, the possibility of, differentiating between the phenomenological sense of the last times and its secondary trajectory in the ideological sphere.

Note, for example, a book (a general school notebook with graph paper) with the title “The Fate of Russia” (figure 1), preserved in the file of the priest I. I. Kotelnikov, “a book written by him in his own hand,” as the book is entitled in the file’s materials. In the book the priest calculates precisely the year of the end of the world — and we can do it together with him. Combining the digits in the written year 1935 ($1 + 9 + 3 + 5$) gives the answer “18.” But 18 is three sixes ($6 + 6 + 6$), and “666” is the number of the beast in the “Book of Revelation.”

Further: Converting the year 1935, reckoned from the birth of Christ, into the old reckoning system “from the creation of the world” ($1935 + 5508$) gives the year 7443. Combining the digits ($7 + 4 + 4 + 3$) once again gives 18. Ergo, the end of the world was appointed by Providence (and enciphered in digits) for 1935.

But Kotelnikov himself and people who had personally interacted with him said something else:

The directives I gave were the following: 1) to spread rumors of the end of the world and the fall of the Soviet regime in 1933 among the population with the purpose of waging a struggle with increasing godlessness (PermGANI, f. 643/2, op. 1, d. 28183, t. 2).

In 1932 Kotelnikov began to say to me again that the time was drawing near when it was necessary to be especially vigilant. That of the twenty-eight signs of the coming of the antichrist according to holy scripture only two had not come to pass: 1) the utter abomination of desolation in the holy place, that is, the complete destruction and desecration of the churches and 2) the coming itself of the antichrist. But this scripture must be fulfilled in its entirety no later than 1933 (PermGANI, f. 643/2, op. 1, d. 28183, t. 1, ll. 97–102).

On October 6, 1932, I was visiting Ovchinnikov, and he said to me in conversation that the psalmist at the church in Podavikha, Nikolai Yakovlevich Alekseev, was spreading rumors among the believers of the village of Podavikha that the world would end soon, indicating the date that the world would end as the beginning of 1933 or at Easter — March–April 1933. (PermGANI, f. 641/1, op. 1, d. 8768, t. 1, ll. 23–24)

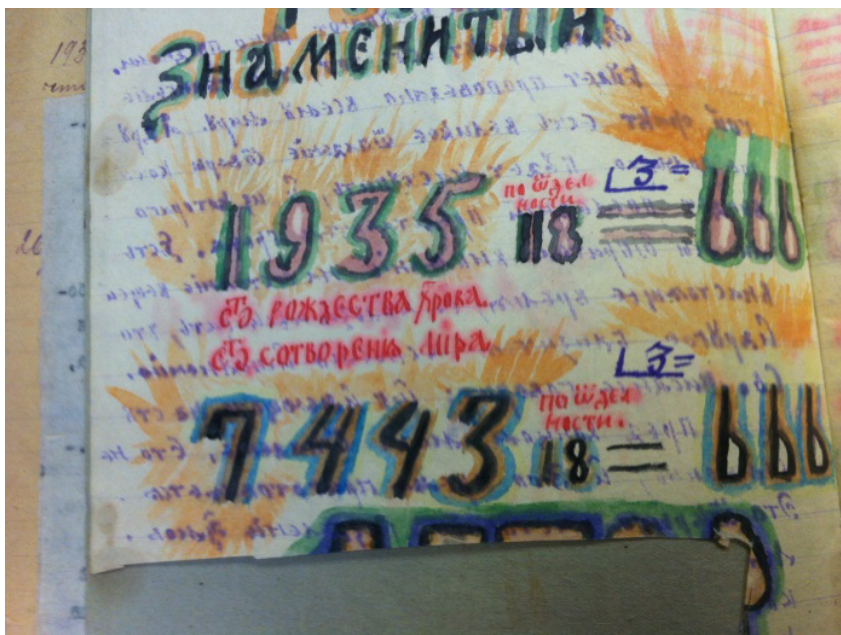


Figure 1. Calculation of the date of the end of the world by the priest I. I. Kotelnikov. The manuscript was written ca. 1932.

It was this very period — the end of 1932 and the beginning of 1933 — that lay at the root of a whole series of practices recorded in completely reliable sources. Several people, independently of each other, speak of strange “assemblies for heaven” observed in the village of Podavikha. The priest Varlaam Zomarev testifies: “The spread of rumors about the imminent end of the world by Alekseev among the believers had certain consequences: The faithful of the village Podavikha sewed clothes for themselves and knapsacks, preparing for death, as if they would flee somewhere but where — I did not know” (PermGANI, f. 641/1, op. 1, d. 8768, t. 1, ll. 23–24). And note this excerpt from the “Indictment in the case of I. I. Kotel’nikov and others”:

In October 1932 the priest [*pop*] OVCHINNIKOV and the psalmist ALEKSEEV spread rumors among the population about the end of the world in January 1933. The citizens of the hamlet of Podovikha, preparing for death, sewed white garments for themselves, the better to pray for forgiveness of their sins before death, and they went many versts to pray, in particular to Kishertsky district, to the village Moriakovo to the priest [*pop*] KOTEL’NIKOV. (PermGANI, f. 643/2, op. 1, d. 28183, t. 2, ll. 60–71)

It is surprising that in the given case the numerological exercises indicating 1935 and the actual expectations of the end of the world, leading to quite substantive effects, were, first, chronologically inconsistent, and, second, linked with one and the same personage — the priest Ivan Kotelnikov. I shall try to sort this out.

The end of the world first began to dawn on the lifeworld horizon of village inhabitants in the Urals in about 1930:

Belozerov spread defeatist rumors as early as 1930, at one of the counterrevolutionary gatherings in the Asov church. Other people and I were talking together with G. I. Belozerov and I asked him: “Grigory Ilich, tell me, *aren’t the last times beginning?*” Belozerov answered me: “At present this must not yet be, for this regime must be changed, these authorities will be no more; then the star will be not five-pointed, but six-pointed.” (PermGANI, f. 641/1, op. 1, d. 16925, t. 2, l. 410b.)

The impression takes shape that a vivid sense of “the last times” and the imminent arrival of the Antichrist reached a peak of intensity at the end of 1932 and the beginning of 1933, but then gradually died out. By 1937 no one was talking about the end of the world, but rather they were hoping for the fall of the Soviet regime as a result of Japanese or German intervention and the world war. (For more details on this, see Kazankov 2011.)

What exactly lies behind this short-lived but very vivid, intense experience of time as “the last time”? To assert that religious doctrine provoked it, that it was predicted in scripture, is somewhat like saying: “Today it is warm, because the thermometer reads thirty degrees Celsius in the shade,” that is, to reverse cause and effect. Another explanation is more likely — a specific traumatic experience required the mobilization of all the explanatory possibilities of religious teaching, by becoming the center of the crystallization of eschatological expectations. (See Panchenko 2002.) It is not difficult to surmise what sort of experience this was, and on this point the interpretation of time I originally proposed also intersects very smoothly with space, forming a sensory-specific chronotope. Clearly, the time was “depraved” and “coming to an end” not in itself but because the collective farm invaded the space of everyday life.

The first signs of the grand campaign preparing for the collectivization of the village appeared in the summer of 1929, and by November the government’s intentions had become evident. The reaction was not long in coming. In November 1929, during questioning about counterrevolutionary agitation by the local clergy, a young peasant sympathet-

ic with the Soviet regime and also managing the village reading room in Brusun (Chusovsky district) reports:

The church people themselves, such as the deacon Mikhail and the monk Paisy, more than once came to the village and had conversations in the street with the peasants along the lines of the following: “Laypeople! The atheists have come up with the idea to draw us Orthodox Christians with their lying deceptive talk into their vile organizations — the communes. Don’t think of signing up for these heretical collectives; there you will be cursed by our holy fathers. There all the possessions you have acquired by your sweat and blood will be taken from you. You will work for these bums (*galakhi*).⁸ They’re not willing to do honest work, for they, the thieves, have dreamed up the idea of enslaving you workers of the land in service to the devil. They have neither cross nor conscience. Don’t trust them. They will forbid you to come to our holy church and will mock our Orthodox faith. With them you will have prolonged famine; you will go around the commune with your sack. (PermGANI, f. 641/1, op. 1, d. 8891, l. 8–8ob.)

The characteristics of the collective farm as a sort of “anti-place,” an “antichrist” place, can be given in more detail in another project. Here I need only denote the core of the traumatic experience that produced the sense of the “last times.” A range of witnesses indicates that something oppressive, coercive, and overwhelming broke brutally and aggressively into everyday life. In the words of the priest Vasily Michkov, brought to us by an anonymous informer under the pseudonym “Green,” there is a pair of completely eidetic (and self-interpreted) images: the image of the “box,” into which the “Jews bend the peasants” and the “screw” with the help of which they wring out money and bread (PermGANI, f. 641/1, op. 1, d. 12702, special envelope). Or, for example, one of the surviving individual farmers, the farmer (*khutorianin*) Timofei Shvetsov, explained the advantage of his position thus: “To live on one’s own is hard because they crush you with crippling taxes, but, nevertheless, somehow we squeeze out the money and pay this amount expected from us, and *again I am at peace and no one is running under the window and driving you out to work*” (PermGANI, f. 641/1, op. 1, d. 12702, special envelope). In contrast to the collective farm laborer the individual farmer was free — and therefore at peace.

The accustomed, that is, the everyday, way of life of the peasant presupposed a certain minimum of private autonomy, albeit expressed

8. *Galakh* is an epithet in the Urals for those without families, drunkards, tramps.

in the primitive formulation “no one is running under the window and driving you out to work.” In the collective farm there was no freedom, and there was a “screw” with a good, strong grip. Peasants living in the Urals in the 1930s literally “felt [this] in their skin.” And he who is not free cannot be a member of Christ’s church. This was the first, essential element of the experience of the “last times,” of “depraved” times, in which it’s impossible to live, in which the familiar everyday meanings have come to an end.

The second element was the perception of the futility of the free, unpaid labor of the collective farm workers, their absolute destitution: “There is almost nothing to eat, all the bread goes to the state, they earn money — they also pay taxes, and they sit without bread among their own grain; work alone remains” (PermGANI, f. 641/1, op. 1, d. 12702, special envelope). One of the specific characteristics of everyday life is that it is an arena of *equivalent* exchanges, a place where an honest game of “sacrifice and reward”⁹ is played. What was happening on the collective farm meant the collapse of everyday routine, the establishment of something utterly absurd but unstoppable, advancing triumphantly.

I shall try to state briefly what I saw when looking at the experience of time. First and foremost, the “spiritual equipment” of the inhabitant of the provincial hinterlands right up to the end of the 1930s was attuned to the small-scale (church-holiday) annual cycles that seamlessly flowed and combined into the distinct, visible “three ages of life” that broadly typify the culture of traditional societies. The intrusion of modernization in this instance is sensed only in the conflicts and discord of “reciprocal perspectives” that surrounded the establishment of a childhood of pioneers and school, “introduced” by the regime into everyday life literally right before the eyes of a single generation. This was a new and shocking experience.

But also, for “traditional time” itself, as they say, “the times had been fulfilled.” The chief cultural shock, imprinted in the image of the “last times,” proved to be the collective farm. The “last times” was not at all a church metaphor but the phenomenon of perceiving that everyday life was collapsing, splitting apart, and disintegrating under the

9. See Syrov 2000: “This is why one should not link everyday life with a totally consumerist and egoistical relation to the world. Routine, monotony, sacrifice, and limitation are present in everyday life when limits are placed on desire. But they are dependent not on internal control but on the force and opposition of external objects. Therefore it is possible to consider the relationship of exchange as the relationship describing this particular dialectic of interaction with the world. Everything makes sense only when it is fit together in this formula: I give and I receive. Here an inversion is possible, when an intentional sacrifice is made with the purpose of prompting and enhancing the act of receiving.”

influence of collectivization. This was a very involved, complex experience: the sense of “normal” time as the possibility of free choice and equivalent exchange, on the one hand, and the perception of the end of comprehensible existence as “troubled times,” on the other, were tightly intertwined, as well as tinged with religious eschatological symbolism, and, as has become clear, became a quite tangible force changing everyday behavior (“assemblies for heaven”).

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NIKOLAY TSYREMPILOV

The Constitutional Theocracy of Lubsan-Samdan Tsydenov: An Attempt to Establish a Buddhist State in Transbaikalia (1918–22)

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The paper examines the causes and circumstances of the establishment of a Buddhist theocratic state by Lubsan-Samdan Tsydenov, an outstanding figure of Buriat Buddhism. Drawing upon some hitherto unedited Tibetan, Mongolian and Russian sources, the paper undertakes a detailed reconstruction of the events in Siberian Transbaikalia in the period of the Russian Civil War. An analysis of personal notes by Tsydenov and the text of the constitution of the Kudun Buddhist state shows that “Kudun theocracy” was a syncretic fusion of the traditional Buddhist understanding of the Buddhist “Dharmic state” and modernist conceptions of republicanism and constitutional democracy. The Kudun theocracy should also be interpreted as a response of Buddhist circles to attempts by Buriat secular nationalists to build Buriat statehood based upon the idea of national self-determination. The Kudun project shows that Buddhism could serve as a foundation for state-building at the time of the early twentieth-century Russian political crisis.

Keywords: Buddhism, theocracy, Russia, Civil War, Buryatia, Lubsan-Samdan Tsydenov, constitution, modernity.

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Introduction

IN the second half of the seventeenth century, when the first Buddhist lamas from Tibet and Mongolia had already begun expounding their faith among Buriat tribes, Transbaikalia was incorporated into the Russian state according to terms of the Treaty of Nerchinsk (1689). The Buriats of Transbaikalia accepted subjection to Russian rule relatively peacefully, and this can largely be explained by promises regarding religious freedom that Fiodor Golovin, representative of the imperial crown, made to the Buddhists of Buryatia (Podgorbunskii 1901, 167). This promise was adhered to, but in general the history of the Buriat Buddhist community within the Russian state cannot be called simple. Unsuccessful attempts by imperial administrators to remove Buddhism from the territory of Russia, undertaken in the eighteenth century, which almost led to a mass exodus of Buriats from Russia to Mongolia (Natsagdorz 2015, 18–39), were superseded by Catherine II's policy of religious toleration and a utilitarian approach. Alexander I and Nicholas I, having become reconciled to the presence of Buddhism within their borders, adopted a number of consistent measures with the aim of controlling the numbers and the extent of the spread of the Buddhist clergy (Gerasimova 1957; Tsyrempilov 2015). Even during the reign of Catherine II the affairs of the Buriat Buddhists had been entrusted to an administrative body created for this purpose, headed by a Bandido Khambo Lama (Chimitdorzhin 2010). The Buddhist community's religious leaders achieved a position of authority over the rank-and-file Buddhist clergy and a network of monasteries. During the second half of the nineteenth century, mutual relations between Buddhist lamas and civil administrators gained a degree of stability, but there were years during which they were overshadowed by short-term conflicts (Tsyrempilov 2007, 174–76, 196–99).

Right up to the beginning of the twentieth century, the system of self-rule by Buriats within the Russian Empire functioned on tribal lines. All Buriats were assigned to one or another Steppe *duma*, which served as the main bodies for tribal self-rule and were subject to the *guberniia* administration (Dameshek 1986, 40–41). The horizontal links between “*dumas*” were weak, which impeded the emergence, among Buriats, of a single ethnic awareness. Meanwhile, the network of Buddhist monasteries, headed by the Bandido Khambo Lama's chancellery, was the only system that drew a large proportion of the Buriat ethnosphere into a certain kind of unity. This probably accounts for the fact that, in terms of influence and authority, not a sin-

gle member of the Buriat tribal elite could compete with the Khambo Lamas, who represented all Buddhists of the region, whereas the tribal heads represented only members of their own tribal community. With its centralized system of rule and its clearly defined center, Buddhism constituted a serious alternative to tribal self-rule, and the common interests of the Buriats as a whole were realized more effectively within the parameters of this system.

At the beginning of the twentieth century a third force was to shape and emerge on the scene, in the form of a Buriat secular intelligentsia, whose representatives had received their education at European universities and became the bearers of modernist ideas regarding nationalism, autonomy and national self-determination. Their thinking was already distinguished by general ethnic rather than tribal categories, and a large proportion of this secular intelligentsia regarded Buddhism as being “a point of refuge for a national spirit, national individuality and solidarity” (Rupen 1964, 1:34). They also viewed it as a force capable of consolidating the dispersed Buriat tribes.

The February and October Revolutions of 1917 and the Civil War offered Buriat nationalists an opportunity to realize their ideas in practice. In their attempts to do that, Buriat advocates of autonomy (“autonomists”) tried to enlist the support of the Buddhist clergy. However, Buriat Buddhist leaders responded cautiously and mistrustfully to the pan-ethnic or nationalist strivings of their kinsmen. The Bandido Khambo Lama Guro-Darma Tsyrempilov and Agvan Dorzhiev offered direct support to the forces of restoration. In the course of negotiations with Alexander Kolchak, they promised him that they would carry out “propaganda against revolution and socialism” (Rupen 1964, 135). A proportion of the Buddhist clergy directly opposed the revolutionary movement and activists of the national movement, while paradoxically borrowing some very progressive ideas from their arsenal.

The project of establishing a Kudun theocratic republic occupies a special place in this history. It was initiated by Lubsan-Samdan Tsydenov, one of the most illustrious representatives of the Buriat Buddhist clergy. Tsydenov’s state-building project is particularly interesting, inasmuch as it combines ideas of a Dharmic state headed by an enlightened Tantric deity with modernist principles of state organization of a republican character.

In the present article I shall attempt to explain the reasons why an ordinary Buriat lama arrived at the idea of a Buddhist theocratic republic; to trace the progression of his ideas; and to establish the sequence of events that led to the emergence of this state-building project. My

interpretations will be based on a range of hitherto little-known sources, among which a typewritten manuscript by Ts. M. Ochirzhapov, a member of staff of the Anti-Religious Museum of the town of Verkhneudinsk (now Ulan-Ude), occupies a special place. This document bears the title, “The Theocratic Balagat Movement and Banditism in the Khori Aimak, 1917–1927.”¹ In this substantial account (92 typewritten pages), the author meticulously describes the course of events that took place in the Khori *aimak* of Transbaikalia during the specified period. In spite of the author’s sharply biased evaluation of the activity of Lubsan-Samdan Tsydenov and his associates, the chronology of events set out by the author, as well as a mass of important details, strike me as being credible. A fortunate circumstance led to my obtaining a manuscript of Lubsan-Samdan Tsydenov’s draft for a state constitution, written in Mongolian,² which sheds light on what kind of political structure its founders had in mind. For the present article I have also used Tsydenov’s own notes, written during several spells of imprisonment in Verkhneudinsk in 1921. These notes, written in Tibetan, Mongolian and Russian, include different kinds of observations on state structures in different parts of the world, quotations from Buddhist sutras, and complaints and petitions to judicial bodies.³ I have also used materials relating to the earlier years of his life, such as the Tibetan text of a poem that he wrote, describing the triumphant celebrations surrounding the coronation of Tsar Nicholas II, which took place in 1896. Tsydenov himself participated in the coronation in his dual capacity as a member of the Buriat delegation and as head of the Kudun monastery (*datsan*).⁴ I would like to express particular gratitude to my colleagues Gonchog Nyamochir, member of staff of the

1. This manuscript is preserved in the personal archive of the present author. Further, see Ochirzhapov. *Aimak* is a term that refers to one of the territorial units that were introduced under the Buriat-Mongol autonomy, and can also mean a military unit similar to a division.
2. The manuscript fills four pages of gray paper of Russian manufacture, measuring 23 x 37 cm. The title is: *Urīda qorī-yin ayaimay-un buriyad qosiyun-ud-un medel-ün baygiysan-a tegūben oyoryuad edūge* . . . Henceforth referred to as “the Constitution.”
3. The L.-S. Tsydenov Archive. The Tibetan Holdings of the Center for Oriental Manuscripts and Xylographs of the Institute of Mongolian, Buddhist and Tibetan Studies.
4. The National Museum of the Republic of Buryatia. Temporary Holding. Inv. No. 422. The manuscript would appear to be a later copy of an original. The text is written in a school exercise-book, which has twenty pages of squared paper. In its Tibetan version it has the following extensive title: “New Song Inspired by the Great Joy of the Eventual Ascent to the Indestructible Diamond Throne of the Mighty Cakravartin, the Deity Established by Heaven, Tsar Nicholas, Praising the Enthronement, Narrating Briefly the Glory of Russia which Acquired the Might of Two Capital Cities, called

Bogdo-Gegen Museum in Ulan-Bator, and Tsyren-Khanda Vladimirovna Ochirova, who, from 2005 to 2007, served as director of the M. N. Khangalov Museum of the History of Buryatia. They, together with Dorzho Dugarov, helped me in searching for important sources.

On the Eve of the Civil War

The Advocates of Autonomy and the Anti-Aimak Faction

In Transbaikalia the February Revolution of 1917 set in motion a process of self-organization among Buriats and a movement for autonomy. In April of that year of revolution the First All-Buriat Congress was convened, and it established the Buriat National Committee (*Burnatskom*), which defined the task of reorganizing *buluk* and *volost'* administrations⁵ and replacing them with new territorial administrative structures on the model of, and similar to, those military-administrative units that had been introduced by the Manchus in Mongolia as far back as the seventeenth century. These were called *somons*, *khoshuns* and *aimaks*, denoting more or less metaphorically “arrows,” “banners” and “divisions” respectively. It was the Buriat bourgeois nationalists, as they were referred to in Soviet historiography, who became the principal driving force of the movement for Buriat autonomization. Their most well-known representatives were the Social Democrat Elbeg-Dorzhi Rinchino (1888–1938), the social activist Mikhail Bogdanov (1878–1919), the renowned scholars Bazar Baradin (1878–1937), Tsyben Zhamtsarano (1881–1942) and Dashi Sampilon (1891–1938), the Buddhist lama and diplomat Agvan Dorzhiev (1856–1938) and others (Rupen 1964, 29). One could not call this a unified group, but overall its members agreed on the necessity of ensuring their own administrative and cultural autonomy within the new Russia. Advocates of the restoration of the Statute of 1822 drawn up by Mikhail Speransky⁶ made up a separate group, initially called the “Old Duma” faction

‘Repeatedly Gazing at the Terrifying Bengal and African Lions in the Zoological Garden’
Henceforth: “New Song.”

5. *Buluk* and *volost'* — the basic administrative units used by the Buriat population of Transbaikalia, introduced due to the *volost'* reform at the beginning of the twentieth century.
6. The statute “On the Administration of Non-Russians,” elaborated by M. M. Speransky when he served as general-governor of Siberia in 1822, set out a system of administration for the non-Slavic peoples of Siberia, including the Buriats, based on principles of self-rule.

(*starodumtsy*), which included former officials of the steppe dumas⁷ and part of the Buddhist clergy, who considered the system of Buriat self-rule, which had been abolished at the turn of the century, as answering the principal needs and hopes of the Buriats. Erdeni Vambotsyrenov, former *taisha* of Khorii Steppe Duma,⁸ was leader of this particular group (*Istoriia Buriatii*, 13). A section of the Buriat Buddhist clergy joined this group, also speaking out firmly against any changes whatsoever in the Buriats' long-lasting system of secular and religious self-rule.

Creating the Structures for Buriat Autonomy

The question of restoring the steppe dumas was raised by the Old Duma faction during proceedings of the First All-Buriat Congress, convened in Chita in the first months after the February 1917 revolution. At that time E.-D. Rinchino managed to persuade the Old Duma faction not to include this matter in the Congress's resolution. Instead, the Congress resolved to recommend the creation of an autonomous territory for the Buriats, divided up into three types of territorial unit, structured hierarchically in the following order: *aimak*, *khoshun* and *somon*. The Buriat National Committee became the superior regulatory structure of the autonomous region. The Buriat National Committee arranged for the Khorii *aimak* to comprise eleven *khoshuns* according to the number of tribes that were to be included in the sub-ethnic grouping of "Khorii Buriat-Mongols."⁹

In the course of discussing the Congress's resolution, a small group of Old Duma faction deputies, headed by Genin Tsyrempilov, head of the Kudun (Kizhinga) *datsan*, and by Burnobadara Dalayev, a former Khornisk *zaisan*,¹⁰ expressed public dissatisfaction regarding the use of military terminology to name territorial units of the Buriat autonomous region. This military terminology seemed to them to be menac-

7. Steppe Dumas — organs or instruments of self-rule for the native peoples of Siberia, employed from 1822 until end of the nineteenth century and beginning of the twentieth century.

8. *Taisha* — a Chinese-derived term for a Buriat tribal chief (Rupen 1964, 23). Before the abolition of steppe dumas, Erdeni Vambotsyrenov had been the chief *taisha* in the Khorii Steppe Duma.

