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MARTYRS AND HEROES
The Religious and Secular Worship of the Dead in Post-Soviet Russia

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It is the aim of this article to analyse the worship of the dead in the context of the post-Soviet *religious revival* in Russia. The paper focuses on certain interrelated manifestations of worshipping the "special dead", martyrs and heroes, in which both religious and secular institutions are involved. Activities in canonisation of new martyrs who "shone out" during the Soviet period also imply the recovery of graves and the identification of the bodies of the (new) saints. They are similar to another secular form of politics of memory: the reburials of soldiers who perished during the Second World War. The physical remains of the anonymous dead are a cause of frustration and ambiguity. In both cases (the sacred and the secular ones), the aim is to achieve personalisation through the identification of graves and remains. It includes both a physical process and a symbolic operation through which the bodies obtain the status and the aura of martyrs and heroes. It is a strategy of reconciling irreconcilable historical legacies and also a tool to positively reformulate traumatic experiences of the past. In doing so, the Orthodox project of constructing memory successfully contributes to the larger societal project of elaborating a positive vision of the past.

Keywords: canonisation, religious revival, worship of the dead, politics of memory, Russia, post-socialism

Celebrations of the "Millennium of the Baptism of Kievan Rus'" took place in Moscow in 1988 and brought to life the return to religion, which was an uneven and contested process. The return to the practices and values of religion in post-Soviet Russia is often defined by the metaphorical expression "religious revival" *(religioznoe vozrozhdenie)*. Analytically, "religious revival" could be described as an overarching frame uniting the heterogeneous manifestations of the revitalisation of religious life in Russia after seventy years of atheist politics. An orientation to the past, whether idealised or imagined, is a particularity of social practices connected to the religious life in Russia. Besides, this orientation implies not just Orthodoxy, but certain social practices of secular character as well. How can the focus on the past be explained which is imprinted on various aspects and manifestations of the symbolic practices projected onto the complexities of current everyday life in Russia? What are the manifestations of the politics of memory in both the religious and the secular milieu at the local level? These were

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questions that intrigued me during my fieldwork in Kaluga and these are, respectively, the research questions to which the present article is looking to find answers. It is the aim of the present work to provide an analysis of the politics of memory as an aspect of the religious revival, and more specifically I am going to address the worship of the "special dead" (see Brown 2002[1981]: 69–85), martyrs and heroes respectively, as an intersection of symbolic practices in the religious and secular spheres of life.*

Field Site and Ethnographic Methods

This paper is based on field research carried out in the city of Kaluga for two weeks in September 2006 and during July and August 2007. The city of Kaluga is located 180 kilometres southwest of Moscow and is situated on the left bank of the river Oka. According to the statistics of 2004, the population of the city is 347,500 (Statisticheskii sbornik 2005: 7). In 1910, there were 55,000 inhabitants. The historic administrative region (*guberniia*), of which Kaluga used to be the capital, had 1,419,949 inhabitants. Under socialism, the population of the administrative district (*oblast'*) of Kaluga decreased. In 2007, the population of Kaluga *oblast'* was 1,009,000. Both the increased population of the city of Kaluga and the decreased population of the district are local evidence for large-scale migration in Russia under socialism and afterwards. During the last pre-Soviet decades, 99.5 percent of the inhabitants of the *guberniia* were Russians; ethnic minorities (most of them Jews, Poles, and Germans) lived in the cities (Chernyshev & Persona'lnyi 1992[1912]: 21). Despite the politics of migration and ethnic mixing that took place during the Soviet era, the majority of the city's present population still consists mostly of people defining themselves as Russians (see Dubas 2004: 216).

The first historical reference to Kaluga dates to 1371 (Pamiatniki 1880: 136; Kaluzhskii krai 1976: 22). Serving as a border fortification during the Middle Ages, the city developed into a commercial and industrial centre during early modern times. Industry (manufacturing) developed as early as the eighteenth century and even before the era of Peter the Great. The guild of merchants shaped the (historic) city architecture and the identity of the population. The eighteenth century turned out to be a century of economic proliferation and welfare, despite the massive fires and epidemic diseases that occurred during that time. Numerous churches, constantly built and rebuilt, used to provide a symbolic expression not only of economic success but also of a strong attachment to Orthodoxy. There were forty churches in Kaluga in 1910 (Malinin 1992[1912]: 30–67).[1] In early Soviet times Kaluga experienced a period of intensive industrialisation (Popkov 2004: 167–178). Industry is still an important source of income for the population, although a significant number of enterprises were shut down during the 1990s, and only some of them reopened recently. Heavy industry is well represented; the recently opened Volkswagen plant in Kaluga (2007) is a matter of pride and gives rise to expectations of economic success.[2] Kaluga is also a university city. At present, there are thirteen universities and colleges: two local institutions and eleven local branches of central universities.