9. Khorii Buriats, Khorii Buriat-Mongols: the self-appellation of one of the largest sub-ethnic groups that make up the Buriat people. They live in Central and Eastern Transbaikalia.

10. *Zaisan*: A post in the hierarchy of ranks of the steppe дума administration.

ing in itself and also seemed to anticipate an impending militarization of the Buriat-Mongols (Ochirzhapov, 2). Obviously claims regarding the naming of territorial units were only an external manifestation of Old Duma dissatisfaction with the Buriat National Committee's (*Burnatskom's*) reversal in favor of autonomization. After that, participants in the Congress paid no more attention to the dissatisfaction of its faction from Kizhinga. Many prominent representatives of the Old Duma faction received jobs in the administrations of *aimaks*, *khoshuns* and *somons*, and Erdeni Vambotsyrenov, the leader of the conservative Old Duma faction, became part of the Khori *aimak's* Committee for Social Security. It seemed that a compromise among the different groups of Buriat activists had been found.

However, soon the rivalry between the autonomists and the Old Duma faction resulted in a serious confrontation. On June 17, 1917, the Provisional Government adopted a resolution on the introduction of local government (*zemstvo*) administration in Siberia. This signified the demise of the Old Duma faction's hopes. The Old Duma faction assumed that now the Buriat Mongols would again be defenseless before the power of the Russian majority. The autonomists were declared to be at fault for this failure, in particular E.-D. Rinchino, who, during the work of the First Congress, had persuaded deputies not to put forward a petition regarding the restoration of the steppe dumas. Tension increased yet further when, as a result of elections organized in Transbaikalia on January 18, 1918, representatives of the autonomists made up almost all the voters at the *zemstvo* level. At the elections the Old Duma faction was unable to consolidate sufficiently early and put forward its own candidates, all the more so since voting was conducted according to lists drawn up in advance. Among the conservatively inclined Buriats there was talk of the dominance of representatives of the Buriat national intelligentsia within the structures of power (Ochirzhapov, 3).

The Movement against Military Conscription, and Consolidation of the Anti-Aimak Faction

Ataman Grigory Semyonov's accession to power signified a new wave of opposition to the Anti-Aimak faction on the part of the autonomists. In October 1918, the Buriat National Committee, now transformed into the Buriat National Duma, headed by Dashi Sampilon, addressed itself to Ataman Semyonov with a petition regarding an institution of Buriat autonomy (*Istoriia Buriatii*, 3:35). However, for Semyonov himself the priority task was to summon young Buriats into the ranks of his

own armed forces, which were called *Tsagan Tsagda*, or the “White Guard” (Bartanova 1964, 36–37). For representatives of the Buriat National Duma the question regarding autonomy basically came to depend on the success of the campaign of military conscription. The followers of Semyonov attempted to convince the Buriats that recruitment to the *Tsagan Tsagda* was not a military call-up as such, inasmuch as (a) Buriats were being called to serve for fewer than six months, which was a significantly shorter time period than for the rest of the population; and (b) Buriat conscripts would perform their military service strictly within the confines of Buriat territory and exclusively with a view to maintaining internal order. However, these arguments did not carry any weight with the majority of Buriats, and they categorically rejected the requirement of military conscription (Ochirzhapov, 8). However, Semyonov had no intention of relinquishing his idea of enlisting them to serve in the ranks of the *Tsagan Tsagda*. In Buriat circles the mood that had arisen against a military call-up was intensified yet further when, in January 1919, a rumor went around the Buriat *aimaks* that Lubsan-Samdan Tsydenov, the famous Buddhist lama and recluse from Kizhinga, intended to create a theocratic government with the goal of defending Buriat Buddhists from the violence of the Civil War.

A Holy Fool

A Promising Beginning

Lubsan-Samdan Tsydenov was born in 1850 in the settlement of Kizhinga in the territory of Khorinsk. While still only a child he was placed in Kizhinga (Kudun) Monastery where, after some time, he began studying philosophy, which he continued when he lived at the Tamcha *datsan*, the residency of the Bandido Khambo Lamas. From early childhood he displayed an inclination toward studying, thanks to which he received the monastic qualification of *gabzhi*.¹¹ One source informs us that Tsydenov was particularly committed to the practice of meditation.¹² His contemporaries described him as being reserved and disposed toward solitude, having limited contact with people around him, and as abstemious in his daily living. However, his rare person-

11. *Gabzhi* (Tibetan, *dka bzhi*): In Tibetan and Mongolian Buddhism this is one of the higher scholarly degrees conferred on monks.

12. The biography of Lubsan-Samdan Tsydenov is based on information set out by Ts. M. Ochirzhapov on pages 80–87 of his manuscript. For a detailed biographical sketch, see Tsyrempilov 2007, 45–52.

al charisma and exceptional level of scholarship raised his authority among believers, and this allowed him to take part in elections for the position of the head of Kudun Monastery. Other sources inform us that he is supposed to have had dreams regarding his own appointment as head of Kudun Monastery and that, allegedly, he even had pretensions to the throne of the Bandido Khambo Lamas, the highest administrative position among the Buddhist clergy of Eastern Siberia. Nevertheless, in a competitive contest for this position, Tsydenov lost to another claimant, who enjoyed the support of Choinzon Iroltuyev, active as a Khambo Lama at that time. By way of moral compensation for that defeat, Iroltuyev included Tsydenov in the Buriat delegation to the 1896 coronation of Tsar Nicholas II. If we are to believe this information, authoritative representatives of Buryatia's tribal aristocracy contributed to Tsydenov's inclusion in the delegation (Zhigmidon, 2).

A Scandal at the Coronation

In March 1896 the delegation set off for Krasnoyarsk, where they switched from post-horses to railway to complete their journey to Moscow.¹³ Secular and religious representatives of the Buriats of Transbaikalia took part in the ceremony of Nicholas II's coronation in the Uspensky Cathedral within Moscow's Kremlin and in the subsequent lavish celebrations in Moscow and St. Petersburg. During the grand ceremony of the coronation Tsydenov refused to kneel, which not only put the entire Buriat delegation in an awkward position, but also led to an investigation of the incident by the Ministry of Internal Affairs. Tsydenov himself explained his action thus: that as a full monk, he enjoyed the privilege of not being obliged to bow before the tsar, and that "no criminal action was committed by [his] not taking part in bowing." Furthermore, "the fact that members of the Buddhist delegation did bow represented a departure from the standards of Vinaya¹⁴ discipline and was shameful, particularly on the part of Khambo Lama Iroltuyev, as a *gylun* (a Buddhist monk who has taken full vows)¹⁵ and as leader of the Buddhist clergy of Siberia" (Ochirzhapov, 81). All this notwithstanding, on August 20, 1896, Samdan Tsydenov,

13. In the personal (archival) holding of L.-S. Tsydenov there is an attestation (No.151) confirming that he was designated to travel to and attend "the holy coronation of their imperial majesties" (Center for Oriental Manuscripts and Xylographs of the Institute of Mongolian, Buddhist and Tibetan Studies, File 636, p. 5).

14. *Vinaya*: The canonical code of discipline to which Buddhist monks adhere.

15. *Gelon*: (Tibetan *dge slong*) or *bhikṣu*, a Buddhist monk who has taken full vows.

like the other members of the delegation, was awarded a silver medal on an Andreyev ribbon.¹⁶

An Enthusiastic Monarchist?

We see even more singular and important evidence of what kind of influence the encounter with Europe exerted upon Lubsan-Samdan Tsydenov in a lengthy poem dedicated to the coronation of Nicholas II that he composed in Tibetan and Mongolian.

We can assume that Samdan Tsydenov really felt that he could refuse compliance with the coronation ceremony, citing the quite reasonable arguments elaborated in the sketch already mentioned. This is all the more likely if we take into account the Kudun hermit's well-known integrity and originality. Nevertheless, there are three places in the pages of his poem where Tsydenov pays respect to the person of the monarch, thereby declaring his own relation to the emperor as to a sacral figure. Samdan Tsydenov was not prepared to venerate the emperor ceremonially in a concrete situation, but internally, and as a bearer of power, the emperor fully merited being seen as an object of his veneration. One way or another, it seems entirely natural to suppose that the person who composed such a significant and triumphal work about the splendor, greatness and sanctity of monarchical power, even if only partially relating to Buddhist civilization, esteemed monarchy as sacred. News about the shooting of the tsar's family was circulated by Russian newspapers in summer 1918, and one can guess what kind of impression this would make on a person who had regarded the emperor as a divine figure. In his eyes could any other power be accepted as legitimate, whether it be the Provisional Government, the Soviets, the structures of Buriat autonomy or Ataman Semyonov? The monarchy that had been done away with could be replaced only by another monarchy possessing the explicit attributes of sacrality — the power of an enlightened deity.

In all probability this idea came to Tsydenov in autumn 1918 when the conflict between representatives of the Buriat National Duma and the Anti-*Aimak* Faction regarding military conscription reached an acute phase. The opponents of conscription and autonomization lacked a single leader and an alternative idea that could counter the

16. The personal archival holding of L.-S. Tsydenov contains the official testimony that he was granted this award (Center for Oriental Manuscripts and Xylographs of the Institute of Mongolian, Buddhist and Tibetan Studies File 636, 5).

movement for the autonomy of Buryatia. Among believing Buddhists the idea of a Buddhist theocracy was already highly popular, as they already had the living examples of the Dalai Lama and the Jebtsun Damba Khutukhtu at the summit of the theocracies of Tibet and Mongolia respectively. Either personally or through those close to him, Lubsan-Samdan Tsydenov would transmit this idea to authoritative members of Kizhinga's Anti-*Aimak* Faction, who were beginning to act.

How the Kudun Theocracy Was Structured

Invitation to the Throne

In the conditions of administrative chaos that reigned throughout Russia during the Civil War, credit cooperatives and consumer societies were often the only structures fulfilling any organizational functions. In Kizhinga the credit association in fact became the platform on which Lubsan-Samdan Tsydenov created his constitutional theocracy project. In January 1919 members of the administration of Kizhinga's credit association were summoned to an extraordinary closed session. At this session it was not financial matters that came up for consideration, but a question of political importance: the secession of Kizhinga from the Khorii *aimak* and the creation, on territory of the former Bodongut *somon*, of a state organized on theocratic principles (Ochirzhapov, 9). The initiators of this scheme were local inhabitants S. Gentsybenov, G. Garmayev, D. Iroltuyev and S. Gonchikdarayev, all of whom were to receive prominent positions in the future theocratic government. Activists proposed that members of the credit association create a ceremony for transferring a *mandala*¹⁷ to Lubsan-Samdan Tsydenov, with a request that he ascend the throne as the religious head of state and thus ensure that local Buriat Buddhists were protected from military conscription and, in general, from the politics of the Buriat National Committee. In line with a decision of the gathering, a campaign began among the Buriats of Kizhinga in support of a collective written petition, and a collection was organized so as to raise contributions for a future ruler.

17. *Mandala* (Sanskrit: *mandala*, lit. circle, disc). In Hinduism and Buddhism this is a symbolic depiction of the universe, showing as a disc with a raised pyramid-shaped or cone-shaped center. In the Buddhist tradition the mandala is one type of offering brought to a teacher or to a spiritual person of any kind.

Structure of the State

Tsydenov gave the initiative group instructions regarding the drawing up of a constitution for the established state; its basic institutions had to be formed and a constituent assembly had to be convened. The constitutional commission that was created comprised twenty-two individuals, taken mainly from among highly placed lamas of the Kudun *datsan* and civil servants within the *volost'* or *somon* administration (Ochirzhapov, 11). On May 4, 1919, a draft version of the Constitution of the Theocratic Government of Kudun Valley was completed, consisting of thirty-six articles. The draft specified the structure of the state's secular administrative bodies, and officially assigned it the title *Erkhete Balgasan Ulus*, which can be translated as "Sovereign State of the Balagats." The founders of the state understood the term *balagat* as signifying the largest administrative and territorial unit, which included *toskhons* that themselves approximately corresponded to what had been the *somons*. *Balagats* also corresponded to *khoshuns*. In the new government the territorial entities that had corresponded to *aim-aks* simply did not exist (Ochirzhapov, 12–13).

According to its fundamental law,¹⁸ the Kudun state was under the supreme rule of Lubsan-Samdan Tsydenov, known by his titles of Yogachari Nomun Khan and Tsog Tuguldur Darmaranza.¹⁹ He ruled the state according to the rights of a person who had realized within himself the Tantric divinity Yamantaka and was performing the will of that deity. Next in the Kudun theocracy's hierarchy of power there was a representative assembly — the *Great Suglan* (*yeke čiyulyan*).²⁰ Deputies were elected to the Suglan by means of a direct secret vote in the ratio of one deputy per hundred voters. Males and females over the age of fifteen years were entitled to vote. And, in their turn, deputies in the Suglan voted for members of the Presidium. The state budget and the responsibility for defining salary scales were under the Suglan's jurisdiction.

18. Here and henceforth analysis of the fundamental law of the state of *Erkhete Balgasan Ulus* is based on the Mongol language version of the constitution (pp. 1–4), preserved in the personal archive of the present author.

19. The given appellation is a combination of Sanskrit and Mongol words which, in their literal sense, mean: "Yogi, King of the Teaching, Majestic and Absolute Ruler of the Dharma." Darmaranza is a Mongol translation of the Sanskrit term *dharmarājā*, used in Hindu and Buddhist traditions to denote a ruler who protects religions.

20. Here and henceforth the original Mongolian terminology is given in parentheses, in the very form in which it is provided in the above-named source.

Directly subordinate to the Darmaranza are the president, the vice-president and the cabinet of ministers. All elected officials had to be confirmed by the Darmaranza. Likewise, important government decisions had to be approved or confirmed by the Darmaranza. However, decisions relating to current issues in operational management were made independently by the president. Correspondingly, government orders needed to have the president's approval.

The theocracy comprised eleven *balagats* or administrative-territorial units. Their administrations (*balayad-un jakiruy-a*) came under the direction of the heads of administration (*balayad-un ejen*) and their assistants. Also, officials at the *balagat* level were themselves elected by residents in the *balagat* for a two-year term. The *toskhons*, the smaller units that made up the *balagats*, were regulated by *dargas* (*daruy-a*), who were voted in to serve for one year. *Balagat* assemblies, at which the heads of *balagat* administrations were elected, required two-thirds of the voters to be present in order to proceed. Likewise, it was the voters themselves who determined the officials' salary levels.

The third branch of government was the *balagat* court, which was presided over by the *balagat's* head of administration and two elected judges (*siülengge*). For the preservation of internal order the position of supervisor (*čaydayači*) was introduced, together with his assistants, and the *balagat* guards (*amuyulang-i kinayčid*) were subject to them.

Lubsan-Samdan Tsydenov, now named as the theocracy's leader and as Lama Darmaranza, simultaneously affirmed the constitution and summoned a Great Suglan to be convened on May 14, 1919 (the first year according to the chronology of the *balagat* state), in Shalsan in the valley of the Kudun River (Ochirzhapov, 12–13). On the appointed date, 102 deputies were chosen and brought together, and they approved a working version of the constitution, declared the creation of a new state and made the decision to bring a mandala before Lubsan-Samdan Tsydenov, asking him to lead. Besides this, his closest follower Dorzhi Badmayev was officially appointed as heir to "Tsar-Despot"²¹ Tsydenov. After the end of the first session of the Great Suglan, its members as a whole went to the place known as Khaltsagai Tolgoi in order to hand Tsydenov a mandala and ask him to ascend the throne. Right then and there the officials elected by the Suglan swore an oath of allegiance and took up their new duties (Ochirzhapov, 16–17).

21. Lubsan-Samdan Tsydenov called himself "tsar-despot," apparently trying by this means to underline the autocratic nature of the government he created, despite the overall republican system of its administration. The status of the theocratic head of the Kudun state was located above that of the fundamental law and of the organs of power.

A Collision with Reality

During the first days of May the government of the newly created state gathered together for its first session of business. That very same day saw the arrival, in the Khori *aimak*, of Colonel Korvin-Piotrovsky, who was in charge of Verkhneudinsk District and, on this occasion, was under orders from Grigory Semyonov. At the same time a Cossack officer called Rabdanov was sent from Chita, together with an armed detachment. Both of these trusted subordinates had orders from Semyonov to investigate what was actually going on in the *aimak* and, if necessary, to arrest the initiators of this separatist movement (Ochirzhapov, 19). Given that Lubsan-Samdan Tsydenov's theocratic government was organized on non-violent principles, and therefore its government lacked a military authority, it was, in real terms, defenseless in the face of any armed forces. The sole means of self-defense for the subjects of the *balagat* state were appeals and proclamations. Thus, having found out about the approach of Semyonov's troops, members of the government of the theocratic state sent dispatches, one after the other, to the Buriat National Duma in Chita and to Ataman Grigory Semyonov personally, with requests to leave the newly created theocracy in peace (Ochirzhapov, 19). At that time the conviction spread among the population that, thanks to the miraculous strength of the Darmaranza, all his opponents would, naturally, be disgraced and rendered harmless, their weaponry would be turned into trinkets and Tsydenov's residence would be surrounded by miraculously arising fortifications (Ochirzhapov, 19). Meanwhile Colonel Korvin-Piotrovsky's and Rabdanov's detachments were joining forces and heading straight toward the boundary of Khaltsagai-Tolgoi, the name of which had by that time been changed to Soyempkus. Also, officials of the *aimak* administration were arriving, including Dul Tsydenov, a member of the *aimak* Duma, and Erdeni Vambotsyrenov, head of a district of the Khori *aimak* (Ochirzhapov, 12–13). The latter of these found himself in a very awkward situation inasmuch as he was an ally and follower of Lubsan-Samdan Tsydenov, but in this case he also represented the *aimak* administration, which was recognized by Semyonov.

After twice being issued with an ultimatum requiring him to give himself up to the authorities voluntarily, Lubsan-Samdan Tsydenov was obliged to submit. He and a number of members of his government were placed under arrest. Some ministers and other highly placed administrators succeeded in hiding in remote settlements and wooded locations. In connection with this, members of their families

were also subjected to arrest and interrogation, during which Semyonov's troops permitted the use of violence and corporal punishment. Officer Rabdanov even dared to punish Lama Galsanov of the Kizhinga *datsan* with birch rods for his complicity in the flight of Genin Tsyrempilov, head of the *datsan*. Subsequently, owing to this episode, Korvin-Piotrovsky was obliged to dismiss some of Rabdanov's subordinates from their duties (Ochirzhapov, 23).

A search of Tsydenov's prison cell was carried out, with the aim of finding documents or objects relating to his case. As the sources inform us, in the course of this search, among other things found in his cell were a crown with a *vajra* [a ritual tool or weapon—Ed.] and a human skull depicted on it, diaries containing a list of people who had made donations, some Buddhist religious literature, a collection of books and journals in European languages, and also a belt mounted with electric lights, which Tsydenov is supposed to have acquired in Petersburg and which he allegedly used for creating an impression on his believers.²²

Some days later Lubsan-Samdan Tsydenov, his close associate Dorzhi Badmayev and a number of members of his government were transferred to Verkhneudinsk prison and interrogated. In particular, as our sources inform us, Tsydenov declared the following during the interrogation:

In connection with the overthrow of tsarism and the formation of a Provisional Government, in many places in Russia a number of new states have been set up, declaring their independent existence [. . .], which has created a rift and hostility among them, internecine strife, anarchy, the mobilization of troops and the declaration of war against each other, and so forth. This was conveyed to me by arriving Buriat supporters, complaining about the actions of the Buriat intelligentsia and their aspiration to call young Buriats to armed service in the *tsagda* [White Guard] so as to preserve the national autonomy that had been achieved through their initiative, and so forth. [. . .] In the given situation I was obliged to declare myself the tsar-despot of a theocratic state that pursues the goal of opposing military recruitment and war, and pursues peace based on specific rules provided for in religious doctrines. I did this, while setting my hopes on Buriat Buddhists avoiding that very autonomous structure

22. See "Description of Tsydenov's Arrest," Center for Oriental Manuscripts and Xylographs of the Institute of Mongol, Buddhist and Tibetan Studies, Mongolian Fond, Collection M1, 516, ll. 10b.–2 and Ochirzhapov, 21.

of administration that would entail their being called up for military service. I further hoped that they would stand behind my idea and that the government in question would be safeguarded by the supernatural power of a divine protector, and that these ideas would not be rejected by the surrounding Russian population, which has suffered as a result of war and internecine strife. However, despite all this, I consider my initiative to be a mistake, explained by my advanced age, my political ignorance, and my immersion in contemplation and isolation from society while the abovementioned events were taking place.²³

This statement of Tsydenov's supported an official call to his subjects and to members of the government that he formed, asking them no longer to consider him as their ruler and to submit to the powers of government represented by Ataman Semyonov. This call brought to an end a movement to affirm allegiance to Tsydenov that had already begun among the population of other Buriat *aimaks* such as the Batanai-Khargana, Khuatsai, Chikoi, Selenginsk and Orongoi *aimaks*.

These explanations and Tsydenov's voluntary disavowal of power were sufficient for Semyonov. Obviously the authorities were afraid of a worsening of relations with the Buriat population, among whom Tsydenov's authority stood very high. The authorities very openly punished the police under Rabdanov for having permitted excesses, and they released all Tsydenov's supporters who had been detained, and also Tsydenov himself. As subsequent events were to show, Lubsan-Samdan Tsydenov's declarations repenting of his actions were no more than a tactical ploy. His return to Kizhinga was triumphant. He was welcomed by numerous believers, many of whom considered the very fact of his release to be evidence of his spiritual power. Upon returning to Soyempkus, Tsydenov declared that the events that had occurred were intrigues on the part of the Buriat autonomists, who were striving in this way to direct the resentment of his followers at members of the Buriat National Duma, not at the followers of Semyonov. By these means Tsydenov was probably attempting to show his subjects that Grigory Semyonov had no grounds to challenge him because Tsydenov's activity was within the bounds of legality. To many of Tsydenov's followers at that time it might have seemed that his arrest and interrogation were simply the fruit of a misunderstanding. That position would be likely to convince Semyonov himself for some time into the future that the Kudun theocracy had no harmful implications for his regime.

23. See "Description of Tsydenov's Arrest," ll. 10b.–2, and Ochirzhapov, 21.

Conflicts around the Question of Military Recruitment

Meanwhile, the fundamental issue in mutual relations between the advocates of theocracy and Semyonov's ruling apparatus remained the question of the conscription of Buriats into the detachments of the *Tsagan Tsagda* (White Guard). The antiwar propaganda they energetically pursued on the ground, as well as the appeals to Semyonov's government demanding it to release Buriats from military service, obliged Semyonov to respond. On three occasions during the period from May to December 1919, Lubsan-Samdan Tsydenov and some of those close to him were subjected to arrest and incarcerated in prisons in Verkhneudinsk and Chita. However, each time they were detained for a relatively brief period (on average for about a month) (Ochirzhapov, 21–22). Among Tsydenov's believing followers the conviction strengthened that their spiritual leader was invulnerable to the repression of the authorities and that each time he emerged from imprisonment by miraculous means. After one of these arrests, D. Badmayev and S. Gynintsydenov, who had been close to him, died of typhoid, and in their honor stupas were erected next to Tsydenov's cell in Soyempkus. For several days Dorzhi Badmayev's body was venerated by believers, and then it was placed inside a stupa as if in a mausoleum. In connection with Badmayev's death, his three-year-old stepson Bid'ia Dandaron was declared to be Tsydenov's heir (Ochirzhapov, 29).

Meanwhile, the advocates of theocracy continued to resist the authorities' initiatives concerning the question of calling Buriats up for military service. This resistance occurred against the background of Semyonov's successful cooperation with other representatives of the Buddhist clergy of Buryatia and Mongolia, such as Bandido Khambo Lama Guro-Dharma Tsyrempilov, and also Neisse-Gegen and Toin-Khutukhta from Inner Mongolia (Ochirzhapov, 32). Thus, within the framework of a congress of representatives of the Buriats of Transbaikalia that convened in October 1919 on the initiative of the Buriat National Duma, at which the above-mentioned august, spiritual individuals were honored delegates, it was recommended that the Duma organize a military administration with the goal of setting up a military conscription of Buriats into a national Buriat force for "the restoration of its native land and for the establishment of order inside the country" (Bazarov and Zhabayeva 2008, 158–60). Advocates of the Kudun theocracy did not take part in the work of this congress and, furthermore, they declared to Semyonov that they had no intention of complying with anyone's orders about setting up military recruitment within

their territory. Annoyed by Tsydenov's obstinacy, Semyonov again had him arrested for a short time (Ochirzhapov, 28). However, in March 1920 Semyonov's regime fell and Semyonov himself fled to Manchuria.

Resistance to the New Authorities

As is well known, the rapid advance of the Red Army into Transbaikalia did not lead to the immediate establishment of Soviet power there. In April 1920 the Khorii *aimak* was on the territory of the Far Eastern Republic, which was a buffer state created by the Founding Congress of the Workers of the Baikal Region. At almost the very same time, within the Far Eastern Republic, a Buriat-Mongol Autonomous Region (BMAR) was established as a national and territorial entity. It worked out that the part of the Buriat population resident in the Barguzin, Verkhneudinsk, Selenginsk and Troitskosavsk districts were included in the composition of the Baikal Region, with Verkhneudinsk as its capital (Ochirzhapov, 28).

In order to lead the process of Sovietization in the Buriat *aimaks* of the Far Eastern Republic a Buriat popular revolutionary committee (*Burnarrevkom*) was created, headed by Pyotr Dambinov, a representative of Buriat intelligentsia (Bartanova 1964, 50–58). Taking advantage of the changeover of power, a number of prominent activists in the theocratic movement entered the composition of newly formed revolutionary committees at *somon* and *khoshun* levels. Moreover, those in the theocratic movement succeeded in establishing close alliances with highly placed officials in the Baikal Region, specifically with Alexei Uvarov, head of section of the Verkhneudinsk district police; with Karpovich, senior investigator of the Baikal Region's Political People's Court; and others. With their help the advocates of theocracy managed to strengthen their own positions at the local *aimak* level and even to conduct an armed struggle against their opponents, whom they accused of collaborating with the regime of Ataman Semyonov (Bartanova 1964, 67). In general, Tsydenov's supporters were active in attracting allies to their side. Thus, thanks to their own contacts, they were able to publish the brochure, "What Is the Theocratic Movement Fighting For?" through the Military Administration of the Baikal Region. In this brochure a certain Grigory Strefyev put forward the idea that the advocates of theocracy were precisely that oppressed minority whose freedom the new power had been called to guarantee. However, the brochure was confiscated almost immediately and its author was prosecuted (Ochirzhapov, 33).

From the very beginning the administration of the Far Eastern Republic followed a course of strengthening the revolutionary committees at *aimak* level in the Buriat-Mongol Autonomous Region and combating separatism. As part of this course of action, the administration of the Far Eastern Republic ordered the arrest of Tsydenov, of Sandylyk Gonchikdarayev, president of the *balagat* state, and also a number of ministers of the theocratic government. Tsydenov was detained in Verkhneudinsk's prison, from which he never again returned to the Kuduk Valley (Ochirzhapov, 36–37). The notes from prison that he wrote during that period of his life have been preserved (Ochirzhapov, 32–33). Among other material, the notes contain many European terms taken from the field of political theory and state formation, which he had copied out from an encyclopedia that he had at his disposal.

In his notes the entry on “theocracy” occupies a significant place, with the term being defined in the following way: “Theocracy is a form of government in which God is considered to be the head of state, as it were conveying orders and prohibitions to the priests; the clergy rule the state, acting, as it were, according to the inspiration of the deity; a state having such a structure” (Archive of L.-S. Tsydenov).

Post factum Tsydenov was purposefully searching the literature for examples of hierocratic and theocratic forms of government in other countries of the world, and for a theoretical foundation for the form of power that he had chosen for his own project of state formation.

In addition to this, a fragment of a draft manuscript has been preserved, namely Tsydenov's appeal to the political court of the Baikal Region of the Far Eastern Republic. In it he provides his own (albeit rather official-sounding) explanation of his motives for creating a theocracy:

I really am the Ruler of the Teaching (Dharmarāja) of the Three Worlds. This power was sent down to me by the divinity. Inasfar as, for my followers, I have been regarded as a savior, in their encounters with me they have venerated me by bowing before me, conducting a service to promote [my] health and by bringing me gifts.

As we have a theocracy, so the majority of my supporters are adepts, and therefore they need to have particular attributes and signs and adhere to appropriate forms of behavior. They are linked together by a ban on killing and by further vows of purity. In accordance with these, it is impossible for them to serve in the army in any circumstances whatsoever. Inasfar as theocratic politics is linked with religion, it views politics and religion as being in close connection with each other. Thus, ac-

tions associated with the “ruling lama” are viewed as religious, and it is impossible to consider any of the actions I have carried out as crimes (Archive of L.-S. Tsydenov, l. 128).

The Storm Clouds Gather

Despite Samdan Tsydenov’s prolonged confinement in prison, his supporters did not reduce their activity. With the support of Police Chief A. Uvarov and other officials in the administration of the neighboring Baikal Region, the leaders of the *balagat* movement called an assembly of the inhabitants of the Khalbin, Tsagan and Bodongut *khoshuns*, at which a decision was taken for these *khoshuns* to withdraw from the Buriat-Mongol Autonomous Region and, instead, to transfer into submission to the government of the Baikal Region. For this purpose they revived the entire administrative system of the *balagat* state, which, two years previously, had been set out in the constitution: the *balagat* and *toskhon* administrations, headed by a chief²⁴ and an elder.²⁵ The advocates of theocracy refused to pay taxes that benefited the Buriat-Mongol Autonomous Region and they organized their own police forces. The leadership of some *somon* and *khoshun* administrations of the Khori *aimak* voluntarily ceded matters to *balagat* leaders and across the whole *aimak* a process of persecuting autonomists got under way. In this connection, police attached to the Baikal Region, whose actions were coordinated by Karpov the investigator, gave active help to the theocratic movement in detaining the autonomists. The campaign against the autonomists was conducted under the guise of a struggle with the remnants of “Semyonov’s lackeys.” As a result of all this, many *somon*- and *khoshun*-level employees were forced to flee to neighboring *aimaks* or else hide in forests (Archive of L.-S. Tsydenov, 38–40).

In the summer of 1921, Lubсан-Samdan Tsydenov, then still detained in prison, asked the following long-standing advocates of theocracy—G. Tsyrempilov, N. Sampilov, Sh. Tsybikov, D. Dorzhiev, Ts. Bazarov and others—to organize a celebration in honor of the restoration of the *balagat* state in the newly opened *datsan* in Chuluta. The festivities, which lasted for two to three days, included prayers, horse-racing and wrestling. Allies of the Kudun *balagats* Uvarov and Karpovich, two officials of the Baikal Region, were officially rewarded by

24. *Ezen* — translation from the Buriat word for “master” or “head.”

25. *Darga* — translation from the Buriat word for “chief.”

representatives of the *balagat* movement with silk scarves and animal furs for the help they had given the Kudun theocracy. The focal point of the whole program of celebrations was the triumphant enthronement of Lubsan-Samdan Tsydenov's heir, the nine-year-old stepson of Dorzhi Badmayev, Bid'iadara (Bid'ia) Dandaron, who was later to become a renowned religious philosopher, Tibetan scholar and Buddhist dissident.²⁶ A little while before that coronation, Dandaron had been recognized by Lubsan-Samdan Tsydenov as being a reincarnation of the Tibetan Lama Jayak-Gegen²⁷ of the Gumbum Jampaling Monastery,²⁸ who had more than once visited Kizhinga. Later in life Bid'ia Dandaron underwent repression and persecution over a period of many years on account of his status as a reincarnated being and because of his own involuntary and unsought association with the theocratic movement.

Movement toward a Compromise

Meanwhile, the situation in the Khori *aimak* became more acute due to an increase in skirmishes between young people supporting the theocracy movement and the pro-*aimak* faction (Ochirzhapov, 40). The intensification of anti-*aimak* feelings forced the government of the Far Eastern Republic to take action. In July 1921 a government commission was sent to the region, headed by D. S. Shilov, a member of the Far Eastern Republic's administration. After carrying out an investigation, the commission was categorical in its demand that participants in the *balagat* movement surrender their firearms and submit to the *aimak* and *khoshun* authorities. The commission also required that officials of the Baikal Region cease all interference in the affairs of one of the *aimaks* of the Buriat-Mongol Autonomous Region. Besides this, D. S.

26. B. D. Dandaron (1914–74), Buddhist religious activist, specialist in Buddhist philosophy, and religious philosopher. Was arrested in 1937 and in total spent about twenty years in Stalin's camps. After his release and rehabilitation in 1957 he worked in the Buriat Institute of Social Sciences. In the 1970s he founded a religious community, which included a circle of educated young people from various parts of European Russia. In 1974 he was arrested and accused of setting up an illegal religious organization. He was sentenced to five years in ordinary regime camps. He died in captivity in the settlement of Vydrino in the Buriat ASSR.

27. Jayak-Gegen (Jayaksen-Gegen): A line of Tibetan reincarnated lamas who resided at Gumbum Jampaling Monastery.

28. Gumbum Jampaling (Tibetan: *sku 'bum byams pa gling*) — the major Tibetan Buddhist monastery situated in the province of Qinghai. Founded at the end of the sixteenth century by the Third Dalai Lama at the birthplace of Je Tsongkhapa, founder of the Gelukpa School of Tibetan Buddhism.

Shilov also held a meeting on August 1, 1921, in the locality of Chuluta of the Bodongut *khoshun* of the Khori *aimak*, involving the participation of representatives of the two warring parties. An attempt was made here to find a compromise by inviting some leaders of the *balagat* movement to work in the *aimak* and *khoshun* administrations. Certain advocates of theocracy were released from detention, but Lub-san-Samdan Tsydenov was not among those (Ochirzhapov, 40–43). On the orders of Shilov himself, Uvarov and Markov were arrested and taken to prison in Chita and Verkhneudinsk respectively. Later Karpovich was detained as well. Sources inform us only about Karpovich's fate: in line with a decision by the Amur *guberniia* court, he was subsequently shot as a counter-revolutionary (Ochirzhapov, 43).

The results of the work of the Shilov Commission were further strengthened by the work of yet another commission, appointed by the government of the Far Eastern Republic. N. Prelovsky was appointed to head this commission. The activity of the Shilov and Prelovsky commissions led to a compromise with the advocates of theocracy. Just as was the case with Semyonov and his followers, the authorities of the Far Eastern Republic had no interest in the worsening of relations with the Buddhists of Kizhinga. In September 1921, prominent figures in the *balagat* movement were elected as deputies to the Buriat-Mongol Region's popular assembly for the Khori *aimak*. In the *aimak* itself, at a gathering of the inhabitants of the Bodongut *khoshun* on September 25, 1921, a truce between the advocates of theocracy and the advocates of autonomy was achieved, and they agreed to establish peaceful relations and to begin cooperating with each other, under the aegis of the government of the Buriat-Mongol Autonomous Region (Ochirzhapov, 43–50).

The Point of No Return

In the Popular Assembly, deputies of the theocratic faction participated actively in parliamentary work, although they did not enter the regional government (the Buriat-Mongol Autonomous Administration or *Burmonavtupr*). Nevertheless, progress was evident, and to many people it began to seem possible that the problem of the *balagat* movement was gradually approaching a solution. However, in reality there was soon to be a new round of opposition that would eventually reach the stage of an armed struggle. A new conflict was provoked by baseless rumors (which began to become exaggerated in Buriat circles) regarding the BMAR government's plans to introduce

a military tax and renew the military conscription of Buriats into the ranks of the Red Army. Representatives of the theocracy faction who were disturbed by this again brought up the question with the government of the BMAR as to whether the *khoshuns* of Bodongut, Tsagan and Khal'bin should leave the region and join the Baikal Region (Ochirzhapov, 50–54).

On this occasion the response of the Buriat-Mongol Autonomous Region (BMAR) government was decisive. First of all the head of that government, Matvei Amagaiev, called on the theocracy faction to become reconciled to the idea of Buriat autonomy, which in no way influenced the position of the supporters of the *balagat* movement. Then the BMAR government accused the theocracy faction of attempting to avoid paying taxes and meeting their obligations, principally their transport and military service obligations. These were the terms in which, in February 1922, the BMAR government presented the case to the government of the Far Eastern Republic (Ochirzhapov, 50). As soon as March of that year, on the order of K. Il'in, inspector of police, the main participants in the *balagat* movement were subject to arrest: these were Sandylyg Gonchikdarayev, former president of the *balagat* state; Naidan Sampilov, head of the Chuluta *datsan* that had broken off from the broader Buddhist community; Badmatsyren Boniiev, former minister of foreign affairs of the *Balagat* state; Badmatsyren Garmaiev, former associate of the minister of finance of the *Balagat* state, and others (Ochirzhapov, 50–51). The theocracy faction responded to this with armed resistance. They mustered an armed detachment of 150 men and sent it to the administration of the Bodongut *khoshun*, where, according to their information, those under arrest were being detained. The detachment did not succeed in liberating their associates because by that time they had been transferred to Verkhneudinsk (Ochirzhapov, 51). However, this move on the part of the theocracy faction led to irreversible consequences. The point of no return had been crossed.

Defeat of the Movement

The theocracy faction's attempt to liberate their leaders led to all the arrested supporters of Lubsan-Samdan Tsydenov, and also Tsydenov himself, being sent off into administrative exile in far-distant territories and regions of the RSFSR. The government of the BMAR issued an ultimatum to the armed detachments of the theocracy faction (Ochirzhapov, 54).

Lubsan-Samdan Tsydenov set off on his enforced exile, and traces of him were lost. There is information available to the effect that in May 1922 he was admitted to the city hospital in Novo-Nikolaevsk, where he died of pleurisy affecting the left side of his body (Dandaron 2006, 276). In effect, the history of the Kudun theocracy ends with his death. Throughout the 1920s the scattered remnants of the theocracy faction were annihilated by the organs of power, first those of the Far Eastern Republic and then by those of the RSFSR. The further history of the *balagat* movement is a history of armed struggle, repression, court trials and executions and imprisonment by the decisions of the courts of various authorities, acts of revenge, mob law, partisan war and, eventually, complete defeat of the advocates of the idea of a Kudun theocracy. The last trial of a group of supporters of the *balagat* movement took place in the village of Aninsk in June 1929, as a result of which one person was sentenced to be shot and five others received prison sentences ranging from five to ten years (Ochirzhapov, 78).

Conclusion

It is hardly possible to call the Kudun theocracy a successful state-building project. As is clear from the sketch provided above, despite the structure developed for the state apparatus and the procedure for setting up organs of power, the theocratic government could not fully meet its obligations. Nevertheless, the sources used for the present article allow us to draw some cautious conclusions regarding the essential nature of the Kudun state project.

As is well known, modernist ideas that arose in traditional Eastern cultures were never a simple reflection of their European models, but, rather, they acquired their specific features and their unique configuration on the Procrustean bed of their own worldview. The means of appropriating political ideas were closely connected with European colonialism, which is evident when we analyze the history of the Buriat Buddhists, who always formed part of the *pax mongolica* and the Tibetan Buddhist world, even after becoming a constituent part of the Russian state. A detailed examination of such episodes in the history of Buddhism as the Kudun theocracy gives researchers the possibility of understanding the nature of the transformation of the theocracies of Outer Mongolia and Tibet. Influenced by a European paradigm for state formation, the Buriats became one of the first Buddhist peoples who were obliged to reconsider many of their traditional political concepts.

The Buriat version of nationalism imitated Russian political culture, in which Orthodox Christianity was assigned the key role as a homogenizing force, and with its help society acquired a single political and religious identity. For the Buriats of Transbaikalia Buddhism served as a particular kind of principal “diacritical mark,” which, during the imperial era, allowed them to separate themselves from the surrounding Russian Orthodox majority, and later, on that foundation, to create state structures and institutions that we actually observe in the example of the *balagat* movement. And it is in this sense that the ethno-religious identity of Buriat Buddhists emerged as an alternative to the model of Buriat nationalism that the Buriats were offered, first of all by bourgeois nationalists (some of whom actively collaborated with Semyonov’s regime) and then by the Bolsheviks. In the example of the Kudun theocracy, we see how easily Buddhism became the basis for state formation, and Buriat nationalists themselves understood this extremely well, as did Semyonov’s forces and also the Bolsheviks. The project of the Dauria Government headed by Neisse-Gegen and initiated by Semyonov in 1918, and the Bolsheviks’ use of the figure of Bogdo-Gegen VIII in the period of transition to Socialist construction in Mongolia illustrate this fact well. Buriat nationalists, who at various times collaborated with tsarism and with Semyonov’s White Guard and the Bolsheviks, experienced the strong influence of the ideas of Romantic Pan-Slavism and Pan-Germanism. In their own picture of the future, Tibetan Buddhism was a force capable of prompting the unification of the Mongol peoples. However, in their conception religion occupied a subordinate place and was conceived of as an instrument, not as a foundation for government. Their nationalism included a religious aspect, but merely as a marker of group identity, not as a basis for promoting national claims. They could be Buddhists, while remaining secular, and the model of their imagined state was also particularly secular. Their opponents, who included Lub-san-Samdan Tsydenov, advocated a purely religious state and Buddhist nation. That is exactly why the Kudun theocracy has such a complicated and dramatic history of mutual relations with the secular Buriat nationalists in particular, who the theocracy’s supporters viewed as their own chief enemies and opponents.

The Kudun state-building project is also interesting in that, while outwardly striving to reproduce an ideal, archetypal model of a Buddhist state of the Maurya Empire of the time of Ashoka, it was the first attempt to construct this kind of theocracy within the framework of a constitutional republic. The electoral principle permeates the entire system of representation in the *balagat* state. Despite the fact that

the figure of supreme ruler was placed above the fundamental law, the very attempt to reconcile monarchy and republic supports the thesis that the Kudun project took shape in the context of Russian political reality, although in form it was also copying examples of the Buddhist theocracies of Tibet and Mongolia. The factor that the Kudun theocracy has in common with other forms of Buddhist monarchy existing in Inner Asia is this sustained ideological opposition to the idea of armed defense of one's own statehood. The circumstances of revolution and civil war created the conditions for the violent annihilation of this state-building project and its initiators. But, at the same time, it may have saved the lives of many young people, who would otherwise have been called to serve in the ranks of various armed services.

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“Spiritualist Epistemology” between Science and Religion: The Transformation of Classical Science at the End of the 19th Century

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Experimental spiritualism as a fringe science played a significant role in Europe’s intellectual life in the late 19th century. Its adherents considered questions of science and religion crucial for developing the right methods of scientific research. This article consists of four parts: (1) theoretical, which provides an overview of subject-object relations in the current theory of classical/non-classical epistemology; (2) historical, which investigates the opposition of “science” and “religion” as different spheres of modern human experience, and proposes a “reality principle” as the main principle of both classical epistemology and theology; (3) typological, which presents a typology of different epistemological models in Russian spiritualism based on the archival materials of its main adherents; (4) analytical, which deals with experimental spiritualism as fringe science that emerged during a paradigm shift from classical to non-classical science.

Keywords: spiritualism, spiritism, science and religion, history of science, A. N. Aksakov, N. P. Wagner, A. M. Butlerov, classical science, non-classical science.

“The living are always, by necessity of the case — and the more so the more we advance in time — under the government of the dead. Such is the fundamental law of human order.” (Comte 1858, 77)

ON August 10, 1897, Nadezhda Mikhailovna Butlerova, the widow of Alexander Mikhailovich Butlerov, the late scholar of the Russian Academy of Sciences (RAN), received a letter from

Nikolai Petrovich Wagner, an old friend of her husband's and future corresponding member of the Russian Academy of Sciences. Nikolai Wagner sought permission to publish the letters Alexander Butlerov had sent to him.¹ It would have been a trivial request if not for one serious contention. According to Nikolai Wagner, Alexander Butlerov wrote these letters after his own death:

The longer I live, the closer comes the hour of transitioning to the other world, the clearer and more threateningly the voice inside me speaks. It accuses me of making an unforgiveable mistake, having given you my word to not publish my spiritualistic research concerning the appearance of dear Alexander Mikhailovich in our séances. My testimony to it would have served a tremendous, decisive role and would have turned many unbelievers back to the path of truth, of this I am convinced. (Institut russkoi literatury (hereafter IRLI), fond 2, opis' 17, delo 21, listy 1–2)²

In fact, Wagner had already asked Nadezhda Butlerova in 1893, when she was living in the home of her relative, Alexander Nikolaevich Aksakov, for the chance to publish the materials and photographs he had received during séances. Even then she had declined, stating her wish to avoid having her husband's name once more “wrung” through the press, which would find an occasion to write extremely unflattering things about the deceased. Among other things, the photographs that Wagner had sent her did not resemble her husband in the least, since “you believe it your way, and I believe it mine. For this summer at a séance in Butlerovka he repeatedly told us, ‘leave me in peace.’ I consider it my sacred duty to do everything in my power to respect his wishes” (IRLI, f. 2, op. 17, d. 21, l. 2–2ob.). The conflict of interest was apparent.

Butlerov's spirit advised Alexander Aksakov, who did not feel well at the time, not to delay considering a successor (IRLI, f. 2, op. 5, d. 8, l. 3). Furthermore, the spirit informed Aksakov through Wagner and Pribytkov's sister Varvara Ivanovna that he had taken on an unseen leadership role of the journal *Rebus*, recommending to Aksakov that he change its administrative policy:

1. Copied messages, rewritten seemingly by Wagner, entitled “Soobshcheniia s togo sveta” (Messages from that world), held at the Památník národního písmenictví (Memorial of National Literature) archive in Prague.
2. All citations to the A.N. Aksakov Fond in IRLI are according to a provisional electronic inventory (*opis'*) of materials in the fond established by the author in 2012–14. Through a system of marked, identified documents, these folios (*opisi*) correspond to the number of the box of archival materials utilized by the author.

I understand a thousand times over that with Pribytkov it will not break from the planned course, but I have different views for the journal, and I hope that in the near future new forces will emerge, which are necessary for giving the journal some life and activity. I would also like to set aside space in the journal for messages from the other side, where it would be possible to include advice and guidance on occasion. Now it is still early to do that, since Rebus is not ready for that and the transition to messages would be a leap forward in its life. . . . It is necessary to take the initiative and turn Rebus into a journal of psychological research in order to attract the power of the scholarly world. I repeat, with Pribytkov as editor this step is impossible, but soon I hope to bring in a person more capable of leading the journal as an organ of mediumism. (IRLI, f. 2, op. 5, d. 11, ll. 19–19ob.)

Since these messages were of critical importance for Wagner, he was not satisfied with the widow's refusal and instead sought to obtain the support of the deceased academic's son, Mikhail Aleksandrovich. In his letter to Mikhail Butlerov, Wagner compared his group to a three-leaved clover, since, as he saw it, they were united in their pursuit of a common goal: fighting against a materialistic worldview and defending the reality of the spiritual world. However, as Nikolai Wagner writes, after the death of Alexander Butlerov and the cooling of his relationship with Alexander Aksakov everything changed: "The three of us with Alexander Mikhailovich [Butlerov] formed an unbreakable three-leaved clover: A. B. W. (Aksakov, Butlerov, Wagner — RVS). At the very least, that is what I thought and mistakenly so. The three-leaved clover has been torn apart! Alexander Nikolaevich and I were united by a noble and kind intermediary. This intermediary was your father" (IRLI, f. 2, op. 17, d. 21, l. 1–1ob.). However, despite this impassioned appeal, Mikhail Butlerov preferred to side with his mother, although he expressed interest in the manuscripts themselves and requested Wagner send them to him (IRLI, f. 2, op. 17, d. 21, l. 1ob.).

Alexander Butlerov's death sent shock waves not only through Wagner and those close to him, but also through the entire spiritualistic community. Spiritualists from all across the Russian Empire strove to summon his spirit in order to have the famous scientist confirm the reality of the spiritual world. Maria Petrovna Saburova, one of the most famous members of this movement in Saint Petersburg, reported that at her séances Butlerov gave advice about how she could handle Alexander Aksakov, who was seriously shaken by Butlerov's death, so that

he did not lose faith in the key idea of the movement, the “proof of the existence of the soul” (IRLI, f. 2, op. 6, d. 1).

This article analyzes “experimental spiritualism” as a fringe program of scientific research. The primary subject is spiritualistic epistemology, first and foremost spiritualists’ understanding of how to properly organize scientific knowledge. Focusing on the theory of V. S. Stepin, which uncovers the historical dynamic of the development of scientific knowledge, this article seeks to reveal several characteristics of spiritualist epistemology that demonstrate its proximity to a non-classical conception of scientific cognition. The hypothesis of this article proposes that “experimental spiritualism” be seen as a fringe scientific program, which emerged during the transition from classical to non-classical science. A characteristic feature of this program is the eclectic blending of classical and non-classical ideas about the construction of scientific knowledge that partially contributed to its defeat in its struggle to obtain legitimacy in the eyes of the wider scientific community of that time.

This article consists of four parts: a theoretical portion reveals the content of classical and non-classical types of scientific knowledge through the prism of subject-object relations. A historical portion identifies the peculiarities in opposing “science” and “religion” as two different spheres of human experience in the modern age, while also confirming the “reality principle” of the object of cognition as a common characteristic of theology and classical epistemology. A phenomenological portion suggests a typology of the spiritualism movement in the Russian Empire, noting the specific variety of epistemological models of experimental spiritualism. This section also demonstrates spiritualists’ attitude toward scientific knowledge, particularly of those spiritualists who were in no way connected with the scientific community. Lastly, an analytical portion discusses experimental spiritualism as a fringe science that arose during the transition from classical to non-classical science.