It is essential to point out a special aspect of the local context: the proximity of Optina Pustyn' monastery. Located sixty kilometres from Kaluga and about two kilometres from the town of Kozel'sk, it is one of the most venerated and most visited monasteries in Russia (Kuchumov 2002: 232–238; Zyrianov 2002: 314). The monastery was established in the fifteenth century but became an important centre of religious life of Russian-wide significance at the beginning of the nineteenth century. During the same century, the specific Russian religious phenomenon of *starchestvo*[3] was established and developed in Optina Pustyn' (Solov'ev 1899[2005]: 3–7; Gorbacheva 2006: 5–23; Kuchumov 2002: 223–244; Nizovskii 2002: 230–231). Optina Pustyn' was repeatedly visited and appreciated by some of the greatest Russian writers of the nineteenth century such as Gogol' (Evgin 2003: 209–220), Tolstoi (Berestov 2003: 290–325), Dostoevskii (Solov'ev 1899[2005]: 3–7), and by the Kireevskii brothers.[4] The impressions left by his meetings with *starets*[5] Amvrosii at Optina Pustyn' in 1878 inspired Dostoevskii to write his famous novel *The Brothers Karamazov*, and the monk became the prototype for the character of

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Father Zosima (Dostoevskaia 1981: 329; Pavlovich 1980: 88; Solov'ev 1899[2005]: 3–7). This has often been mentioned in local conversations, too. The geographic proximity of Optina Pustyn' to Kaluga has strengthened the local identity of the city, establishing its place in the symbolic geography of Russia (Avramenko 2001: 95). What is important today is the immediate and powerful impact the monks of Optina Pustyn' continue to have on the religious life of Kaluga.

During my fieldwork I made observations and took 30 in-depth life history narratives and/or autobiographical interviews, and also a number of informal interviews. Interviewees were balanced in terms of age, education, and social status, but less so with regard to gender. Women predominate, and this seems to reflect church attendance. The information obtained orally through interviewing was combined with that from written sources, mostly church periodicals. Some of my interviewees have contributed to the local church press; these publications are also considered here, to verify oral information. I have sought to preserve the anonymity of my interviewees, and have given them fictitious names in order to do so. All the translations from the interviews are my own.

There were 33 functioning Orthodox churches (each attached to a parish) in Kaluga in 2006/7, including monastic churches and so-called "house churches" (*domovye khramy*).[6] I have chosen to carry out observations in two parishes, the first belonging to the church of the Shroud of the Holy Mother (*Pokrova Presviatoi Bogoroditsy* or *Pokrova, chto na rvu*), the second belonging to the church of the Martyr St. John the Warrior (*Muchenika Ioanna Voina*). The first church is located in the city centre and is a recognised architectural monument (Morozova 1993: 157); it was built before 1626 (Malinin 1992[1912]: 100). In contrast, the church of the Martyr St. John the Warrior is located at the very periphery of Kaluga and was only recently built (1994–1999). The decision to choose two parishes was made in order to take into consideration different social backgrounds and, respectively, the variety of local practices.

The main interviewing strategy was to obtain information concerning both the institutional strategies of the Russian Orthodox Church "from above" and the ideas and practices of the common people "from below". Accordingly, I conducted interviews among: a) clergy and parishioners from both parishes; b) among librarians[7]; c) among people close to the local church elite and responsible for designing church strategies and policies. By interviewing randomly chosen librarians, in particular, I intended to obtain information from outside the circle of people expressing a very high commitment to religion (those were mostly the parishioners). It is important to mention that the interviews were not specifically directed to the politics and practices of memory; this turned out to be a particular aspect of the general process of religious revival.

Politics of Memory: Theoretical Framework

Orientation to the past as a point of reference of current religious practices in Kaluga defines memory as the central notion of this article. Moreover, certain influential authors conceptualise memory as pivotal for their endeavours to define religion as such (Hervieu-Léger 2000: 4, 124–130; Davie 2000: 36–37, 58–60, 70–79, 142–167). On the other hand, as it has always been during historical periods of dramatic political changes, a process of intensive production of practices and places of memory is taking place in post-socialist countries (Pine, Kaneff & Haukanes 2004: 1), and Russia is no exception. Politics of memory is the concept that bridges religious and secular aspects of this phenomenon. As a theoretical point of departure, I support a notion of the politics of memory, which unites "official or government sponsored efforts to come to terms with the past" and "unofficial and private initiatives emerging from within society to deal with the past" (Barahona de Brito, Gonzales-Enriquez & Aguilar 2001: 1). According to this understanding, the politics of memory correlates with the historic legacies of past repressions.