Spiritualist ideology, which is often characterized as “synthetic,” aimed to go beyond the oppositions of “nature” vs. “culture” (the sciences and humanities) and “natural vs. transcendental” (science and theology) typical of late nineteenth-century philosophical discourse. The spiritualists were trying to confirm the exclusively “natural” character of communication of believers and the objects of their faith. Not all spiritualists, however, equated the “natural” with the “scientific.” The space of the “natural” became a meeting point for “science” and “religion” as different ways of knowing. In order to

grasp the form that this took, it is necessary to turn to modern philosophy of science and the historical relationship between science and religion.

Subject-Object Relations in Classical and Non-Classical Epistemological Models

Subject-object relations offer one of the most important methodological concepts for describing the process of scientific cognition. Historically this interpretation of scientific cognition specifically becomes dominant in Western European philosophical analysis of science in the modern era. Thus, on the one hand, “subject-object relations” as a distinct category provide a research tool for modern epistemology, and on the other hand, it is a necessary form of modern epistemology, without which it is impossible to discuss the epistemological foundations of Western European science.³

Western European philosophy’s assertion of a particular vision of subject-object relations can serve as a marker, distinguishing modernity as a special period of development for Western culture. The beginning of the modern age is marked by the assertion of subject-object relations within the framework of the “classical model” of science, while its end is marked by the formation of a meaningful alternative to that vision within the framework of the “non-classical model” in the first half of the twentieth century.⁴ Thus, the modern, when seen through the prism of epistemology, ends when the “nonclassical model” occupies a dominant position in Western European philosophical discussions of the nature of scientific knowledge.

3. “Several authors propose replacing the theory of cognition with a broader understanding of ‘philosophical knowledge.’ There is also the argument that all of the older categories of traditional epistemology: subject, object, reality, objective knowledge, rationality, truth — have lost their meaning today. Clearly, in such an interpretation epistemology itself loses the right to exist.” V.A. Lektorskii, “O klassicheskoi i neklassicheskoi epistemologii,” in *Na puti k neklassicheskoi epistemologii* [On classical and non-classical epistemology, in *On the path to non-classical epistemology*], ed. V. A. Lektorskii (Moscow: IFRAN, 2009), 7.
4. In Russian philosophy of science the concept of “non-classical” is understood in relation to its history and epistemology differently. According to V. S. Stepin, “non-classical science” covers the period of its development in the beginning of the twentieth century until the 1970s. According to V. A. Lektorskii, “non-classical epistemology” arose as an answer to the call from modern cognitive and evolutionary epistemology since the 1970s. Furthermore, despite their divergence in historical analysis, as demonstrated, both authors include the unconditional intersections in assessing the “non-classical” character of subject-object relations.

The first attempts to conceptualize the right relation of subject and object knowledge in scholarly research are connected with the works of philosophers such as René Descartes, who proposed the algorithm of scientific discovery (*Discourse on the Method*), and Francis Bacon, who articulated the necessity of liberating the subject from any external influence (*idola mentis*) and recommended observation, induction and experimentation as guaranteed methods of obtaining, deducing and verifying claims about the nature of things (“reflection theory”). The “classical model” is typically justified through reference to the fundamental works of Galileo Galilei and Isaac Newton, as well as through the indication of the model’s various types in the works of philosophers who discuss scientific knowledge. Of these philosophers, perhaps the greatest historical significance can be attributed to John Locke (study of primary and secondary qualities), Immanuel Kant (Kant’s Copernican revolution), and Auguste Comte (the positive philosophy of science).

One of the most important qualities of the subject is its detachment from the object; in order to correctly understand the nature of something being studied, one must first look at it from a distance. Presumably, the subject can reach an “ideal” position in relation to the object through preliminary procedures of self-purification of all biases against the object of judgment. From an epistemological perspective, such an “ideal” position would be defined by the Western European philosophical tradition as impartiality. An essential immutability emerges as the key characteristic of the object, guaranteed by the constancy of time and space, which determines the object’s foundational “primary” qualities. The nature of the research object is considered identical to itself and independent of the subject of cognition. In this way, reaching the “ideal” position of the subject and following all scientific procedures allows one to reveal the true nature of things.⁵

The qualities of received “knowledge” partially coincide with the “values” about which Robert Merton spoke, pointing to its “universal-

5. “The ideal dominated during the stage of classical science, according to which the explanation and description should include only the characteristics of the object. References to a value-oriented structure of knowledge, on the foundation of materials and operations of activity, according to classical norms, should not figure into the procedures of description and explanation. Deviation from these norms is received as a rejection of the ideal of objectivity of knowledge.” V. S. Stepin, “Klassika, neklassika, postneklassika: kriterii razlicheniia,” in *Postneklassika: filosofii, nauka, kul'tura* [Classical, non-classical, postclassical: Discerning criteria, in *Postclassical: Philosophy, science, culture*] (St. Petersburg: Mir, 2009), 249–95.

ism” and “collectivism.”⁶ Adhering to methodology emerges as a key condition for the acquisition of knowledge, and of the different ways of receiving it perhaps the greatest weight is placed on comparison, which allows one to differentiate the essential qualities of a thing from its secondary qualities. In the classical model, justification of knowledge is most often carried out by pointing to its conformity to the nature of a thing (“the corresponding theory of truth”). The most important postulated characteristic of scientific knowledge is its integrity, since assessments about an object made within the framework of one scientific discipline cannot contradict the assessments made within the confines of a different discipline; in the case of a contradiction one of them inevitably must be considered false.

In the end, it is precisely the reference to the universal character of scientific “knowledge” that enables a number of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century philosophers to declare its principal epistemological superiority over other forms of knowledge. Typically these forms are not considered within the framework of the classical model as independent forms of knowledge, but rather as misconceptions. These misconceptions are either based on the incorrect conceptions of the subject (“theology”) or do not possess the proper means of verifying the assessment, and have not escaped the impact of individual points of view concerning questions of ontology and “epistemology” (“philosophy”).

The non-classical model is characterized by its serious revision of subject-object relations. Historically the formation of the non-classical model is typically associated with the crisis of rationality around the turn of the twentieth century, the formation of the phenomenological direction in Western European philosophy as an alternative to classical rationalism, as well as with a wide spectrum of scientific revolutions in natural science (Stepin 2009, 249–95). The non-classical model is normally grounded in its reference to the works of Niels Bohr, who confirmed the principle of complementarity in quantum theory, and Albert Einstein, who demonstrated that time and space were relative categories within the theory of relativity.

The key quality of the subject and object of investigation in the non-classical model is defined by their shared unity and variability. In the non-classical model the subject and object of study are interrelated, so that the same concept of subject-object relations be-

6. “The Merton ethos of science is the ideal model of scientific activity during the era of classical science.” Mirskaia 2005, 20.

gins to be analyzed not as the relationship as such, but as a whole system, in which the subject and object appear connected to one another to the point that their separation seems to be a mere heuristic hypothesis, and not a rigid statement of fact. At the same time the system is regarded as being in a process of constant transformation, so any “knowledge” is relative to the concrete state of the subject and the object.

In contrast to the classical model, the subject is characteristically involved in the process of studying the object, which is manifested particularly clearly in the humanities.⁷ Phenomenology illustrates this thesis even more clearly by postulating the necessity of the research subject’s involvement in the activities of the object: if you want to understand another person, you need to experience what he/she has gone through.⁸ Another, no less important quality is the dependency of the subject on the context in which it is located; science as an activity that produces “knowledge” is grounded in cultural and social factors governing the content of the subject’s thoughts, including the content of any theories.⁹

The appeal to feelings within the phenomenological program highlights the pronounced irrational nature of this method of cognition, characterized as “empathy,” “insight” and “integration [*vzhivanie*].” Isolation of the causes of the phenomenon, as a final result of the study, is declared futile and instead replaced with describing them, thanks to which it becomes possible to carry out comparisons and establish a classification of studied phenomena.

The resulting “knowledge” appears to always be relative to the experience of the interaction between subject and object and, correspondingly, cannot claim to be of an absolute nature. Indeed it seems that this “experience,” taken as a whole, determines the contextual-

7. For more on contemporary efforts to create such a philosophy of cognition, see Mike-shina 2005, 33–38.

8. Phenomenology’s interpretation of religion is demonstrative in this regard, in part confirming the necessity of religious experience in order to understand religion. “We call to remember a moment of strong and, as much as possible, one-sided religious fervor. Those who cannot do that or those who have never experienced such a moment, we ask read no further.” R. Otto, *Sviashchennoe: ob irrational’nom v idee bozhestvennogo i ego sootnoshenii s rational’nym* [The sacred: On the irrational in the idea of the divine and its relationship with the rational] (St. Petersburg, 2007), 15.

9. “A ‘constructivist’ outlook . . . regards scientific knowledge primarily as a human product, made with locally situated cultural and material resources, rather than as simply the revelation of a pre-given order of nature.” J. Golinski, *Making Natural Knowledge: Constructivism and the History of Science*, XVII. (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 2005).

ity of knowledge. Accordingly, the justification of the value of such knowledge is often pursued either by social criteria (the “conventionalist” theory of truth), or by pragmatism (the idea of utility independent of truth). Furthermore, by pointing to the relativity of “knowledge,” certain modern philosophies of science have concluded that various forms of knowledge, such as theological and scientific, at least on a purely theoretical level should be recognized as equal. From there it follows that neither of them can claim to have epistemological advantage or use politics as a means of promoting their own worldview (Feierabend 2007, 36).

The Conflict of Science and Religion in the Modern Era and Belief in “Reality”

From the perspective of history of science, the classical epistemological model was formed in the early modern period through its gradual juxtaposition to other forms of knowledge. That event, which in older historiography is standardly labeled the “Scientific Revolution,” can be viewed as a watershed, lying between the “old” and “modern” eras.¹⁰ The Scientific Revolution is presented as a long process of forming new epistemological priorities, beginning in Western Europe in the seventeenth century and ending in the nineteenth century.

The Scientific Revolution ushered in the negation of the “old” scientific view of the world, tied to a Christian systematic theology (Barbour 2001, 3–37). The gradual weakening of its influence was accompanied by the Scientific Revolution, which emerged as a significant factor in European secularization and the gradual removal of Christian doctrine, along with that of other religions, from the public sphere. The end of the Scientific Revolution came at the beginning of the nineteenth century, and was marked by the emergence of the philosophy of early positivism, which proposed a unified theoretical conceptualiza-

10. The author consciously combines two types of rhetoric: “procedural” and “event-driven [*sobytiinyi*].” Conflicts between representatives of the old and new historiography reflect historians’ different methodological approaches. One group is oriented on determining the differences between forms of knowledge, the other focuses on determining their similarities. One establishes the borders between epochs, the other on their correlations. In the juxtaposition of this somewhat futile dispute it is worth confirming the complementarity of various descriptions, and not dismiss the “classical,” “presentist” view of history, despite the fact that it specifically provides the totality of history and invests it with mythological meaning, which ensures the unity of the scientific community through its recognition of the unity of its own history.

tion of “science” as an independent sphere of human activity.¹¹ It was precisely at this time that foundational concepts of European modernity began to receive a wider circulation. Concepts such as “science,” “religion,” “culture” and “society” appeared as tools for educated Europeans to comprehend the world around them. In this connection, it can be productive to analyze the broad nineteenth-century discussion of the conflicted nature of the relationship between “scientific knowledge” and “Christian theology” as a consequence of the assertion of a new epistemological paradigm.

Furthermore, the relationship between “religion” and “science” has only grown increasingly complex, forcing philosophers of the modern age to repeatedly compare the two, not through the contradictions of their individual content, but through finding their shared characteristics as holistic systems of knowledge. One of the foundations of Western European scientific tradition is the Pythagorean-Platonic universal idea, the discovery of which came through the help of rational mathematical proofs, and the experiment serves as a means for verifying the “universalism” of obtained data (*dannye*).¹² That which does not yield to mathematical calculation is declared unknowable by scientific methods and lies beyond the reaches of scientific research. However, originally the idea of mathematical knowledge was directly connected with divine knowledge in that it was general and universal.¹³ This view of learning about nature as its own way of learning about God (or in the Christian tradition, mildly put, as a way to learn about the Divine Plan and its creation) was generally characteristic for the founders of European science.¹⁴

11. This approach overlaps, and simultaneously, polemicizes the position introduced in the works of Cunningham and Williams 1993, 407–32. For a broad overview of the history of interpretations regarding science and religion beginning with Comte, see Gregory 2003, 329–58.

12. “The real world is the world which is beholden exclusively to quantitative relationships. . . . Mathematics is the language and the perfect model of the Universe.” Svetlov 2008, 97.

13. In contemporary historiography, the issue over the relationship between “science” and “religion” in early Greek philosophy remains a discussion, taking into account the relational nature of its research concepts, as well as the prevalence of mythological material in early Greek historiography of science. For more on the example of Pythagoras’ work and its interpretation, see Zhmud’ 2012.

14. The basis of this thesis is dedicated to the majority of historical works on the problems of the mutual relationship between “science” and “religion” in the early modern era. Several researches suggest that organization of scientific knowledge and its ethical code also correlate with “religious” examples. Saprykin 2000, 194–208 and Merton 2000.

Thus despite the fact that in their content the classical model of scientific knowledge and theology derive from different ontologies (that which in fact exists) and epistemologies (how to recognize that which exists), the most important shared quality of the two is their affirmation of a belief in the existence of a true reality and the fundamental possibility for humankind to reach it. Precisely this belief can explain the typical desire in scientific thinking to move beyond the bounds of conceptual frameworks created by human thought,¹⁵ as well as opposing acquired “knowledge” to former “knowledge,” announcing another Scientific Revolution and gradually moving closer toward understanding the essence of an object of study.¹⁶

However, as the conflict between “science” and “religion” acquires ideological and social dimensions, “science” begins to be analyzed as a form of knowledge, which reveals the laws of the natural world independent from any kind of connection to received knowledge of the idea of God. In turn, “religion” begins to be identified as a part of the given nature of mankind, with its sources (regardless of which religion is concerned) in the seventeenth through nineteenth centuries increasingly declaring that on one side there were human feelings and thoughts and on the other there was nature, which was open to interpretation and experience.¹⁷

The juxtaposition of “science” and “religion” in the modern age has three primary dimensions: epistemological (God and Nature as dis-

15. “I believe in ‘absolute’ or ‘objective’ truth in the sense of Tarskii (although I, of course, who am not an absolutist in that sense, do not consider, that I or someone else has truth in their pocket) . . . I allow, that in any arbitrarily chosen moment we are hostages to the conceptual framework of our theories, expectations, our previous experience, our language. But we are not hostages in the literal sense. If we so choose, we can escape from our framework at any time. . . . The idea that different frameworks are similar in their mutually untranslatable languages is dogma, and a dangerous dogma at that.” Popper 2003, 323. For more on the religious foundations of scientific thought, see Markova 1997, 219–64.

16. “Yet the great minds who laid down the foundations of modern mentality — John Locke for example — had reason for their dissatisfaction with the traditional dogmatic theology, though they partially misconceived the grounds on which they should base their attitude. Their true enemy was the doctrine of dogmatic finality; a doctrine which flourished and is flourishing with equal vigour throughout Theology, Science, and Metaphysics.” Whitehead 1967, 162.

17. “I maintain that cosmic religiousness is the strongest and noblest motive for scientific research. . . . Only one who has devoted his life to similar ends can have a vivid realization of what has inspired these men and given them the strength to remain true to their purpose in spite of countless failures. It is cosmic religious feeling that gives a man such strength. A contemporary has said, not unjustly, that in this materialistic age of ours the serious scientific workers are the only profoundly religious people.” Albert Einstein, *The New York Times Magazine*, November 9, 1930, pg. 4.

tinct objects of cognition, different methods of obtaining knowledge); socio-political (the fight of social institutions and their participation in the struggle for power); and ideological (the contradictory descriptions of events and processes). The conflict between science and religion in the modern era is identified in various ways, however one of the most notable is that many scholars create an opposition between general statements of “universal” science and “private” views of religion.¹⁸ Furthermore, science claimed to discover a common “natural” basis for diversity of the world of human culture, and also positioned itself as the universal platform for dialogue between people.

It is worth mentioning that such opposition of “science” and “religion” in the modern era, it seems, is genetically linked to the Judeo-Christian opposition of the Creator with the world he created (Gaidenko 2006, 79–119). One could even suggest that the idea of the “independence of science and religion” emerges in European philosophy in the modern era as a derivative of a Christian-Platonic interpretation of the divine as transcendental, “wholly other” (to use the terminology of R. Otto) in relation to the created world. However, the opposite could also be stated: the basis for this opposition of science and religion can be found in Parmenides’ division of “truth” and “opinion,” which contrast as “singular” and “plural,” and is rooted, it seems, in the characteristics of human thought that have an innate ability to differentiate natural processes from those it deems supernatural.¹⁹

However, such a differentiation of science and religion as “universal” and “particular” spheres did not suit many philosophers and scientists, since, in their view, it suggested overcoming the contradiction between “universal” science and “particular” religious knowledge. Christian theologians faced a similar problem of combining “universal” and “particular” viewpoints even in the thirteenth century, when they attempted to cope with the challenge of Aristotle’s philosophy,

18. The famous motto of the London Royal Society, *Nullius in verba*, best conveys the typical attitude toward the authorities’ views, if it is not based on experimental evidence. The propaganda of such an attitude becomes a departure point in the works of a number of French Enlightenment scholars, and finds its final conceptual form in the first wave of positivist philosophy. See Osler 2013, 31–52.

19. In this regard it is worth noting B. Malinowski’s argument that in everyday life a primitive person understands well where the border between natural and supernatural lies. Malinowski 1998, 19–91. Furthermore, the understanding of certain things, events and processes as supernatural can be explained as a lack of adequate knowledge on behalf of a primitive person. Attributing a “supernatural” quality to this or that object seems to be the only method of including it in everyday, “natural” life.

and even then, “studies on the twofold mode of truth” led to a plethora of skeptical rebuttals from conservative-minded thinkers (Grant 1996, 70–85). It is not surprising that in addition to the large number of scholars and theologians who worked within the confines of “normal science” and privately proposed the idea of the separation of science and religion, the modern age bore witness to a great number of revolutionary attempts to overcome this contradiction.

These attempts manifested themselves in two ways, depending on which principle — the “universal” or the “particular” — the actor in question preferred. For example, many philosophers moved “from science to religion,” typically adhering to the idea of Deism in their interpretation of the relationship between God and the world, and developed the concept of “natural religion.” Religion “within the limits of reason” developed through the framework of various quasi-religious cults of the era of the French Revolution and the positive religion of Auguste Comte (Wright 2008). At the end of the nineteenth century the baton was taken up by new religious movements, such as theosophy, which asserted the equivalence of different paths to attaining the truth and spoke of a fundamental unity between all religions, despite their individual differences (Falikov 2007, 19–51). In such an approach, religion is interpreted as an innate human *characteristic* and is characterized first and foremost as an ability or a special kind of *intimate relationship* toward a sacred object. Religious teaching and cult become increasingly abstract and in many instances play either a secondary role, or in principle, are not seen as having any kind of significance (*znachenie*).

The opposite movement, “from religion to science,” was introduced by philosophers and scientists, who strove to preserve and defend the specific teaching of their own religion. The “natural theology” movement became the most notable manifestation of this in the modern era, as it attempted to strengthen the idea of the Divine Creation and Plan with scientific arguments (Brook 2004, 166–93). Biblical creationism, which declares the need to verify the “universal” assertions of science through the private truths (*chastnymi istinami*) in the biblical text, is a typical contemporary representation of a similar relationship to science as an instrument for confirming religious doctrine.

Experimental spiritualism, as will be demonstrated below, cannot be attributed to any of the indicated discourses of European thought. Precisely that fact has compelled researchers to resign it to a “fringe” phenomenon that does not fit into the general picture (for example, attempts have been made to fit it either into the logic of secularization,

or conversely, to demonstrate its “conservative” nature). It is possible to explain such ambiguity in spiritualism if one looks at it as one of the transitional forms that arose during the transition from a classical to a non-classical epistemological model.

“Scientific” and “Religious” Types of Spiritualism in Russia in the Nineteenth Century

Within the scope of this study, I define “spiritualism” in the broadest sense as the belief in the existence of spirits and the possibility of communicating with them. In the nineteenth century, that belief became the subject of a fierce polemic between members of different social groups: scientists and priests, publicists and independent researchers discussed whether spiritualism as a specific practice was capable of providing an answer to the question of the real existence of the human “spirit.” All those who positively answered the question pointed to a direct “experience” of communicating with spirits as the primary evidence of their existence.

“Experience” is a notion that simultaneously stems from both the romantic and the positivist lexicon. The fundamental difference in its interpretation lies in the fact that for the romantic, “experience” is directly felt by the subject of cognition, while for a provisional positivist, “experience” must have universal significance and be totally independent of the subject. For both, “experience” provides access to reality, however, if the romantic discovers it in all the fullness of the subject’s feelings, the positivist discovers it through thoughts and senses shared by everyone.

Spiritualism as a specific ideology and practice arose at the intersection of positivist and romantic discourses. Drawing on the common nineteenth-century juxtaposition between “science” and “religion” as public and private knowledge, Russian spiritualism as a cultural phenomenon can be divided into two ideal types: “religious” and “scientific.” The religious type of spiritualism is the religion of direct experience of encountering the “sacred,” the origins of which in Christianity must be sought in the Reformation movement and broadly, in Christian apophatic mysticism. For such religion the following is characteristic: condemnation of the passive absorption of tradition; although reflection about the object cannot replace meeting with it face to face, the mind is viewed as the single possible means of interpretation of religious experience; cult practice and doctrine are seen as secondary to religious experience; science as a means of knowing the world through

the help of controlled or repeatable experiments is either directly rejected or demonstrated to be insufficient for knowing the world.

The scientific type of spiritualism is a variety of scientific practices unrecognized by the scientific community, which aims to study the world of spirits as part of the natural world. In its essence, it is a “scientific” kind of natural theology, dating back to Antiquity and aiming to use rational means to confirm the existence of various articles of faith. The scientific type of spiritualism strives on behalf of the spiritual world to expand the space of the “natural,” which it views as the only real one, and often skeptically treats any form of “transcendental” as imagined. In the historiography of the issue it is often named as a side effect of scientific development, primarily defined as a specific direction in psychology, which set as its goal empirically demonstrating the independence of the human psyche from its material body.

From a historical-cultural point of view, the proposed typology has a heuristic benefit: in the internal polemic that occurs between representatives of the aforementioned types, the desire arises to overcome the dividing lines between the spheres of “science” and “religion.” The content of the proposed typology is not static: in a historical perspective, the views of many thinkers undergo a transformation, shifting from one end of it to the other (for example, from the “objectivism” of science to “subjectivism” of religion). At the same time, it makes it possible, with reasonable accuracy, to demonstrate the specific diversity of spiritualism, uniting under its banners people who differ from one another in their view of the correct relationship of science and religion.

It is necessary to attribute to the “scientific” type the activity and work of the three major apologists for the scientific study of the phenomena, which took place at the so-called spiritualist séances: Alexander Nikolaevich Aksakov, Alexander Mikhailovich Butlerov, and Nikolai Petrovich Wagner. The formation of the Russian scientific community of researchers of mediumistic phenomena took place during the 1870s, when Alexander Butlerov first became acquainted with them, then Nikolai Wagner, and finally, it achieved its greatest degree of publicity thanks to the activity of a special commission, constituted at the Physics Society of St. Petersburg University (1875–76). The 1880s and beginning of the 1890s represented the peak of organizational and publication activity of the movement, however toward the turn of the century it began to lose its influence, largely unable to compete with the religious type of spiritualism (Razdyakonov 2010, 162–71).

The specific methodological position of researchers of mediumism allows one to speak of three types of the “scientific” kind of spiritualism: “experienced” (Alexander Butlerov), “theoretical” (Alexander Aksakov) and “doctrinal” (Nikolai Wagner). These types of scientific spiritualism can be further delineated by the extent to which their conclusions, as obtained on the basis of the content analysis of individual experiments, take on a global character.

Alexander Butlerov rightfully held the authority of a distinguished scholar in Russia. For this reason, in his archive one can find a substantial number of letters from amateur spiritualists, asking that he place their pursuit of spiritualism “on a scientific basis.” The typical argument in these letters fell along the lines of:

Believe, professor, that it is not mere curiosity that drives an idle person with equal force to a spiritual séance and the performance of a magician. It is not that feeling that compels me to appeal to you as the center and natural leader of those, who share a serious attitude toward spiritualism. . . . You alone can give our circle direction. You alone can establish our séances on a rational basis . . . since you alone unite in your person and your faith that kind of appearance and compelling authority of a serious (*glubokii*) scholar. (IRLI, f. 2, op. 17, d. 48, ll. 10b.–20b.)

Consequently, in the “three-leaved clover” Alexander Mikhailovich Butlerov had the undisputed “scientific” authority. Aksakov did not have any kind of academic credentials, and Wagner soon gained the reputation of an eccentric.

Compared with his fellow spiritualist enthusiasts, Alexander Mikhailovich Butlerov occupied a cautious position in regard to mediumistic phenomena. He recognized the reality of “mediumistic facts” and on this point he was ready to agree with the statement of mathematician Auguste de Morgan: “The physical explanations which I have seen are easy, but miserably insufficient: the spiritual hypothesis is sufficient, but ponderously difficult” (Butlerov 1889, 66. Original quote: Morgan 1863, vi). In this way, he viewed the spiritual hypothesis as one possible explanation and deliberately left it as a hypothesis.

Characteristically, in the last years of his life Butlerov was less interested in spiritual phenomena. Aksakov writes to Wagner about this with some annoyance, advising him to update the contents of his posthumous article about Butlerov: “You say that Alexander Mikhailovich ‘no longer’ (?) took interest in phenomena. Here you must be careful, otherwise they will take it and misinterpret it. It is necessary to ex-

plain: having become convinced of the essence of matter and having seen enough of it, A. M. took little interest in repetition, but greater interest in specific (*indiscernible, possible “cases”*– RVS) or in those conditions, that did not permit full control” (IRLI, f. 2, op. 2, d. 45, l. 1–10b.).

In the program of lectures that debated the question of the relationship of mediumistic research and Christianity, Butlerov writes that one does not contradict the other at all, as far as “scientific” knowledge and “religious” knowledge are independent of one another (Pribytkov 1901, 124). Mediumism does not cause any harm to Christianity, presenting itself as merely a new realm of positive knowledge about nature. Furthermore, this knowledge can ultimately be used by Christianity, since it can potentially confirm the existence of souls and refute materialists:

This issue represents a domain of pure positive knowledge, since its entire center (l. 2) of gravity lies in facts, now considered to already be undeniable by a considerable number of authority figures. As a branch of factual knowledge, the issue of mediumism, similar to other branches of science, obviously cannot be subject to delay or removal by any kind of external means. . . . On the basis of these undeniable facts, more or less probable conclusions and deductions can be drawn, among which, the conclusion on the existence of the spiritual world and man’s transfer into it upon the death of its body is of particular significance, a view in direct contradiction to materialism (l. 20b.). . . . This view equally agrees well with the basis of the most diverse religious views, not at all linked exclusively with any one of them. All further conclusions from the reality of mediumistic phenomena will be completely arbitrary and can be made solely on the basis of superstition, that is, in those conditions under which false teaching and belief often find an imagined support in the basis of complete truth. Encountering materialism, mediumism easily prevails, countering it with real facts, that is to say the very same upon which materialism imagines itself resting.²⁰

20. IRLI, f. 2, op. 10, d. 113, l. 2. A. M. Butlerov, Kopia pis'ma Iu. Aleksandru Nikolaevichu (tsenzoru Rebusa). Rukoi N. M. Butlerovoi. 1886 19/IV [Alexander Butlerov. Copy of a letter to Iu. Alexander Nikolaevich (the censor of Rebus). Handwriting of N. M. Butlerova. April 19, 1886]. Count M. M. Petrovo-Solovovo (1868–1954), a representative of the “young” generation of researchers of mediumistic phenomena, held a similar position, having joined the English “Society for Psychical Research” in 1890, which adopted a generally critical position concerning the correct interpretation of phenomena with the help of the “spirit hypothesis.”

Aksakov and Wagner's attitudes toward "scientific" and "religious" knowledge have already been explored in other publications, therefore this article will be limited to general assertions about their attitude (Razdyakonov 2013, 55–72). Compared to Butlerov, Alexander Aksakov went further, not only recognizing the reality of mediumistic facts, but also specifically working to defend their "spiritual" interpretation. Aksakov's main work, "Animism and Spiritualism," was dedicated to the possibility of a scientific basis for the "spirit hypothesis," an explanation whose a priori rejection by the scientific community caused serious objections from his supporters.

Nikolai Wagner, in turn, not only recognized the "spiritual hypothesis," but also interpreted the content of messages received "from spirits" with the goal of illuminating their "doctrine." Significant differences between him and Alexander Aksakov in understanding how one should properly conduct research on mediumistic phenomena ultimately led to a schism among the leaders of the scientific type of spiritualism. The religious-philosophical theories Nikolai Wagner formulated toward the end of his life attest to his evolution from the "scientific" to "religious" type of spiritualism.

To characterize the divergence in views between Aksakov and Wagner, it is enough to quote Wagner's own words addressing Butlerov: "Aksakov looks at not only me, but also you and all scholars with dismissive condescension. For him, science is a materialistic hindrance in developing the appropriate view on things. Consequently, it is a stupidity not worth pursuing. Both you and he try to bend science toward spiritualism, but I wish to bring it under the principles of spiritualism. *Inde ira* (Lat. *Hence wrath*) and intractability in our views (IRLI, f. 2, op. 17, d. 20. l. 10b.). If Aksakov spoke a great deal in his publications about "Orthodox dogmatics," which interfered with the progress of scientific knowledge, then for Wagner this question had already been decided by the end of the 1880s. Specifically then he communicated with "the spirit" of Butlerov through the means of various mediums, and as a result in his book, *Observations on Mediumship*, he formulated his own religious-philosophical teachings, which he deduced from the messages of good spirits.

As for Russian "religious" spiritualism, it can be divided into types based on the specifics of religious doctrine. These types are often divided into two groups, French and Anglo-American spiritualism. However, at least in Russia, it is possible to establish a more complex picture, involving contention between various teachings within the spiritualist religious field (for example it is necessary to

note the followers of the teachings of Swedenborg, and also the significant number of spiritualists who did not break with the Orthodox Church). Without going into the details of the features of the specific diversity of that type, one must bear in mind one of its key characteristics: although its proponents used pseudo-scientific terminology to describe their own spiritual experiences, they were extremely critical of science as a method of cognition, asserting the inadequacy of its methods for studying the realm of the spiritual world. An excellent example of this type of attitude is provided in the spiritualist diary of M. P. Saburova. (For the social and psychological aspects of the diary's contents, see Razdyakonov 2015, 55–69.) Although one regularly finds the use of scientific rhetoric in this diary, in the author's opinion, abstract science claiming objectivity in comprehending a subject will always leave room for a skeptical attitude toward mediumistic phenomena.²¹ Only the direct experience of communication between a deceased individual and his family offers the guarantee of “spiritualist conversion”: “if faith also went along with science, then much would be discovered by your scientists” (Saburova, 3:58). Furthermore, criticizing the possibility of objectivity of the scientific method, M. P. Saburova did not doubt in the slightest the existence of the “natural” world of spirits she had discovered. “Miracles” and “spirits” continued to remain a part of it, however they could not be known through the scientific method, or rather they could not be objectified, for they belonged to the world of irreducible subjective “experience”:

But why did he put a sign [an image of a wavy line — RVS] instead of the word “materiality”? Likely because they consist of matter: if he had said “it has not yet received materiality,” then it would be possible to think that there is no matter in their world, when there is a shell (*obolochka*) and form there. And in their world spirit and matter appear in union, but how could we, with our limited eyes, which are arranged and suited for the narrow field of earthly activity, how can we behold unearthly things

21. “The invisible have the possibility to unite their currents [*toki*] and the currents of the medium . . . like a telegraph wire, since these currents can be broken and reconnected at will. It is possible to understand this, but by what means the connection occurs is not within our understanding.” M. P. Saburova, *Gody moei zhizni* . . . vol. 3, p. 7; “And your scholarly séances do not lead to anything. . . . No one can understand us [*postich*] with science: here only faith in future life is necessary — everything will be clear.” Ibid., vol. 1, p. 43.

with them, which are ephemeral and so completely evade our senses!
(Ibid., 1:146)

In this way, the spiritualist anti-scientific discourse argued that a special “spiritual” realm (*oblast'*) of the natural world exists, which people are not able to understand, yet insofar as it is natural, it definitely exists. Access to it became possible only thanks to a direct “subjective” experience (*perezhivaniia*), and therefore they always recommended giving spiritualist practice a try at least once before passing a final judgment on the subject. Appealing to subjective experience, religious spiritualism came as a predecessor to later phenomenological conceptions, which aimed to overcome the classical understanding of subject-object relations in scientific knowledge.

Spiritualism and Classical Science

In their discourse on the social nature of scientific knowledge, spiritualists do not abandon the juxtaposition of “scientific” and “religious” knowledge that is characteristic of the modern age. This becomes clear in the linguistic clichés that are constantly used in scientific and quasi-scientific polemics about mediumistic phenomena. Their opponents called spiritualists “believers” (people who did not know scientific methods), while in response spiritualists defined their opponents as “dogmatics” (people who had not liberated themselves from “idols”). Thus, “religion,” understood first and foremost as a systematic doctrine based on faith, remained for the majority of spiritualists just a set of personal beliefs held by misguided people, and the characteristics associated with it (belief, dogma) were used to underscore the weakness of their opponents’ conclusions.

Spiritualists by and large retained the classical conception that the subject of research under ideal conditions allowed for the essence of the studied object to be revealed. However, achieving this set of ideal conditions is not so much associated with a necessary distancing from the object, as with the opposite, having *a certain intimate inclination* toward that object. So-called “dogmatics” and “skeptics” pushed spiritualists in this direction: the first group refused in principle to initiate study of the object on the basis that it was impossible to violate the laws of physics; while the second group remained unconvinced of the reality of what had occurred even after repeated and direct observation. Skeptics especially shocked spiritualists, who were focused on empiricism and positivism as methodological programs, and forced

them to admit that direct observation of a phenomenon in scientific research still does not guarantee researchers' agreement in acknowledging the reality of that phenomenon.

Spiritualists closely approached the idea that shared research is based on mutual trust between the researchers. In the end, if trust is not there it is always possible to suggest falsifications and raise questions about the conditions for conducting the experiment. Spiritualists were extraordinarily frustrated by the fact that their scientific authority was insufficient to convince other scholars that their object was not only worthy of study, but in fact actually existed.

Reacting to this cold reception from the scientific community, some of the spiritualists, who held great sympathy for subjective experience, began to adopt two ideas that were completely incompatible with classical epistemology (this is most clearly seen in Nikolai Wagner's works). First off, they *demanded researchers believe in the reality of that which they studied*. Furthermore, the degree of the intensity and features of the mediumistic phenomena depended on the faith and desire of the appearance of these phenomena in the field of sensory perception. If the researchers did not believe in them, the phenomena may not appear. Secondly, it completely exceeded all possible limits, they argued, that "spirits" with whom the researchers interacted could directly interfere in their experiments, appearing as guides in spiritualist séances.

Within the classical methodology, "knowledge" is viewed as something that the subject should elicit from the world, similar to an investigator, while in spiritualist epistemology it appears as a consequence of the openness of the subject to possible communication with the world of spirits. This epistemological formulation correlates, as it seems, with the well-known understanding of the humanities as knowledge resulting from the *interaction* between the subject and the object, since in the end it is people who serve as the object in the humanities (and thus knowledge in the humanities becomes self-knowledge). Finally, it is precisely the message of these people that is of critical importance from a humanities' perspective.

Many spiritualists, especially those who regarded contemporary science skeptically, commonly doubted one of the basic aims of the classic methodology of scientific knowledge — to find the hidden causes that governed the object's behavior. Spiritualists' "knowledge" appeared not as a result of analyzing an object within the limits of hypotheses, but rather as the result of "translation" and "decipherment." The researcher, in this case, could be likened to no more than a trans-

lator. If he even used scientific knowledge, his aim was just to open a channel of communication and to hear the voices of people eternally alive.

Incomplete reproducibility was yet another feature of the research results that spiritualists' opponents often emphasized. Although spiritualists tried to reveal the progressive character in mediumistic manifestations, each time a new manifestation seemed somewhat different than the previous ones. Spiritualists responded to this objection by stating that the conditions of the appearance of these phenomena are still not identified; correspondingly, it is impossible to precisely predict when and how they appear. Moreover, they further argued something more serious, that the properties of their instrument — a medium — have an impact on their object of research, and that therefore the results are new every time. Still, they continued to relate to it as to a "machine," which, with the proper set-up, might achieve the sought-after "ideal" results.

In this way, from the point of view of classical epistemology, the spiritualists' "knowledge," clearly, should have been considered "subjective." On the one hand, the appearance of an object of research depended on the will of the researcher. On the other hand, the object of research became a full-fledged participant of the study, a second subject. "Knowledge" arose not as a consequence of the subject's distancing from the object, but as a result of a joint effort of the subject and the "object." Furthermore, the more a spiritualist trusted his or her subjective experience, the more such "knowledge" acquired social significance and urgency, and resolved crises and even the needs of the spiritualist himself.

Thus among the variety of messages and their interpretation, the figure of Alexander Butlerov always played the role of arbitrator, giving advice on the proper organization of social and political relationships between living people. The contents of his letters from the other side held significance, according to spiritualists, for three reasons. First, they came from a living person with high scientific standing. Second, they came either indirectly in the course of his materialization or through automatic writing. And third, they are not revelations, but simply a continuation of normal social communication. In this respect, from the spiritualists' perspective, the "knowledge" that Alexander Butlerov received in the spiritual world was actually human knowledge.

Of course, "experiments with spirits" could not directly facilitate the emergence of new theories in physics, and in that regard it would

be overreaching to deem such experiments as precedents for non-classical science. Still, certain aspects of the epistemology of experimental spiritualism, it seems, testify to the movement of several of its representatives in the direction of a non-classical understanding of the features of scientific cognition. In this connection, a standard appeal of spiritualists to various non-classical theories that questioned the classical understanding of “space” (e.g., the mathematical ideas of Bernhard Riemann), also receives its own historical explanation.²² This appeal should be seen not only as an attempt to gain a theoretical foundation (for example, using already approved theoretical knowledge as the scientific basis of their own research), nor as an attempt to gain social legitimacy (if spiritualists come to the same conclusions as “scientists,” then they are “scientists”), but rather as a testament to methodological proximity between the approaches of non-classical science and this fringe scientific program.²³

Despite the pointed similarity between non-classical and spiritualist understandings of subject-object relations, the classical model was dominant in spiritualist epistemology, and spiritualists primarily believed in the reality of an existing world and the possibility of knowing it through the aid of special scientific methods. Furthermore, some spiritualists introduced certain elements to scientific cognition, which were in fact not intrinsic to it. First and foremost, their very discovery of a new realm for research was seen as an event capable of leading to the resolution of fundamental questions of ontology (matter and spirit) and anthropology (the spirit and the body). However, a resolution to these questions was never found, for the vast majority of scholars the program did not seem sufficiently convincing, while the problem

22. “Now it seems that the empirical notions on which the metrical determinations of space are founded, the notion of a solid body and of a ray of light, cease to be valid for the infinitely small. We are therefore quite at liberty to suppose that the metric relations of space in the infinitely small do not conform to the hypotheses of geometry; and we ought in fact to suppose it, if we can thereby obtain a simpler explanation of phenomena.” Bernhard Riemann, *On the Hypotheses Which Lie at the Bases of Geometry*, ed. Jürgen Jost (Leipzig: Birkhäuser, 2016), 40 (first written in 1854 and published posthumously in 1868 as *Über die Hypothesen, welche der Geometrie zugrunde liegen*). [The author originally cites from a Russian-language Soviet collection of Riemann’s works (Riemann 1948, 291) — KH].

23. In this regard, one can recall the words of Einstein, who in a conversation with Heisenberg said, “Whether you can observe a thing or not depends on the theory which you use. It is the theory which decides what can be observed.” Masud Chaichian, Hugo Perez Rojas, and Anca Turean, eds., *Basic Concepts in Physics: From the Cosmos to Quarks* (Heidelberg: Springer, 2014), 202. [Author originally cites from a Russian-language Soviet edition, Heisenberg 1970, 303. — KH]

of the relationship between “science” and “religion” has not lost its relevance even today. Along with this, spiritualists’ attempt to overcome the gap between the other reality discovered through “religion,” and the reality recognized by “science” was sufficiently original that this unrecognized scientific program left a colorful trace in the intellectual history of the nineteenth century.

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Constructing Holy Spaces in a Multicultural Milieu: The Case of the Zajde Bašće Shrine in Niš (Serbia)

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The culture of neighborhood with all its details that makes up the cultural mosaic of the Balkans is manifested at the level of popular religiosity, in particular, in the cases of mixed pilgrimages and popular shrines with shared practices. Such interaction between communities belonging to different cultural and religious traditions assumes various forms and patterns. This paper focuses on one such example, a holy site of joint devotion by Muslims and Christians, the Zajde Bašće shrine in Niš, which maintains the traditional practice of ziyārāt within a changing social and cultural environment. The main role in maintaining this tradition is played by the local Roma minority. Recently the shrine went through certain changes: the common old narrative about the Muslim nature of the cult was complemented by another one, with a clear multicultural emphasis. The study of narratives, the site's architectonics, and the co-practices of visitors help us to understand the correlation between competing discourses and to identify patterns of interreligious interaction.

Keywords: shared shrines, pilgrimage, Christianity, Islam, popular religiosity, Balkans, Roma.

RELIGIOUS culture in the Balkans is notable for its pluralism on the formal (confessional) level as well as on the popular (extra-confessional) level. The religious situation in the Balkans can be likened to a multi-colored mosaic made up of elements of various proportions and forms. This image of religious daily life is related to the region's historically conditioned ethno-confessional diversity. As a logical consequence of this, a developed culture of neighborhood has

obtained, which is itself worthy of study, considering its importance to contemporary sociopolitical processes in the region. The culture of neighborhood as a “*modus vivendi* of everyday cohabitation” (Valtchinova 2012) includes phenomena on several levels; here, the focus is on everyday religiosity.

Researchers at the beginning of the twentieth century turned their attention to the phenomenon of “mixed pilgrimages” in the Balkans (Hasluck 1929; see also Đorđević 1984a; Đorđević 1984b; Filipović 1939; Vražinovski 1999; Popović 1996). In recent decades, the phenomenon of “joint veneration” has been once again at specialists’ center of attention (e.g., Dujzingz 2000; Hayden 2002; Albera and Couroucli 2012; Belaj 2012; Radishević-Ćiparizović 2010).¹

Over the last five years, I have studied the characteristics of the religious culture of Roma (Gypsies) as one of the most significant ethnocultural minorities in the Balkans, bringing out the specific contents of their popular religious traditions and how they have changed. The object of research has been the ideas and practices of Roma (Arlia, Gurbets) in border regions of southern Serbia, Macedonia and Kosovo, which historically comprise an area of residence and internal migration for various Muslim and Christian Roma groups. This provisionally delimited cultural region is also interesting, because numerous Sufi spiritual centers, which determine the specific religious mapping of the area, are concentrated within its limits (Biegman 2009; Norris 1993; Popović 2002; Popović 1994; Zheliaskova and Nielsen 2001). The inclusion of Sufi traditions in the representations and rituals of local communities of Muslim Gypsies can be observed on the level of local forms (*‘ādāt*).

Romani Islamic culture includes a layer of popular beliefs and practices that are organically intertwined with Islamic elements that are “traditional” in these areas. With this in mind, I turned my attention to the widespread practice of visiting the tombs of Islamic saints (*türbe*)² and the veneration of these places as sacred (*tekia*).³

1. See also the articles by Bowman (2014) and Dragana Radisavljević-Ćiparizović (2014).
2. *Türbe* (in Turkish), *turbet* — a shrine-mausoleum characteristic of Ottoman grave site architecture. The construction of a *türbe* on the burial site was commonly done to honor eminent citizens, as well as spiritual leaders, those revered as *awliyā* (“saints,” or in singular form *walī*), and shahids (in the narrow sense of fighters who died on the field of battle, innocents who were killed, or those who died in exceptional circumstances such as during a pilgrimage or in childbirth). In addition to graves in the classic sense, cenotaphs (as symbolic *türbes*) could be erected in locations where it is believed the saint is “present,” and which thus have special properties.
3. *Tekia* (*tekija*) — a lexeme denoting a holy space. In modern times, this term is found more often in regions that have a multiethnic and multicultural structure. Sufi *zaviyas*,

These tombs were frequently unique local centers of religious activity. Taking into account their significance in the past, I was interested in examining how the status of these places and the practices associated with them have been preserved and transformed within a changing sociocultural context, especially within the framework of the religious culture of an ethnic and cultural minority, in this case the Roma.

The Zajde Bašće shrine, which is connected to an eponymous saint, is an example of such a *tekia* (in this case, a symbolic *türbe*). This example is interesting both in its own right and in the context of the questions mentioned above.⁴ Located in the southern Serbian city of Niš,⁵ Zajde Bašće is one of numerous loci in the sacred geography of cultural space in the Balkans, where regular rituals such as venerating *türbe* and saint figures have been preserved (Trofimova 2015).⁶ This particular *tekia* appeared in Niš, a city that was a military and administrative center with developed religious (Islamic) institutions under Ottoman rule. The *tekia* is now an active shrine within a predominantly Orthodox environment and is visited by both Muslims and Christians. Local Romani communities currently play the main role in maintaining these traditions.

The first in-depth study of the cult of Zajde Bašće the “saint”⁷ was carried out in 2001 by the sociologists Dragoljub B. Đorđević and Dragan Todorović. Over the course of their research, they revealed ar-

mazars (türbe), natural loci, as well as churches and monasteries are all generally denoted in the popular religious lexicon with the term *tekia/techa* (*tekija* in Serbian, Croatian, and Bosnian, or *teqeja* in Albanian). Regardless of the fact that the concept of *tekia* can also denote monasteries of Sufi brotherhoods (*tekke* in Turkish), in the present article I consciously separate out these two designations.

4. Zajde Bašće and Zajde Badža are the two variants of the shrine's name that are in general use.
5. Materials that form the basis for this article were gathered during ethnographic expeditions in Serbia (Niš and Leskovac), Macedonia (Skopje), and Kosovo (Prizren) on urban public and private shrines and cult objects in 2011–14. In the course of this work, I used the following methods: observation, semi-structured and unstructured interviews, and photography. In this article, I also use data from observation and in-depth interviews with informants from border areas, as well as from Kumanovo (Macedonia), Gjakova (Kosovo), and Gjilan (Kosovo).
6. It is worth noting that the Zajde Bašće *tekia* is not the only shrine in the region. In recent decades, numerous public and private (home) shrines have appeared within Roma settlements, which localize the tradition of *ziyārāt* (pilgrimage) and that reproduced associated practices as an element of the everyday religious culture of Roma Muslims.
7. Zajde Bašće is respected and worshiped as an Islamic *wālī* by local Muslims and as a personage similar to a Christian saint by non-Muslims, thus the use of “saint” as a descriptor here and hereafter.

chival and folkloric materials that told the story of the *tekia* and also carried out empirical research on the cult (Đorđević and Todorović 2001).⁸ I, in turn, approached a study of this specific place ten years later in a socially and culturally altered context, which was due to many factors. As a result of military conflicts in the Balkans, which continued through the 1990s, and the subsequent economic crisis and other circumstances, Roma settlements within the city grew or were built in connection with the arrival of displaced persons from Kosovo and Macedonia. From another angle, the “Islamic Community of Serbia” (*Islamska zajednica Srbije*) was strengthening its policies of religious education among the Muslim population (this mainly affected Roma communities); of the transformation or creation of local religious institutions (*jamaats*); and of the training of religious leaders within the Romani milieu. At the same time, the cult of Zajde Bašće itself was developing, which was connected in no small part with a change of the shrine’s caretaker.

The shrine is interesting as an example of a popular and non-institutionalized site of religious worship. In the wider context, studying Zajde Bašće is important to the project of describing the mosaic of religious culture in the Balkans, where identifying the general and specific features of certain elements allows one to explain the specifics of their mutual positioning and proximity.

Tekia

The Zajde Bašće shrine is located in the central, historic part of Niš and abuts one of the external walls of the city fortress (I will discuss the figure of the saint in more detail below). In the narratives of visitors, it figures as the *türbe* of Zajde Bašće the saint, whose legend continues to be preserved in local folklore. According to the legend, the origins of the saint’s burial site date to approximately the sixteenth century (Interview with Romani caretaker of shrine, 2011; Interview with thirty-year-old Romani male, 2011).⁹ The physical space of the *tekia* takes the form of an irregular polygon with an

8. I am grateful to Professors Đorđević and Todorović for sharing their materials and valuable comments with me.

9. In the thirty-year-old Romani male’s telling, the time of the *tekia*’s appearance is compared to the activities of other confessions: “It happened even 500 years ago. Many years ago, perhaps, older than many churches.” By church, this visitor meant Christian churches, including neo-Protestant churches, which carried out active missionary work among the Roma.

area of 20–25 square meters. It does not have a mausoleum, which is otherwise characteristic of such loci. There are various ritual objects in close proximity: the “burial site,” an altar, trees and a part of the wall, painted white, all enclosed by fencing. The trees and the fence delimit the borders of the shrine. The most significant part of the *tekia* is placed in a bend in the fortress wall in such a way that the central section, including the burial site and the altar, is located in a corner. The grave (a cenotaph, from all appearances) is visually marked with a slightly raised piece of concrete, in the middle of which is carved an irregular polygon, through which the ground is revealed. It is assumed that earlier the saint’s mausoleum stood above this fragment.

On Thursdays — visiting days — the shrine is modestly decorated. The caretakers hang three images on the wall above the burial site: an image of Zajde Bašće the saint in the center, a photograph of a Virgin Mary statue on the left, and on the right a photograph of the Black Madonna of Letnica (named after the village in Kosovo).¹⁰ In the corner itself, vases with fresh flowers are placed on a special recessed plinth. On the opposite side of the shrine, the central zone of the *tekia* is symbolically delimited by jugs of water, an altar (usually a small carpet, on which people leave their offerings intended for the saint: water, food, money), and candle stands that are used in local church services. Occasionally gifts (towels, clothing, and rarely food) are left directly in the corner section, avoiding the open ground. A bit farther away, in the extreme left corner of the shrine there is a fountain (a *chesma*) built in 2012, which is intended for drinking and ablutions (at the time of observations in 2012–14, the fountain was not working). In the center of the grounds, there is also a recently constructed flowerbed with roses, flanked by benches so that visitors can spend time within the shrine. Every Thursday the *tekia* hosts pilgrims: these are mostly local residents, believers who follow Islam and Christianity. Among the ethnically diverse visitors, the majority are from local Romani communities. The shrine’s caretakers are also Roma.

10. In everyday language, one often hears an abbreviated name: simply “Letnica” or the “Letnica Mother of God” (*Letnička Gospa*). Located in the southwestern part of Kosovo, the predominantly Croat-inhabited village of Letnica is the location of the Catholic Church of the Letnica Mother of God.



The Zajde Bašće shrine on the day of my visit. June 9, 2011. Photograph by Ksenia Trofimova.

Believers come individually or as entire families and perform a common sequence of rituals. Approaching the shrine, they touch the wall or nearby trees with the palms of their hands or with their lips, which symbolizes crossing the boundary of a sacred space. These activities open the central phase of the ritual (Vražinovski 1999).¹¹ This is followed by the presentation of offerings, the lighting of candles, and the recitation of personal prayers. The ritual ends with a reverent departure from the shrine, facing the “burial site,” with closing rituals identical to those that accompanied the visitor’s entrance. Late in the evening the territory of the *tekia* closes, and candles left prior to that moment continue to burn, lighting the footpath to the shrine.

The structure of the ritual is straightforward and its fundamental script did not change substantially over the course of my observations. The ritual is performed by each participant individually, regardless of whether he or she came alone or with a group of believers. We should note that within the shrine certain religious practices are not

11. The local perspective in examining practices characteristic of popular traditions of venerating saints and holy places is given in Vražinovski (1999).

performed, such as prayers, ritual processions, and collective activities such as ritual healing, collectively recited *dikr*, the verbalizing of formulas, healing practices with the participation of ritual specialists, and so on. The pragmatics of visiting the shrine are universal: seeking protection, help in solving various problems, or health and happiness, as well as expressing gratitude to Zajde Bašće for her assistance, establishing ties with the saint or sustaining existing ones: “among the majority of Roma, let’s say, there is a certain faith that she [Zajde Bašće — K.T.] fulfills desires, gives you what you want, so that your health improves, your material situation improves, whatever it is, then, it helps, especially with health” (Interview with thirty-five-year-old Romani male, 2011). Certain actions considered “magical” or against the “instructions” for visiting the tomb of an Islamic saint (*mazar*) are prohibited within the shrine. The boundaries of what is acceptable here are quite flexible, although the set of prohibited activities includes anything that is not directly connected with communication between believer and saint or believer and God. This includes activities that introduce an additional level of communication (for example, between humans and Jinns or characters from popular mythology through the recitation of incantations), or that demonstrate worship of the site through physical manipulation of bodies or objects such as tying ribbons to trees, spending the night on the slab above the symbolic burial site, and so on. Over the course of my observations, I never heard audible recitations of incantations, though I acknowledge, of course, that the ritual is private.

After the completion of the ritual, believers remain on the territory of the *tekia* for some time, sitting on benches, discussing “sanctioned” topics (Interview with Romani female, 2012)¹² or sinking into silent contemplation. They also hope to see the saint’s image in one of the trees or on the wall, which would indicate her presence and strengthen the existing connection between the saint and believers. In the course of research, I often encountered witnesses of theophany or hierophany as primary communication, the script of which contained a number of consistently repeated motifs: the saint appears in dreams or in visions, showing herself in the image of a beautiful young girl, or communicating her desires through familiar images and stories. Believers

12. On the territory of the shrine, it is recommended that visitors avoid discussing “ugly” topics in conversations and using profanity. Informants justify such restrictions by saying that “dirty” language, but also thoughts and intentions potentially defile the “clean” space, which can provoke the saint’s wrath and subsequent punishments.

noted how, after the rain, an image of the face of a woman appeared on the trees or walls of the shrine.

The current caretaker of the shrine, a Sunni Muslim, interacts with visitors, initiates them into the legend of Zajde Bašće the saint, and tells the story of the *tekia*. Without interfering in the course of the ritual itself, he observes and when necessary carefully directs the actions of believers, showing them where to light candles and place their offerings. For locals, visiting the *tekia* is in most cases a regular practice, reinforced by the “intention” or “vow” to perform the ritual and witness hierophany, which creates a “discourse of the miraculous.”

Attracting believers from various religious traditions, Zajde Bašće the saint, the shrine itself, and its existing traditions of veneration are firmly connected to Islamic and historically Turkish tradition in the narratives of visitors. At the same time, the space of the shrine is described by individual visitors and by the caretaker himself as “multi-ethnic”: “And the Orthodox, the Orthodox lighted candles here. Muslims come, as do Catholics. So it is a place of all religions, not only for Muslims. In this way it is a multiethnic [multicultural — K.T.] space” (Interview with Romani caretaker of shrine, 2011).

Thus, Zajde Bašće represents a popular shrine, which is “open” to followers of various religious traditions for the performance of shared practices. It is, in this way, an individual example of the more general Balkan tradition of “mixed” pilgrimages. The shrine in the city of Niš is notable for several details. First, it is interesting for its current decoration, which includes Christian or quasi-Christian elements, which, as I suggest, demonstrates the transformation of the shrine’s image.¹³ Second, I note the unvarying script of the ritual for Muslim and Christian believers within a space, which, according to the widely accepted “traditional” narrative, is understood as Islamic. Third, on top of the original Islamic discourse, Zajde Bašće adds a multicultural one, which creates two demonstrative discourses about the religious identity of the place. Along with this, another specificity of this site is that the ritual is reproduced and the tradition is supported thanks in large part to the participation of an ethnic, cultural and religious minority — the Roma, who appear as both participants and ritual specialists

13. Though it is a space of shared practice for Muslims and Christians, it is notable that Zajde Bašće is not a “dual” shrine, endowed by various groups with a dual identity (Islamic and Christian), nor is it a shrine with a vague identity that mixes elements associated with various traditions in its own peculiar way. A similar mixture can be observed in many other private shrines.

(Đorđević 2010).¹⁴ It is remarkable that residents of Niš who are not involved in this religious practice view the shrine as a Roma space, although the Roma themselves, while acknowledging that a significant portion of pilgrims are Roma, do not understand the site as “theirs” in an ethnic sense.

In connection with this, I propose the following question: what is the correlation between the two discourses mentioned above? What allows us to speak of the given shrine as Islamic and multicultural, and in particular — through which discursive practices are the religious boundaries of this cultic space demarcated? In this context, I identify the grounds for a possible approach to the phenomenon of jointly venerated sacred spaces. As the anthropologist Dionigi Albera rightly notes, religious practices of this sort represent a “relatively unstructured phenomenon,” in connection with which the character of its appearances is “changeable and sometimes unpredictable” (Albera 2012, 223). It is obvious that, depending on the concrete historical, social and cultural context, this material suggests multiple readings. The observation of various examples of shared practices and the reconstruction of their respective contexts allows one to draw a more accurate picture each time of the interrelations that obtain in the culturally heterogeneous space of the Balkans. As Doreen Massey argues, the space of joint action, in its heterogeneity, is “alive,” filled by a multiplicity of simultaneously constructed stories, which continually succeed one another (Massey 2005, 12). It is constituted through its relations, in continuous interaction (in joining and separation, creating various combinations), and these relations form boundaries, around which places are formed. A place is always “a meeting place,” which is appropriate for cultural frontiers (Massey 2005, 67–68).

For its part, the place itself reflects these differences, as it is filled with discourses generated by actors involved in interaction. The interrelations of these discourses create the complicated meaning of this or that place. The place emerges and it is filled with meaning(s) generated by the narratives “told” about a place, which tie the place to popular social practices. The process of “narrating place” (Low and Lawrence-Zúñiga 2003, 16–17) allows a place to serve as a significant factor in the construction, change in content, and sustaining of the historical and cultural memory of this or that social group. In this sense, cer-

14. Muslim Roma are a large proportion of visitors to the shrine. In southern Serbia and especially in Niš, they constitute a religious minority in a predominantly Orthodox Christian area. At the same time, among local Roma, those that identify as Muslims constitute a large community.

tain places, including, of course, sacred loci can be seen as “heterotopias” (*hétérotopies*) to use Michel Foucault’s concept (Foucault 1984). Sites of pilgrimage, as with other ritual spaces, also vary in their content. They are distinguished by their ability to “absorb and reflect a multiplicity of religious discourses” (Eade and Sallnow 1991, 15). At the same time, research focused on finding the specific features of the shared use of ritual spaces underscores that the existing multiplicity of discourses tends toward regulation by the existing dominant system of ideas and practices, which are under the control of formal or informal religious and social institutions. This certainly applies to popular shrines, which are also implicated in the complex system of social relations.

Thus, on the basis of the theoretical framework set out above, and coming back to an analysis of the Zajde Bašće shrine within the context of mixed pilgrimages in the Balkans, the next step is an analysis of the narratives emerging around the shrine and their variability; the architectonics of this sacred locus; and actions and joint activities of visitors.

Legend

The first mention of the Zajde Bašće (Zahide-baci)¹⁵ came in the second half of the seventeenth century (Čelebi 1967, 63), although it does not contain a description of the shrine and does not provide detailed information about the person of Zahide-baci, who, it can be inferred, occupied a special place in society and was honored by local residents. The tomb of Zahide-baci is mentioned in historical chronicles (*salname*) that refer to the final years of Ottoman rule in Southern Serbia (Sajtović-Lukin, et al. 2005, 47–53).

At the same time, local folklore contains a legend about a certain Turkish girl, who was honored as a saint, whose *türbe* was located in a moat near the old Belgrade gate of the Niš fortress. One might surmise that over time the images of Zahide-baci and the saintly Turkish girl combined into a single saintly image, whose shrine developed along the walls of the fortress.

The legend of Zajde Bašće was first written down by the Serbian historian Milan Đakov Milićević in 1878 in Niš according to the testimonies of representatives of the Turkish community. Subsequent-

15. *Baci* (Turkish) — lexeme used in relation to a woman with the literal meaning of “sister.”

ly, variations of the legend were produced by Dušanka Bojanić, Đorđe Stamenković, Iva Traiković, Nenad Jašić, and Dragoljub Đorđević (Đorđević and Todorović 2001, 251–60).¹⁶ The current study also takes into account different versions of the legend as I recorded them in the process of interviewing the current caretaker of the shrine and its visitors. The motifs and images expressed through the legends play an essential role in the formation of the particular character of local practices and the character of the shrine. In narrating its “origins,” the legends about the *türbe* and the saints become part of a narrative about tradition, cultural heritage, and continuity. They become an instrument for establishing the dominant religious discourse, alternately Christianizing or Islamizing the figure of the saint as well as the shrine itself.

According to the unvarying plot of the legend, Zajde (Zahide) Bašće (Badzha) was a young, unmarried girl who lived in Niš. She was characterized by piety, good manners and compassion, and spent a great deal of time in prayer. The central event of the legendary narrative in all instances is the departure of the master of the house in which Zajde Bašće was living (the Turkish aga) for the Hajj, her intention to bring him halva in Mecca, a miraculous transposition in space, and the subsequent disappearance of the girl. At the end of the unvarying legend, an area near the fortress wall and the moat that surrounds the city is identified as the spot where Zajde Bašće’s shoes are found after her disappearance.

Several motifs in the legend vary, some of which provide the key to an analysis of the content of the contemporary cult. These relate to the girl’s name, her ethnic and religious identity, the reason for her decision to pass along the food items, as well as the means by which she traversed distances and disappeared. Thus, the current caretaker of the holy shrine tells the story about a Muslim girl, a Turk, who was adopted by the Turkish aga. She was pious and helped people a great deal. All in all, this version is similar to the earliest narrative recorded by Milićević at the end of the nineteenth century and that described by Stamenković. Incidentally, in the latter case the motif of the miraculous apparition appears: while in Niš, the girl hears the voice of her adoptive father, who asks her to bring him food in Mecca as soon as possible. In other narratives,

16. Excerpts from the works of these authors have been collected in Saitović-Lukin, et al., 2005. See also Jašić 2001.

one finds the motif of a visionary experience: the aga comes to Zajde Bašće in a dream.

In another important version of the legend, as retold by the researcher Nenad Jašić on the basis of the folklore of longtime Romani residents of Niš, Zajde Bašće was not a Muslim and she was not allowed to pray in the home. Because of this, she was forced to pray to “her God” in the lavatory. The plot device about the pious non-Muslim was also found in the version of the legend told to us by an elderly resident of one of the Roma *mahalas*¹⁷ of Niš, who over the last twenty years has engaged in preparatory burial practices among Muslim Roma. In her version, Zajde Bašće was a pious Serbian Orthodox maidservant to a wealthy Turkish townsperson. She fell in love with Islam and began to pray to God as is customary in her chosen religion. The spouse of the master prepared halva, put it in a basket, and ordered the girl to take the basket to the aga. The girl put on her shoes, left the house, and disappeared. Her shoes fell into the moat around the city walls, while the girl “went to God, departed with him, and now she is theirs [the saints’ and angels’ — K.T.], and God’s. Her shoes fell here, and here she (. . .) appears to some, and to others she does not appear” (Interview with sixty-year-old Romani female, 2011).

All of the cited versions of the legend are reproduced in contemporary folklore. In addition, according to the versions of the last two caretakers of the shrine, Zajde Bašće appears as a Turkish Muslim. Nevertheless, representations of her as a pious Serbian Orthodox girl also appear in the assertions of visitors, including Muslims. The saint’s religious identification, including the above-mentioned plot device of her conversion to Islam, is one of the signs that marks the shrine as an Islamic place (*korakhano than* in Romani). At the same time, one might surmise that the image of a non-Muslim saint, from one perspective, supports specifically Islamic ideas about the mercy of Allah, which, as it appears in the legend, can spread not only to Muslims, but to God-fearing followers of other religions. From another perspective, this motif can support and legitimize the visiting of the *türbe* by Christians and their performance of those practices that are usually followed within the boundaries of their own confessional tradition. This relates most of all to the individual recitation of prayers, in so far as this is mentioned in those versions of the legend in which Zajde Bašće appears as a non-Muslim.

17. *Mahala* — word meaning an urban area settled compactly by an ethnic or religious community. Currently, this term is often used to denote a neighborhood compactly settled by Roma.

Other motifs as well as the details of the account — toponyms, holidays and foods (the miraculous transposition to Mecca, the ability to fly and the possession of wings as an example of *karāma*;¹⁸ the celebration of Kurban Bayram and the preparation of halva, which in local Muslim tradition is a ritual food) — also form a narrative of Muslim sources for traditions of venerating the *tekia* of Zajde Bašće. Some informants also read the saint's appearance in the same way — she is a young, beautiful girl dressed in white clothing, an image that she adopts while appearing to believers in their dreams.¹⁹

There are also other narratives connected with the legend of the girl Zajde Bašće that directly chronicle the appearance of the religious space dedicated to her. These include the luminescence of the site and other miracles: “Exactly on this spot she disappeared, exactly there she disappeared, and her shoes remained. All who lived in the fortress came to look to see what it was, why it happened, and there was a great glow, a great glow” (Interview with fifty-year-old Romani male, 2011). Certain sources of oral folklore indicate witnessing a glow, which was lit “not by the hand of man” (Đorđević and Todorović 2001, 253). This widespread motif creates meaning in beliefs about the tombs of shahids and *awliyā'* in various local Islamic traditions (beliefs about analogous miracles in the Balkan context can be found in Đorđević 1984b; Đorđević 1984a). At the same time, the interpretation of discrete visions can have Islamic and also Christian connotations. The face of the woman who appears in the shade of a tree or on the wall of the shrine can be interpreted as Zajde Bašće the saint or the Virgin Mary (Sajtović-Lukin, et al. 2005, 55).

The Construction of a Mixed Shrine

The Zajde Bašće shrine can be considered an example of the so-called “uncovered” *türbe*.²⁰ According to the legend, a mausoleum on the site of the symbolic burial was erected several times, but in each case

18. *Karāma* — a miraculous occurrence. See Lozanova (2001) for characteristic features associated with this in the portrayal of female saints represented in the folk tradition of Bulgarian Muslims.

19. Youth and beauty are motifs encountered in descriptions of female saints in the popular imagination of Muslim-Alevis in Bulgaria, such as Kiz Ana, Zekia Baba, and so on.

20. The “uncovered” *türbe* is a gravesite that is surrounded by fencing as a rule, but which is not marked by a mausoleum. It is one of the types of Islamic gravesite architecture that belongs to the traditions of the Bektashi order, Qizilbash-Alevis (see Mikov 2001, 180–220).

the construction crumbled of its own accord, which indicated that the girl's gravesite ought to be left "open."²¹ Believers routinely cite the motif of the collapsing mausoleum to prove the presence of the sacred in this place and its continuing power. Thus, according to these beliefs, every act of refurbishment of this shrine must be approved by the saint herself.

The general architectonics of this sacred space appear to us in a traditional form characteristic of popular Islamic traditions of decorating similar shrines. The decoration of the *tekia* is distinguished by several elements that can possess Islamic connotations. These elements include the recently constructed fountain (*chesma*) meant for ablutions. Muslim visitors to the shrine bring with them jugs of fresh water for the saint, so that she can perform ablutions prior to her prayer (*namaz*). The second element, a rose,²² is one of the abiding attributes of the Islamic *türbe*. In ritual activities, participants light only white (that is, Islamic) candles,²³ which are sold by the shrine's caretaker. The Islamic character of the cult is also indicated by the offerings brought to the Zajde Bašće *tekia* by pilgrims. Among the gifts, one often sees ritual foods, such as sherbet and halva, which are connected to the everyday religious life of local Muslim communities.

Looking beyond the Islamic discourse, however, what remains remarkable is the absence of explicit visual and verbal markers associated with other similar sites. Thus, in constructing the appearance of Zajde Bašće's place of worship, the color green is not used, images of the Kaaba or of Islamic spiritual leaders are not presented; neither are there special tiles decorated with Qur'ānic verses (*shamail*), the Qur'ān itself, prayer beads, or prayer rugs.²⁴ At the same time, during pilgrimage days, symbols with explicitly Christian connotations are used. The ritual center of the *tekia* over the cenotaph is marked by three images. In the center of the composition is an original repre-

21. In general, the motif of the construction and collapse of structures as part of a specific semantic field (religious buildings, bridges, fountains) is frequent in Balkan folklore (see Đorđević 1984b, 132; Mikov 2001, 198).

22. The rose is semantically linked with the images of shahids and saints. According to the legends, roses grow where the blood of innocent victims (or the blood of shahids) is shed (Đorđević 1984a, 125, 126, 134).

23. According to local beliefs, the color of candles used in rituals marks the religious belonging of the participant and the ritual itself: white are associated with Islam and yellow with Orthodoxy.

24. One should note that the listed Islamic objects do appear in other public and private shrines in Romani settlements in Niš and Leskovac. Moreover, other *tekias* do not feature objects that would have strong associations with Christian traditions.

sensation of Zajde Bašće the saint as a stylized version of the Catholic image of the Virgin Mary. To the right and to the left, there are photographs of sculptures of the Virgin Mary and the “Black Madonna” of Letnica, respectively.



Images of the “Black Madonna” of Letnica (left), Zajde Bašće, and the Mother of God (right). June 9, 2011. Photograph by Ksenia Trofimova.

In my view, the key image is that of the “Black Madonna” of Letnica. Veneration of the Virgin Mary, which exists in different forms in Muslim cultures, was practiced by Roma until the end of the 1990s in annual pilgrimages to the Church of “the Letnica Mother of God” in the village of Letnica (a Croatian settlement in Kosovo), which is well known for its venerated statue of the “Black Madonna.” These pilgrimages were timed to coincide with the celebration of the Dormition of the Mother of God (August 14–15) (Dujzings 2000, 38–45; Vukanović 1983, 291–92).

The celebration of the Dormition of the Mother of God in Letnica organically combined within itself discourses of various communities of believers, each of which symbolically outlined and demonstrated its own cultural boundaries through conceptualizations, ongoing practices, and interpretations. Rituals, demonstrated by groups of Romani

Muslims, are structurally similar to actions taken to venerate saints (*awliyā'*) in Macedonia, Kosovo and Serbia, and included sacrifice (*kurban*) and offering bloodless gifts to the "Black Madonna." This set of rituals had "sanctioned" status in this "multicultural" space, which is also indicated by liturgical services carried out in the Romani language. In this way, the church in Letnica during the holiday was understood by Roma as "their" space within the boundaries of the "foreign," the dominant discourse of which after all remained Catholic, and the integrated cultural space displayed a discrete character. In reminiscences of visits to Letnica and other shrines in Kosovo, informants explained that within and around the church (within the borders of markets and tent encampments) one could perform various rituals. This was not prohibited but rather permitted. "This was our visitation" (Interview with Romani female, 2012; Interview with seventy-year-old Romani male, 2014; Interview with Romani female, 2014).

The national conflicts of the 1990s in the Balkans had their effect on cultural interactions. During that time, observers noted a weakening and suspension of "mixed" pilgrimages to monasteries and churches (Dujzings 2000, 65–75). The church in Letnica was no exception. In circumstances of the alienation of Roma from their traditional pilgrimage sites, it should come as no surprise that one can often see an aspiration to reproduce familiar forms of ritual in new surroundings within Roma communities, especially those made up of the forcibly displaced. These often take place in typologically similar religious loci while preserving the overall conceptual context and structure of the ritual. Thus, in recent years, one observes the growth in the number of pilgrims and visitors during times of religious holidays to Catholic churches, known as local pilgrimage sites, that are located along migration routes for Roma communities (for example, Niš, Serbia; Skopje, Macedonia; and Novi Sad, Serbia, among others).

Research on annual visits to the Church of the Sacred Heart of Jesus in Niš on the holiday of the Dormition of the Mother of God shows the growth and revitalization of visitors (caused for the most part by the growth of the Roma population), who are attempting to recreate their familiar ritual forms associated with Letnica. As a consequence, insofar as the physical space of the worship site in Niš does not allow for mass events, access to the church's courtyard and its sculpture of the Mother of God and child is restricted on designated dates and the offering of sacrifices is forbidden (Saitović-Lukin, et al. 2005, 61–62). I suggest that the forcible alienation from the central cult object, and the departure beyond borders already delimited in the ritual have dis-

rupted the ritual structure, have lowered its functional significance, and have forced a transformation of the ritual complex, in particular by moving it into more appropriate loci (for example, into private domestic or public shrines).

Thus, the appearance within the Zajde Bašće *tekia* of the images of Letnica and the Mother of God, as well as the stylized image of the saint herself, are perfectly logical and understandable. While their juxtaposition might at first glance appear confusing, it can be explained by examining the objects' origins. According to information offered by the current caretaker of the *tekia*, the three images were brought to him in 2010 by an ethnically Serbian Christian woman, who stated that she was moved to do so by a dream in which she saw herself bringing the images into the *tekia*.

In this way, the veneration of the Mother of God was partially included in an active religious space, the latter of which, in its turn, acquires an additional meaning and is marked through the presence of the given image. The act of giving the images had an individual character, but it was legitimated by tradition and integrated into the holistic cult. Taking into account the role of dreams in various cultures (see Vražinovski 1998, 143–48; Đorđević 1984b, 376; Jovanović 2011; Mikov 1999, 220; on experiences of visions in Muslim/Islamic traditions, see Felek and Knysch 2012), the introduction of the images can serve as an example of a traditional mechanism of legitimation for the constructed confessional hybridity of space (Berger 1980; Boyer 1990).

I suggest that one of the determinants in the choice of place as well as of the inclusion into the cult was the fact that the Zajde Bašće shrine, which attracts believers mostly from Roma communities, is understood by Roma as a space of ethnocultural unity. In other words, it is not about the transference of the cult, but the partial reproduction of it within their “own” space. At the same time, it is important to underscore that the figure of the Mother of God has not squeezed out the figure of Zajde Bašće, and the latter remains the dominant personality, and it is through her that Islamic rhetoric is preserved.

In this way, as in the example of the legend narratives, the organization of the space of the shrine reveals a special hybridization or combination of Islamic and Christian elements. It is worth singling out the multiple differences that mark the Zajde Bašće as separate from numerous other phenomena in the Balkans in relation to mixed pilgrimages. As a rule, in confessionally unique sites (for example, in monastery or mosque, etc.) or ambiguous shrines (areas related to figures of saints equally venerated in popular Christian as well as popular Islam-

ic traditions as in the example of Saint Nikola/Haydar Baba) (Bowman 2014), the organization of space is either subordinated to the dominant confessional discourse or it is reorganized each time according to the needs of a concrete group of pilgrims depending on their religious identification. Zajde Bašće, however, is a space that organically minimizes or smoothes over religious differences, which allows for the co-existence of symbols of various faiths.²⁵

The final brush stroke in completing a portrait of the Zajde Bašće *tekia* is to return to the ritual behaviors of visitors. Based on observations of believers and interviews, it is possible to note the existence of instructions for the cultic aspect of visiting the shrine. Ritual activities and the behavior of people within the boundaries of the given site are regulated by a complex set of prohibitions and regulations that correspond to ideas about ritual purity/impurity, some of which are determined by the Islamic context. Among the purifying activities to be completed while preparing for the ritual (roughly within twenty-four hours of a visit) are: thorough bathing, a prohibition on sexual contact, and a refusal of “forbidden” food (pork and alcohol). Smoking is allowed, including within the boundaries of the shrine. It is recommended that women wear modest clothing and refrain from applying cosmetics. The hijab is also not required.²⁶

The most important areas of ritual activity are the individual act of making a vow or declaring intentions and unmediated communication between supplicant and saint. In this way, the ritual activities carried out within the shrine consist for the most part of individual activities (personal prayers addressed to the saint, lighting of candles, making of offerings). Insofar as there are no collective ritual activities within the shrine, this can also be seen as a feature that permits the minimization of external (visible) confessional differences among pilgrims and creates space for religious combinations. It is remarkable that the system of regulations and prohibitions, which sets rigid limits to what can be allowed in ritual, at the same time preserves the flexibility of confessional boundaries: on the external level, all visitors to the shrine are performing the same acts, without being explicitly attached

25. As noted earlier, the architectonics of space of the shrine do not include confessional symbols of the first order, which could serve as an obvious and explicit marker defining the confessional boundaries of the sacred space.

26. A possible explanation for this is the fact that, in contrast to other ethnic communities that follow Islam in the Balkans such as Albanians, wearing a hijab has not become an everyday practice among local Romani communities, with the exception of visits to mosques and other religious sites (Sufi *tekias* or *semanas*).

to a single confession — they do not raise their hands for the traditional Islamic *dua* nor do they cross themselves.²⁷ At the same time, the existing system of injunctions does not regulate internal prayer to the saint and allows believers to appeal to her in a way appropriate for their own confession or simply in their own way.

In this way, the religious status of participants is differentiated within the boundaries of general religious practices on the level of injunctions and prohibitions. At the same time, the integrated discourse of the cult is simultaneously a product as well as the creator of the cultural identity of the given space, delimiting the boundaries of the personal discourses it includes (multicultural against the background of Islamic, the latter of which is dominant in this case).

Concluding Remarks

In its current form, the Zajde Bašće shrine is constructed on the basis of various narratives. The uniqueness of this *tekia* is determined by the specifics of its foundational narratives, the organization of its internal space and ritual practices; it consists of a combination of traditional Islamic, Christian and popular elements. Their interrelations show, on the one hand, the tendency toward regulation on the basis of the dominant “traditional” Islamic discourse, and on the other, the leveling of confessional difference, which ensures the flexibility of confessional limits on the level of representation and practices. As I have already noted, the formation of this religious space and its hybrid character depend on cohesive mechanisms of legitimization, which are formed by local conceptualizations and rituals.

The question of the character and specifics of the recognition given to the Zajde Bašće shrine and the rituals performed there by local official religious leaders remains an interesting one. In their eyes, this *tekia* is seen, as a rule, as an illegitimate, unorthodox, or extra-confessional phenomenon, and one that is marginal. This marginalization on the one hand entails, and on the other is based on an interpretation of this cult as a specifically distinctive Romani religious phenomenon, perceived as “their” tradition. In contrast, visitors themselves and certain leaders of local Sufi brotherhoods view Zajde Bašće as a means of supporting local Islamic traditions and at the same time as a part

27. Crossing oneself is expressly forbidden, and in this fact one can see the predominance of an Islamic discourse over a multicultural one. “I am Orthodox, but here I can’t cross myself [it’s simply not done — K.T.]” (Interview with Serbian male, 2012).

of their own cultural memory, which integrates the religious culture of the Roma into the surrounding cultural space. And in this context, the Islamic discourse ascribed to “tradition” is preserved.

I would also suggest that the constructed narrative about the shrine’s multicultural character as a supplement to the “traditionalist” Islamic discourse can be understood as a direct reaction to the non-recognition of Zajde Bašće and its relegation to marginal status on the part of local religious leaders. The marginal, peripheral character of the cult, on the one hand, suggests the liminality of defined confessional boundaries, and on the other, demands self-regulation. It is likely that the appearance of this “multicultural” discourse can be explained as a manifestation of the polyphony characteristic of Balkan religiosity in general (as a facet of the culture of neighborhood) and of contemporary Romani religiosity specifically.

At the same time, the most productive way to explain the specifics of the Zajde Bašće shrine is exactly within the context of the specificities of Romani religiosity in the Balkans. In my research, I have tried to show that the characteristic features of the popular religious culture of the Roma are its syncretism and its ability to combine multiple elements (Trofimova 2013). This ability to combine disparate elements is a form of organization of everyday religiosity in which elements of different traditions do not lose their connection to a specific confession and yet unite with a general narrative, spatial or ritual complex. It is exactly this that can be seen in the example of Zajde Bašće, in which elements of popular Muslim and Christian beliefs combine, and in doing so reveal the specific presence of the religious ideas and practices of the Balkan Romani milieu. To summarize, I argue that, within conditions of non-institutionalization and marginalization and simultaneously in line with traditional forms of existence and legitimization, the Zajde Bašće *tekia* reveals certain Balkan mechanisms of everyday religiosity in the realm of different neighboring cultures.

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KRISTINA STOECKL

Postsecular Conflicts and the Global Struggle for Traditional Values

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This is the text of a lecture that Dr. Kristina Stoeckl (University of Innsbruck, Austria) gave in RANEPa on the 2nd of March 2016. She presented the research project “Postsecular Conflicts” (2016–21). This project in the field of sociology of religion and political theory explores conflicts over questions of public morality (i.e., visibility of religious symbols, definitions of family and gender). It starts from the observation that in today’s world these conflicts no longer take place in national contexts, but have a global appeal. How can we understand this global struggle for traditional values? In order to answer this question two steps need to be taken: (1) a revised political sociology of traditionalist religious actors; (2) a revised political conception of moral conflict. The Postsecular Conflicts research project wants to achieve both of these steps, specifically through a thorough analysis of the role of Russian Orthodox traditionalist actors in the global struggle for traditional values.

Keywords: postsecular, Russian Orthodox Church, Habermas, religion, norm entrepreneurship.

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Introduction

THE aim of the Postsecular Conflicts research project is to explore the phenomenon of the conflicts over moral and religious questions in present-day societies from the perspectives of sociology of religion and political theory. Let me give you two examples of the kind of conflicts I mean:

In spring 2016, Italy was living through intense public debate over the introduction of “civil unions” for couples of the same sex. Supporters and opponents of the law organized demonstrations; every other day the newspaper headlines reported on a different facet of the debate, and the Vatican issued a statement in which the Catholic Church insisted on the semantic difference between “civil union” and “marriage.” Inside the parliament, politicians of all backgrounds were divided on the question, and even the ruling center-left majority did not vote unanimously in favor of the new law, which entered into force in summer 2016.

The second example is from Austria: Austria is a country where the vast majority of the population identifies with the Catholic faith, even though only a limited percentage actually attends church actively. Religious education in Austrian public schools is compulsory and available for all recognized faith communities. School has nonetheless become a site of contestation over questions of religion: parents complained that during a music lesson in an Austrian elementary school all of the children were being taught Christmas songs. The contentious issue was that this was the music lesson, not the religious education class, and some parents felt that the school was not being neutral vis-à-vis all religions and worldviews.

I am sure you are all aware of conflicts of this kind, we read about them in the news almost every day. What these two situations have in common is that they both tell a story of a shift in public consciousness, a shift away from a situation where certain aspects of social life are unquestioned (the heterosexual definition of marriage, the simultaneous worldly and religious meaning of Christmas) to a situation where these aspects undergo re-evaluation. It is, in the words of Russian structuralist Viktor Shklovsky, a process of alienation or defamiliarization (*priem ostraneniia*), in which something that has been taken for granted to the extent of becoming self-evident again becomes “something” — an object of contention, the center of struggles over definition.

Conflicts of this kind concern not only questions of family and education, but also questions of life and death — for instance abortion, assisted suicide, medically assisted procreation — and questions of religious freedom — for example the display of crucifixes in public places.

These conflicts are also not confined to secularized Western democracies, but also take place in Russia. The year 2012 is commonly considered the “turning point” in Russia’s engagement with morality politics: this was the year when the Russian government fully endorsed traditional values in terms of a domestic and international political agenda, introducing laws regarding the protection of religious feeling and the ban on propaganda for non-traditional relationships inside Russia (Stepanova 2015), while lobbying for traditional values in international human rights policies outside Russia (McCrudden 2015). In reality, however, traditional values had occupied an important place in Russian domestic and international politics before that year, as the Russian Orthodox Church lobbied for traditional values (Stoeckl 2014).

You are surely aware of the nature of the public debate that surrounds conflicts over morality politics: usually the opponents accuse each other of all sorts of things, including backwardness, a geopolitical quest for power, advocating murder, instrumentalizing religion, defending religion, lack of values, destroying the basis of civilization, inhumanity, violence, intolerance, discrimination, lack of restraint, oppression, and so on. Public debate and journalistic reporting on the issues at hand are stuck at the level of fierce reciprocal accusations and tend to use a friend-enemy strategy.

I don’t think this is helpful for understanding the nature of these conflicts.

The research project “Postsecular Conflicts” is about these conflicts, but it wants to move beyond the usual level of these debates. It is an academic, sociological research project, not a journalistic or political endeavor, and it takes a step back from the public debate in order to ask: how can we understand today’s postsecular conflicts and the global struggle for traditional values? The answer to this question, I argue, involves two components:

- (1) a revised political sociology of traditionalist religious actors;
- (2) a revised political conception of moral conflict.

The Postsecular Conflicts research project wants to achieve both. In the remainder of this article, I will give an overview of how we intend to answer the question of how to understand today’s postsecular conflicts and the global struggle for traditional values along these two lines of reasoning.

Postsecular Society

Because this is an academic research project, the first indispensable step is to lay open the assumptions that guide this research. Our point of departure is the concept of “postsecular society.” The social sciences are by definition secular sciences, that is, they consider religion and religious actors as a subject of research. However, social sciences today are also “postsecular” sciences inasmuch as they do not conceive of their own stance as superior to the religious. Instead, postsecular social sciences relate in a self-reflexive way to their research subject, the religious.¹ The term “postsecular society” was coined by the German philosopher Jürgen Habermas (Habermas 2006). He uses the term to describe a specific quality of democratic debate, namely the capacity of public debate to include and possibly incorporate religious arguments.

Habermas’s starting point is the strict separation of religion and the state. The state as the sum total of rules, regulations and institutions that organize human coexistence must not, in Habermas’s view, be itself religious: it must not be a theocracy; there must not be a state church; legislation must not invoke religious justifications. This is the politically liberal and democratic starting point for Habermas, and it is also the normative starting point for the questions I ask in this project.

However, the religious neutrality of the state does not mean that religions may not flourish inside the state and that they may not influence the ways in which people democratically discuss and decide on the laws that should govern them. This is the idea of the “overlapping consensus,” supported both by Habermas and by John Rawls (Rawls 1993). The overlapping consensus means that citizens in a democratic state can support one political order even though they hold different and even contradictory worldviews.

From Conditions of Consensus to Conditions of Conflict

It is important to recognize that the concepts of postsecular society and overlapping consensus speak precisely to the kind of conflict situations I gave as examples in the beginning. In Italy, a religiously neutral state, citizens and their representatives, the political parties and

1. For a corresponding definition of “postsecular religion,” see Kyrlezhhev 2014. For analysis of contemporary “post-secular philosophy” and changing attitudes toward theology and religious arguments, see Uzlaner 2011.

the elected government, are engaged in a process of formulating a law, the law on civil unions, which calls citizens of different and contradictory worldviews into action to mobilize for and against the legislative proposal. Is it possible to reach an overlapping consensus in this case? What is it that makes it so difficult?

It is here, at this point in the argument, that my own approach departs from the answer given by mainstream political liberalism, in particular by Habermas. Habermas correctly describes the challenge of a pluralism of worldviews in democratic societies, but I think he is wrong in describing the conditions of consensus. Let me therefore explain Habermas's answer first, and then my criticism of it.

According to Habermas religious consciousness has to undergo a process of "modernization" in response to three specific challenges in order to be conducive to an overlapping consensus in democratic societies. These three challenges are religious pluralism, modern science, and positive law and secular morality. This modernization, according to Habermas, consists of three steps, namely the development of an "epistemic stance" by religious citizens

- (I) toward other religions and worldviews that they encounter within a universe of discourse hitherto occupied only by their own religion;
- (II) toward the independence of secular from sacred knowledge and the institutionalized monopoly of modern scientific experts;
- (III) toward the priority that secular reasons enjoy in the political arena. (Habermas 2006, 14)

Habermas believes that in order for the modernization of religious consciousness to be considered "successful," religious citizens must develop their "epistemic stances" toward these three topics as follows:

- (i) They succeed to the degree that they self-reflectively relate their religious beliefs to the statements of competing doctrines of salvation in such a way that they do not endanger their own exclusive claim to truth.
- (ii) They can only succeed if, from their religious viewpoint, they can conceive of the relationship of dogmatic and secular beliefs in such a way that autonomous progress in secular knowledge cannot come to contradict their faith.
- (iii) They can succeed only to the extent that they convincingly connect the egalitarian individualism and universalism of modern law and morality with the premises of their comprehensive doctrines. (Habermas 2006, 14)

I argue that, while Habermas correctly identifies the three crucial thresholds for religious consciousness in modern society (I, II and III), his way of conceptualizing their “successful passage” (i, ii and iii) is problematic because it sets too high a threshold for the inclusion of religious arguments in the formal public sphere.

We have to remember here why it is so important for Habermas (and political liberals in general) that religious actors can become part of an overlapping consensus. The reason is that political liberalism rejects the idea of the “modus vivendi” as a viable political order. The modus vivendi is the flip side of the overlapping consensus: in a situation of overlapping consensus, all citizens agree to the principles that guide their political community, even though they may not agree for the same reasons. In a situation of modus vivendi, the citizens do not agree with the principles that guide their political community, but because they are in the minority or for other pragmatic reasons, they consent to the rules, at least for the time being. The situation of an overlapping consensus is intrinsically stable, whereas the modus vivendi is volatile: it can be overturned at any moment, and in a democracy at every election; it can also degenerate into violent conflict.

Political liberalism has been criticized for this rejection of the modus vivendi by two groups of thinkers: firstly by those political liberals who have argued that the modus vivendi can in fact be a viable political model (see Horton 2010), and secondly by postmodern critical thinkers, who have accused liberalism of losing sight of the conflictual, agonistic dimension of politics (see Mouffe 2000). This essay is not the place to resolve the question once and for all, but I do want to add that with this project, I am hoping to contribute rather to the first than to the second school in democratic theory. Agonistic democratic theory, which celebrates conflict as the center point of politics, is, in my view, insufficient for guaranteeing those basic individual rights that even antagonistic theorists would probably choose to keep.

Liberal, Traditionalist and Fundamentalist Religious Actors

From a sociological perspective, Habermas’s definition of how religious actors approach the three epistemic challenges of secular modernity outlined above splits the religious field into two camps: those religious actors who respond successfully to these challenges, and those who do not. The first group is “reasonable,” the second is “unreasonable.” As a consequence, most social scientists in their study of religious

actors have focused either on “liberal” religious actors as belonging to the first group, or on “fundamentalists,” the second group, which resists modernization and attacks modern, liberal and secular societies. In the empirical study of religious actors, however, there is a third, in-between group alongside the liberal and fundamentalist representatives of religious tradition. I call this group “traditionalists.” If we look into the empirical reality of religious actors in democratic deliberation, we see that, indeed, three “steps” identified by Habermas are the crux of postsecular inclusion of religious arguments into the informal public sphere, but his way of conceptualizing their successful adaptation is too narrow. (Below I will present more examples to substantiate this claim.) If we follow Habermas closely, must we conclude that political liberalism is only about liberal “reflexive” religious actors and that his theory does not speak to any other cases of religious claims that are, from this perspective, lumped together as “unreasonable” and “fundamentalist”? This is a conclusion that I would find intellectually unsatisfying, because it avoids what I believe are the “real” issues, and practically unsatisfying, because it leaves the wide field of non-liberal religious actors undifferentiated and underexplored. The Postsecular Conflicts project was created precisely because I believe that the traditionalists deserve the attention of social and political scientists, and because I am convinced that the study of situations of moral and religious conflict is crucial for advancing a more realistic postsecular political liberalism.

What sets religious traditionalists apart from religious liberals and religious fundamentalists is their strategy of dealing with the plurality characteristic of modern secular societies. Let us now consider the traditionalist position with regard to Habermas’s three steps of modernization of religious consciousness.

Religious Freedom and Visibility of Religion in the Public Sphere

In debates on religious freedom and the visibility of religion in the public sphere, the standard liberal answer would be that religious freedom is to be protected and that religion is first and foremost a private matter that should not assume privileges in public life. The standard fundamentalist answer would be that religious freedom is a sign of apostasy. Traditionalist religious actors generally disagree with both of these positions. They defend the privileged role and visibility of their religion at the expense of rights for minority religions or non-believers. They do so, however, not by publicly arguing that their belief is

superior to others, but by claiming that their belief is that of the majority and/or enjoys a historically based privilege.

One example of this strategy was Italy's line of defense in the Lautsi case in front of the European Court of Human Rights. This was a case where a parent demanded that the crucifix should be removed from her child's classroom because the presence of a Christian symbol in a public school interfered with the neutrality of the Italian state (the Italian constitution separates religion and state) and with her right as parent to educate according to her own (in this case non-religious) worldview. In its defense, Italy argued that the crucifix was not primarily to be seen as a religious symbol, but that it is also symbolized Italian history and culture, which were profoundly influenced by Christianity. The representative of the Russian Orthodox Church in Strasbourg, Igumen Philip (Ryabykh), commenting on this case, said:

In Europe, Christianity has historically represented the main religious belief. People's choices in favor of traditional Christianity as already rooted in Europe should also be protected by religious freedom, and not just the freedom of religions that have appeared relatively recently. . . . This explains why the Russian Orthodox Church expressed disagreement with the decision of the European Court of Human Rights in 2009 on the removal of crucifixes from classrooms in Italy and why Russia supported Italy in its appeal to the Grand Chamber of the Strasbourg Court. (Ryabykh 2013, 21–22)

This quote expresses a common position among traditionalists in matters of religious freedom. It is a position that should be considered “reasonable” according to Habermas's taxonomy, inasmuch as it acknowledges and accepts the presence of other religions and worldviews within a universe of discourse hitherto occupied only by one's own religion. These actors, indeed, “self-reflectively relate their religious beliefs to the statements of competing doctrines of salvation,” but they do so in terms that Habermas never considered. He speaks about exclusive truth claims, they speak about history and culture.

Secular Discourse

The second challenge Habermas identified in terms of the modernization of religious consciousness is the reconciliation of religious teaching and scientific knowledge. Habermas believes that religious actors are “successful” in overcoming this challenge “if from their religious

viewpoint they conceive the relationship of dogmatic and secular beliefs in such a way that the autonomous progress in secular knowledge cannot come to contradict their faith”; in other words, if they accept the independence of scientific knowledge from belief. The “unsuccessful” or “fundamentalist” response in this case would be the denial of scientific knowledge. One example that comes to mind is the exclusive teaching of creationism practiced by some fundamentalist evangelical groups in the United States in home-schooling models. This model means a retreat from secular society and secular scientific knowledge into a religious universe. Traditionalist religious actors generally follow neither the fundamentalist retreat strategy, nor the liberal independence strategy. Instead, they borrow from the pluralism within secular discourse, from a postmodern type of relativism, and even a postcolonial subaltern discourse that questions the independence of knowledge and describes it as the product of structures of power.

The following example is drawn not from science, but from human rights discourse. However, it demonstrates well what I want to show, namely that traditionalist actors use an almost Foucauldian type of discourse and power analysis in order to deconstruct dominant discursive positions. The example is taken from controversies over the correct interpretation of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. A couple of years ago (2012–14), the United Nations Human Rights Council, over a series of sessions, engaged with the topic of traditional values and the question of what traditional values had to add to the understanding and practice of human rights (McCrudden 2014). The gist of the debate was whether human rights discourse is intrinsically universalist and individualist, or whether it can also be contextual and communitarian. The argumentative strategy advanced by proponents of the latter view was not primarily that contextual and communitarian human rights would be better as such, but that their exclusion from the discussion was the result of an unfair power hierarchy inside human rights institutions. Patriarch Kirill, at that time head of the External Relations Department of the Russian Orthodox Church, said at a meeting in Geneva:

The development of human rights institutions has been increasingly affected in a monopolistic way by a limited range of ideas concerning human nature, which are not shared by most people in the world. More often than not, international organizations involved in human rights tend to draw their conclusions from the opinions of a narrow circle of experts,

functionaries or noisy but well-organized minorities. (Russian Orthodox Church 2008)

This is a common position among traditionalists in matters of secular versus religious knowledge. It, too, represents a position that should be considered “reasonable” according to the taxonomy developed by Habermas, inasmuch as this position acknowledges and accepts the plurality of discourses, and in fact celebrates it. These traditionalist actors do not lament the fact that secular knowledge contradicts their faith, they merely claim (and this is a powerful argument) that secular knowledge cannot claim superiority over other forms of knowledge. It is a classic postmodern move, and one not anticipated by Habermas when he outlined this criterion.

Modern Law and Morality

Step three in Habermas’s taxonomy of the modernization of religious consciousness is about reconciling religious doctrine “with the egalitarian individualism and universalism of modern law and morality,” which religious traditionalists often argue renders a society amoral and doomed. In this point they differ from liberal religious actors (who recognize the priority of human rights and accept that their religious viewpoint represents a minority position in a larger, pluralistic society) and they agree with fundamentalist religious actors. Traditionalists differ from fundamentalists, however, in their strategic engagement in the politics that they derive from this conviction. Traditionalists do not retreat from society, nor do they endorse violent means of reversal; they rely on the conservative religious and political establishment in their respective countries, co-opt political and civil society actors and forge transnational alliances, whereas fundamentalists generally remain at a distance from organized politics and clerical hierarchies.

As political actors, traditionalists bring their religious arguments into public debates. Often these arguments are presented in a non-religious language adapted to a secular legalistic human rights terminology, or use the language of natural law. In domestic politics, these actors use democratic means to advance their case by lobbying parliamentarians, organizing demonstrations or resorting to referenda.² They also take controversial cases to court (see Gedicks and Annic-

2. For the American case, see the classic: Hunter 1991; for Europe, see: Engeli, Green-Pedersen and Larsen 2012.

chino 2014). Finally, traditionalists take their struggle beyond the nation state (Bob 2012). They try to influence international institutions in their favor, in order to weaken the domestic impact of the international human rights regime.³

The standard solution in political liberalism is to grant legal exemptions for situations in which religious reasons cannot be brought to overlap with general norms. There are many examples of exemptions on grounds of freedom of conscience, including conscientious objection to military service or to conducting abortions (in the case of medical personnel). At first glance, exemptions appear to be a valid solution in cases of religious (or non-religious) non-compliance. The idea is that in the absence of consensus on a certain law or norm, the legislator can create “pockets” of a *modus vivendi* regime, where non-compliant individuals are exempted from the general law. However, exemptions do not always work, for two reasons.

The first reason is that traditionalists themselves often claim more than merely exemptions; they want to have a say in shaping the political system as such. To again quote Igumen Philip (Ryabykh):

Today religions try to preserve their freedom not only in an exclusive way, by claiming that some norms may not apply to religious communities, but they also insist on their right to contribute to the shaping of general norms that apply to the whole of society.” (Ryabykh 2013, 23)

The second reason is that the non-religious public is less and less willing to accept exemptions as valid solutions. One good case in point is the case of *Ladele v. Islington* from the United Kingdom. This case involved a marriage registrar who refused to register same-sex partnerships for religious reasons. The claimant lost the case, with the court sustaining the idea that granting the registrar the right to an exemption on religious grounds would violate the commitment to equality assumed by the state (and consequently by its officials) (Smet 2015).

In cases where religious reasons cannot be made to match general norms, or general norms in the making, as in the case of Italy’s new law on civil unions, there is no easy solution, and perhaps no solution at all. A conflict remains, a hiatus in the liberal democratic system and a gap in the theory of political liberalism. It is the aim of the

3. For the case of Russian Orthodox actors, see: Stoeckl forthcoming; Rimestad 2015; Annicchino 2011.

Postsecular Conflicts project to develop a theory of political liberalism that is closer to reality on this point, emphasizing the idea of conflict where political liberalism imagines that there should be consensus (see Walshe and De Wijze 2015; Ferrara 2014).

The Russian Orthodox Church as Moral Norm Entrepreneur

In the last section I gave examples that demonstrate that Russian actors play a role in contemporary traditionalist politics. In fact, I believe that the goal of this project — a revised understanding of the political sociology of traditionalist religious actors — has to examine the role of transnational morality politics, irrespective of national contexts. As you will have already gathered, I do not consider Russian traditionalists a unique or special case. I think they belong to a large global political phenomenon, from which they draw inspiration and to which they contribute. However, the extent of their cooperation with traditionalist actors inside and outside Russia has not yet been studied. I propose to do just that in this project, because I believe that a revised political sociology of traditionalist religious actors cannot be complete without taking Russian actors into due account.

The project therefore aims to study the Russian Orthodox Church and Russian religious actors as moral norm entrepreneurs. “Norm entrepreneurship” or “norm protagonism” are terms used in the study of international relations to describe the normative agency of actors in transnational governance regimes (Finnemore and Sikkink 1998, 286). Scholars studying norm entrepreneurs distinguish between the actual norm promoters (an individual, a group) and the organizational platforms through which norm promoters act (for example a non-governmental organization or an international political body like the European Union or the United Nations). They also point out that “norm entrepreneurs and the organizations they inhabit usually need to secure the support of state actors to endorse their norms and make norm socialization a part of their agenda” (Finnemore and Sikkink 1998, 900). Norm entrepreneurship thus comprises three levels: (1) norm protagonists, (2) organizational platforms, and (3) supportive state actors.

Most studies about norm entrepreneurship focus on progressive actors that promote norms like equality, freedom, education or welfare through international organizations like the European Union or the United Nations, or through international non-governmental organi-

zations like the Red Cross (Keck and Sikkink 1998). In addition, researchers have also begun to focus on conservative, anti-liberal norm protagonists (Bob 2012; Katzenstein 2006). But the Russian Orthodox Church has only been considered very recently from the angle of international norm entrepreneurship (Curanović and Leustean 2015; Laruelle 2015). With this research project, I hope to make a contribution to this emerging research field.

I mention the theories and conceptual toolkit of norm entrepreneurship because it is a theory that helps us to distinguish levels of analysis, in particular the levels of the (1) norm protagonist, (2) organizational platform, and (3) supportive state actor. This distinction is crucial in the Russian case, where the levels are very often undifferentiated in the analysis. Assessments like “traditional values are a propaganda tool of the Putin administration” or “through traditional values the Russian state is building up soft power” may have some validity in the field of political analysis, but from a political sociological perspective they fall short of analytical rigor. The situation is, in fact, much more complex than these sorts of assessments suggest, and as a scholar I am interested in the separateness and the interplay of the three levels. I am, in particular, interested in the independent role of the Russian Orthodox Church as norm protagonist.

I have said above that I do not consider Russian traditionalists to be a unique or special case and that I look at them as part of a larger global political phenomenon, from which they draw inspiration and to which they contribute. There is one thing, however, that sets Russian actors apart from other traditionalist actors, at least in the present moment: this is the fact that the Russian government is endorsing a traditional values agenda. This has made the Russian position prominent in the global struggle for traditional values, because it has given it diplomatic and logistic weight.

Conclusion: A European Research Project

The Postsecular Conflicts project is a research project in the social sciences. It will last from the present year, 2016, until 2021. It is based at the University of Innsbruck in Austria and is undertaken by a multinational team that includes researchers from Russia, Austria, Italy, the United States, and Brazil. I am the director of this project and together with my collaborators I am planning to conduct interviews with traditionalist actors in Russia and elsewhere. Our aim is to speak to as many actors in the field of morality politics as possible and to

learn more about their motivation, their engagement and their collaborations. The knowledge gathered through such interviews will become the basis for a more complete political sociology of religious actors that gives due recognition to “traditionalists” beyond the limited distinction between “liberals” and “fundamentalists.” It should also become the basis for a work in normative theory that moves toward a more realistic political liberalism that also takes into account the importance and inevitability of “conflict,” where political liberals until now have looked for “consensus.”

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Nikolay Tsyrempilov. 2013. *Buddhism and the Empire: The Buriat Community in Russia (18th–Early 20th century)*. (*Buddizm i imperiia. Buriatskaia obshchina v Rossii [XVIII–nachala XX v.]*). Ulan-Ude: Institut mongolovedeniia, buddologii i tibetologii SO RAN (in Russian). — 338 pages.

Nikolay Tsyrempilov's monograph deals with an important, complex, and interesting topic that weaves together politics and religion, state interests and the spiritual needs of members of one of Russia's minor confessions (Buddhism). This must be appreciated as a highly successful choice of topic, since, as Tsyrempilov rightly remarks in his introduction, "an understanding of the laws by which relationships between imperial power and religious communities align can clarify many of the questions asked both by historians researching the nature of empires and by religious scholars exploring the formation of religious institutions" (p. 3). The almost three-hundred-year relationship between the Russian state and Buddhist communities stands in need of conceptualization and "summation," absent which, to quote Tsyrempilov again, the state will find it "extremely challenging to frame

an effective and optimal line of engagement with the contemporary Buddhist world, both within the country and beyond its borders." Herein lies the unquestionable relevance of this study, especially in light of events in post-Soviet Russia, when the authorities have openly sought to confer on Orthodoxy the status of a dominant, "state" religion and also have imposed politically motivated restrictions on contacts between Buriat and Kalmyk Buddhists and their spiritual head, the fourteenth Dalai Lama, as was the case in the 1990s and early twenty-first century. Tsyrempilov's work is set in a broad chronological framework, beginning in the early eighteenth century with the first state initiatives to regulate the spiritual affairs of Buriat Buddhists, and ending in early twentieth century, when the imperial decree "On Strengthening the Foundation of Religious Tolerance" (which opened up a

new era in the relations between the Buddhist community and the Russian state) was published.

Tsyrempilov's monograph is an original and innovative study that offers an integrated and comprehensive analysis of the interaction between the organized Buddhist community in Buryatia and the power structures of the Russian state in "macroregional and intercivilizational terms" (as Tsyrempilov puts it). This is the first work on the history of the Buriat Buddhist sangha's integration into the Russian Empire since Kseniia Maksimovna Gerasimova published her *Lamaism and Tsarism's National-Colonial Policy in Transbaikalia in the Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Centuries*¹ in 1957. The scholarly novelty of Tsyrempilov's work is therefore indisputable, not least because he has here incorporated into his research, and thereby introduced into academic circulation, a number of previously unknown sources in Tibetan, Mongolian, and Russian. Aside from an enormous array of primary sources, he has also read virtually all the core literature on this topic, both domestic and foreign (the latter mostly in English). Another important indicator of the originality of this scholar's research

is his comprehensive comparative description of tsarist Russia's religious policy toward the Buddhist sangha relative to its policy toward other confessional groups.

In the first chapter, Tsyrempilov examines the specifically Russian model for relations between a religious (in this case, Buddhist) community and the state, from the point at which Buddhism began to spread in Transbaikalia in the early eighteenth century. He refers to "the socio-confessional structure" of imperial Russia thus: "The Empire's categories were religious rather than ethnic or otherwise. Confession underlay the social order. Every one of the Empire's subjects had to adhere to one confession or another" (p. 132). The Russian Orthodox Church's dominant role in society unavoidably placed other confessions in a subordinate position, where they had to adapt, to seek out ways of surviving the state's campaign (launched in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries) to eradicate "paganism." This allows Tsyrempilov to conclude that until 1905, religious minorities in the Russian Empire were targets of discrimination. Thus, "the Buddhist lamas were faced with constructing a community in circumstances that were both familiar and at the same time highly unusual. While altogether prepared for, and even in need of, strict supervision on

1. Gerasimova, K. M. 1957. *Lamaizm i natsional'no-kolonial'naiia politika tsarizma v Zabaikal'e v XIX i nachale XX veka*. Ulan-Ude.

the part of the state, they were obliged to exist in a situation of constant and acknowledged *marginalization* and to carry *the stigma of being the cultural other, the cultural alien*” (p. 38). This is, in my view, a very important conclusion that fosters an understanding of the Buriat Buddhist community’s unique kind of self-identification.

Tsyrempilov identifies two principles that guided “the Russian administrators” in laying the foundations of policy with respect to the Transbaikal (“Buriat-Mongol”) Buddhists. The first was the striving to isolate the community from its coreligionists in the neighboring empire (the Qing), in order to “ensure security in the frontier zone and block unregulated channels of communication.” The second was the officials’ desire to establish “control over the system of admission to monastic orders by introducing a staffing roster and centralizing the community” (pp. 89–90). This was, however, hampered by the lack of a legal framework that would have made it possible to “incorporate” the Buddhist community into the system of governance.

The second chapter explores the earliest drafts of relevant religious legislation (drawn up in the first half of the nineteenth century), which took the form of statutes designed to manage “the

Buddhist lamas.” Note is taken of the fact that those drafts emerged from both the liberal and the conservative standpoints. The liberal position was that of the officials of the Asian departments of both the Ministry of Internal Affairs and the Ministry of Finance, and its conservative counterpart was that of the Chief Directorate of Eastern Siberia and the Siberian Committee. At the same time, though, the authorities were rejecting the lamas’ own initiatives, despite their being well considered and “focused on constructive interaction.” This invites the conclusion that “the power structure (in the first half of the nineteenth century) was not prepared for interaction with the community,” preferring “to hand down decisions from above” (p. 149).

The third chapter covers the way in which the system for managing the Empire’s Buddhist subjects took its final form in the latter half of the nineteenth century. Among the issues it examines are the adoption of the “Statute on the Lamaist Clergy, 1853” [Polozhenie o lamaiskom dukhovenstve 1853 g.], the “religious migrations,” and the publishing activities of the *dat-sans* [Buriat; a Lamaist temple-cum-residence]. Tsyrempilov concludes that there was “a high degree of consolidation” of the Buddhist sangha in the Baikal area and intensification of

its “centripetal tendencies” in the late nineteenth century. In addition, he notes a characteristic feature of the Buriat community’s relations with the imperial administration, which is that the Buriat Buddhists “looked on the Empire not as a hostile force but as an arena of opportunity and a sphere of symbiotic interaction” (p. 199). This is a conclusion that one can thoroughly endorse.

In the fourth and final chapter, Tsyrempilov explores the mutual perceptions of the Buddhist community and Russian society, noting that the latter half of the nineteenth century was a time of “rapprochement between the two worlds on an intellectual and cultural level.”

Tsyrempilov’s ultimate inferences, which are summarized in his conclusion (pp. 232–39), strike me as well-considered, convincing, and valid, which is a testament to the thoroughness and superior quality of his research. The author has carried out extensive research in the archives and used a sizable array of Russian and Mongolian/Tibetan sources that have allowed him to convincingly demonstrate just how vexed the relations between the Russian imperial state and the Buriat Buddhist community were and how they evolved within the confines of “the Russian model,” and to draw some logically grounded and incontrovertible conclusions.

The one thing that could have been added to Tsyrempilov’s description of the Buddhist sangha’s perception of the Russian Empire is the mythologization by Buddhists of their relationship with the supreme tsarist authority as personified by the ruling Romanov dynasty, and specifically the creation of the myth of protection extended to Buddhism by the Russian tsars (Elizaveta Petrovna, Catherine the Great, and Nicholas II), who were seen as an embodiment of the White Tārā. In Mongolia, Tibet, and Russia itself, as is well known, the learned Buriat lama Agvan Dorzhiev assiduously circulated that myth in the early twentieth century, calling Russia the *Chang Shambhala* (or Northern *Shambhala*), his aim being a political rapprochement between Russia and Tibet. Furthermore, he urged Nicholas II to declare himself the secular patron and protector of Tibet, as a purely religious state, in accordance with the Tibetan conception of the priest-patron, or *choyon*. Part of the myth that is circulated by Buddhists to this day involves the Empress Elizaveta Petrovna signing an edict in 1741 that “approved” Buddhism in Russia, although there is no such document to be found in the Russian archives. This provided the contemporary Buddhist sangha with its rationale for an extensive celebration of “the two-hundred-and-

fiftieth anniversary of Buddhism in Russia" in 1991.

The impression is that Tsyrempilov believes in the existence of that edict. "I do not *as yet* have the full text of that document to hand," he writes (p. 62). However, a little later in the same section he holds that it was actually issued by the local (provincial) authorities: "Although I have yet to find that document, there can be no doubt that it did indeed exist [. . .] Its status was that of an edict — not *a personally signed imperial edict but an administrative edict published by a local authority on behalf of the supreme monarch, which was normal in eighteenth-century administrative practice*. The same data compel me to admit that, although I cannot call it an official sanctioning of the Buddhist religion within the Russian Empire, *the edict to all intents and purposes legitimized the Buddhist clergy, recognizing its members as Russian subjects*" (p. 61). That conclusion cannot be contested, although it seems to me that the idea of an edict personally signed by the empress (who, incidentally, did not ascend to the Russian throne until very late in 1741) should have been more definitively and unambiguously labeled as myth.

It also seems to me that Tsyrempilov could have given rather more detailed coverage to

the role of Agvan Dorzhiev and his political and religious activity in Russia in the early twentieth century, although that would, without question, have led him beyond his established chronological framework. So, for instance, Dorzhiev conceived the Buddhist temple that he built in St. Petersburg in 1909–15 not only as a "modest datsan" designed to meet the spiritual needs of local Buddhists, but also as the residence of the Dalai Lama's unofficial representative in Russia (Dorzhiev himself, that is). He was evidently aspiring to manifest on Russian soil the Tibetan concept of the *choyon*, facilitator of the relationship between secular and spiritual leaders (in this case, the Russian tsar and the Dalai Lama). But this would in effect make the Buddhist sangha and its head (the Bandido Khambo Lama) distinctly and quite heavily dependent on Lhasa. Naturally, such a hierarchy of spiritual power did not appeal to St. Petersburg, which doomed Dorzhiev's plan to failure.

Tsyrempilov does allude to this complicated topic in passing, quoting Al'fred Iosifovich Termen, who wrote in 1912 that Dorzhiev "by his constant presence in Petersburg and his brief annual visits to outlying areas carrying the message of Buddhism *is gradually transferring Buddhism's*

center of gravity to Petersburg, which is giving Buddhism a new coloration in the eyes of the populace." Termen also cited rumors circulating among Buriats to the effect that "the tsar has ordered a magnificent *datsan* to be built for Dorzhiev alongside his own palace," that "lamas live in the palace of the tsar himself," and that "the tsar sympathizes greatly with Lamaism and would have all Buriats be Lamaist" (pp. 205–6). In other words, Dorzhiev actively created a myth of the Russian tsars' patronage of Buddhism, which he needed in order

to carry through his extensive political project of "Russo-Tibetan rapprochement."

In sum, it should be noted that this study's principal value is that in it Tsyrempilov has been able to gather and summarize a large amount of empirical material, which he uses as a basis on which to reveal the logic behind the historical processes he examines, in both the Russian and the pan-Asian contexts.

Alexander Andreev (Translated by Liv Bliss)

Alexey Rakhmanin et al., eds. 2016. *The Study of Religion: Textbook and Practicum for Academic Bachelor Students. (Religiovedenie: uchebnik i praktikum dlia akademicheskogo bakalavriata)*. Moscow: Iurait (in Russian). — 307 pages.

The educational and methodological discourse of contemporary religious studies is highly diversified; there are dozens of textbooks, instructional aids, academic dictionaries and anthologies. The sheer variety of texts and approaches often makes it difficult for both instructors and students to navigate through the literature. Furthermore, the authors of textbooks often pursue originality for its own sake, which leads them to avoid presenting concepts that are generally accepted in the religious studies community in favor

of offering the theories and hypotheses of individual schools or branches of the discipline. Since these positions are not firmly established, they cannot help being read as controversial. In short, the "time-tested" is often sacrificed to the "up-to-date." Obviously, students require balanced materials that will enable them to develop a conception of both the basic framework of academic religious studies and the current state of the field. It seems to me that the main strength of this peer-reviewed textbook is the fact

that the authors have succeeded in finding and maintaining that balance. This is largely due to the rigorous and coherent structuring of the book's content.

The textbook consists of three sections that cover:

1. Theoretical concepts in religious studies.
2. What the authors call "the subject matter of religious studies."
3. Theoretical and practical problems in contemporary religious studies associated with the study of contemporary religiosity and the dynamics of the contemporary religious situation.

This three-part structure deserves recognition; it enables the reader to develop a comprehensive view of religious studies as a set of disciplines and methods for the study of religion that form a unified whole.

The textbook is quite extensive, and is well-structured; it is divided into sections, chapters and paragraphs. Since summarizing the contents of a book falls beyond my role as a reviewer, I will concentrate on the aspects of this textbook that set it apart from the wide range of other religious studies textbooks, its merits, as well as those elements that are subject to varying interpretations and evaluations.

It is clear that the contents of a textbook, the principles shaping how the material is presented, the points that are emphasized, and so on, depend on its purpose, on the goals that it could be used to achieve. For whom is this textbook intended?

I believe its potential audience is quite broad; it may include students at liberal arts universities who are taking religious studies as one of their core disciplines, whose exploration of religious studies is aimed not only at becoming generally "cultured" people, but at developing sufficient expertise to the use religious material in historical, philological and sociological research. Students at technical universities, whose degree programs sometimes include religious studies or history of religion courses, may find this textbook quite difficult, since it is focused on professional rather than educational training.

Of course, this textbook will be relevant not only for students, but also for anyone who is pursuing knowledge independently and wishes to understand the contemporary religious situation, the effect of religious factors on social and political processes, and the nuances of religious conflicts.

An analysis of the current state of the educational and methodological discourse in religious stud-

ies leads to the conclusion that religious studies textbooks are often constructed around various classificatory approaches to religion. As a result, these textbooks are largely dedicated to describing specific religions and beliefs, detailed accounts of ritual practices and the specifics of mythological narratives and theologies. As a result, students often lose sight of the subject, drowning in a sea of details. This approach to religious studies reduces it to a description of individual faiths—a kind of encyclopedia of world religions.

This observation does not apply to Rakhmanin's textbook. The theoretical section with which it opens allows for the development of basic skills that are necessary for further study of factual material, and also cultivating a clear idea of the nature of religious studies as an academic discipline that is not limited to simply recording facts and describing the discourses of various religions.

The detailed chapter dealing with the principles and methods of research work in the field deserves special attention. In debates, conference presentations, and published articles, I have often drawn the attention of my colleagues to the fact that contemporary Russian religious studies is undergoing a methodological crisis. Contemporary religious scholars are not suffi-

ciently prepared for research, source criticism and analysis. Although, as the textbook correctly observes, "there is not, and cannot be, a unified method for religious studies research given the current state of the field. A researcher must strictly abide by the academic methods required by a multidisciplinary approach" (p. 109). It is not completely clear, however, what the authors mean by their statement that "any research into religion accomplishes . . . specific ideological tasks" (p. 109), but I presume that the authors' thinking in no way ascribes an a priori ideological orientation to the discourse of religious studies. Considering the fact that the views expressed in expert assessments provided by religious studies scholars often become stumbling blocks not only for scholars, but also for journalists, political figures and lawyers, discussion of the ideological and philosophical connotations of religious studies research requires extreme precision in terminology.

It is worth noting that the authors weigh in on the origins of the field (there is no consensus on this question among contemporary scholars), arguing that it was established as an institution in the 1860s–70s, though that process played out differently in different countries (p. 25). Section 1.3, "Periodization and the

Key Stages in the Development of Religious Studies,” is dedicated to the development of academic religious studies. When it comes to teaching methods, familiarizing students with the history of the field and its canonical authors, whose names will continue to appear in textbooks, is an urgent and important task. Its significance in religious studies can primarily be attributed to the fact that many debatable questions in the field, such as how to define the term “religion,” the concept of “religious belief,” and so on, are decided on the level of the authors’ approaches and interpretations. Since this is the case, it is necessary to have some degree of familiarity with the relevant authors.

The problem of how to define the term “religion” deserves special attention. I once argued for the need to distinguish between two levels of this problem—the academic and the methodological (Prilutsky 2013). On the level of academic inquiry, the most unexpected and extravagant definitions are permissible, as long as their competence and generative quality are based on convincing argumentation. A textbook, however, has a different task; it must help students entering the field to develop a sufficient grasp of the subject matter. It would be naïve to suppose that everyone already knows perfect-

ly well what religion is. As understandable as it might be from an academic perspective, rejecting any normative definition and reducing it to academic pragmatics does not facilitate efforts to achieve this methodological/pedagogical goal. The authors quite rightly argue that “since research goals differ, it is impossible to articulate a universal definition of religion. In this case, universalism must be rejected, since religion is envisioned by researchers in different ways in different contexts” (Rakhmanin et al., 47). But to what extent does this approach help students to absorb the material? What should be given preference—methodological/pedagogical practicality or academic accuracy? This problem is not a new one, and there is no clear-cut solution. Naturally, the choice between a “bad definition” and no definition at all cannot be definitely resolved one way or the other. I must admit that the approach chosen by the authors of this textbook is close to my own, but we should also recognize the right of other scholars to hold a different point of view, and thus, to offer criticism.

The authors have made a point of noting that while the discipline of religious studies first emerged in historical and theological contexts, in the process of becoming institutionalized and

achieving academic autonomy, it was transformed into an independent sphere of knowledge. The problem of the relationship between religious studies and theology, which is acquiring ever greater importance today in the context of the ongoing “official institutionalization” of theology in contemporary Russian legal and academic spaces, is discussed in greater detail in the second section of the textbook. Not everything here seems entirely successful to me, however. While the reference to “the convergence of theology and philosophy that is occurring in the new space of the post-secular world” (p. 168) seems quite fair on the whole (although “new space” is an insufficiently precise formulation), the definition of the goals of theology as the systematization of all of the propositions and elements of religion that are suitable to function as a basis for supporting and protecting religious doctrine (p. 182) is clearly unsuccessful from the point of view of the style and content of the text. In any case, interpreting theology through the prism of apologetics impoverishes the subject matter of theology; among other things, it implicitly excludes apophatic theology.

There is also the issue of the selection and arrangement of the material in chapter four, which contains three subsections enti-

tled: “Religious Thought in India,” “Religious Thought in the West,” and “The Philosophy of Religion.” It is not entirely clear why the editors opted for this selection of material, which virtually excludes all other areas, including Russian religious philosophy. Section 4.1.3 is devoted to the cultic side of Hinduism. In the context of continuing fascination with India, it is excellent that students are becoming acquainted with accurate information about the relevant religious traditions. It is no less important, however, for the student of religious studies to develop an understanding of the cultic practices of world religions, which have not received sufficient discussion here.

In conclusion, I would like to share my general impressions: this textbook made for interesting reading, and I hold that using it in the context of a university course exploring religious studies will be equally interesting and enlightening. It can serve all of the functions of a basic college textbook quite successfully. Most importantly, the excellent presentation of the material might inspire the student to continue their exploration of religious studies after completing their introductory course.

Alexander Prilutsky (Translated by Isaac Stackhouse Wheeler)

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