The politics of memory exists in different spheres and develops on different societal levels in Russia. It could also be described in terms of interplay between different institutions and different social

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actors both at the local and the national level. The examples analysed in the following section confirm the observation that "political and religious movements often involve the same processes, particularly evocations and appeals to the past" (Pine, Kaneff & Haukanes 2004: 2).

As Verdery noted, post-socialist developments in Russia and Eastern Europe were accompanied by activities around the dead aiming at "reassessing or rewriting the past and creating or retrieving memory" (Verdery 1999: 3). Actually, long before the end of socialism, similar practices of "civil religion" took place in countries like Japan and the United States (Kearl & Rinaldi 1983: 693–708). Scholars point to the discrepancy between the modern "segregation" of the dead "from the affairs of the living" and political "practice of maintaining the memories and citizenship rights of its deceased members" (ibid.: 693). What is specific in the post-socialist context is the intensity and widespread character of the (political) worshipping of the dead.

Hence, the worship of the dead is not a Russian particularity, yet I argue that its sweeping character, specific temporal and spatial contexts give it a particularly Russian character.

Martyrs and Heroes: The Religious and Secular Worship of the Dead

In the following section, I shall try to analyse certain interrelated manifestations of worshipping the dead, in which both religious and secular institutions are involved. Since 1989, the Russian Orthodox Church has initiated a large-scale project (at both national and local level) of canonisation of martyrs and "new martyrs". The latter concept has political connotations: it concerns martyrs who have suffered and died "in the name of the faith", predominantly during the time of socialism.[8] A second category of "confessors" (*ispovedniki*) involves those who suffered but died "without bloodshed" (Muchenichestvo 2005: 265–272).

Both central and local institutions of the Russian Orthodox Church are involved in the canonisation. The central level is represented by the Synodal Commission for the Canonisation of Saints (established in 1989),[9] and the local one is the Commission of Canonisation of the Eparchy of Kaluga.[10] It is important to note that not all locally recognised martyrs acquire national validity: only the central Synodal Commission is entitled to grant that highest status of a saint.

The Commission of Canonisation of the Eparchy of Kaluga is in charge of the investigation of the biographies of people of local origin (and/or church affiliation), who suffered severe persecutions, and of the verification of the testimonies for martyrdom. The local commission consists of ten members, all of them men, who are representatives of the clergy (both priests and monks) and laity as well. Two of the latter define themselves as *kraevedy*.[11]

The canonisation of new saints is a significant aspect of the Russian religious revival, symbolically and politically loaded, as far as it resumes an important institutional activity of the Russian Orthodox Church, which was completely abandoned during the Soviet era. Creating an all-Russian memory of new martyrs is a sweeping project in which a monk, Damascin (Orlovskii), has played and still plays an important role. He is a pioneer of research into the martyrdom of clergy and began this work in the 1970s. Damascin is the author of an impressive series of documentary books on the subject (Damascin 1992, 1996, 1999, 2000, 2001, 2002a, 2002b). Since 1997, a large Web resource (The Public Foundation "Memory of the Martyrs and Confessors of the Russian Orthodox Church") has been established to provide information (including icons, photos, video films, etc.) concerning numerous new martyrs.[12]

One should briefly note that canonisation is also a subject of violent disputes between the different factions of Russian Orthodox Church clergy, involving mostly the so-called "church liberals" and their opponents, the rigorists; the latter are often emotionally referred to as "fundamentalists" by many authors (Mitrokhin 2004; Lebedev 2004a, 2004b). The canonisation of the "royal family" (i.e., the family of the last tsar of Russia, Nikolai II), which took place in 2000 (Knox 2004: 125–128), was one of the examples of disagreement between these factions, but also the exemplary case of canonisation of new martyrs.

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The canonisation of prominent *startsy* (who lived during the second half of the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth century) from the monastery of Optina Pustyn' was a process in which local and national dimensions overlapped. Because Optina Pustyn' is located in the district of Kaluga, the Eparchy of Kaluga provides a territorial context for the first stage of the transformation of memories about *startsy* into national sanctuaries. Twelve of the *startsy* of Optina Pustyn' were declared to be "locally venerated" (*mestnochtimye*) martyrs and confessors on 26 July 1996, which caused Patriarch Aleksii II to visit the monastery (Aleksahina & Bogatyreva 2003: 41). The Patriarch Aleksii II also transmitted the relics of seven of them into one of the seven monastic churches (ibid.).[13] The canonisation was confirmed at national level in 2000, when 1,097 persons were canonised.[14] Another three monks of Optina Pustyn' have recently been added to the list of national Russian martyrs: in 2005 and on 27 December 2007.[15]

Two institutional units are locally involved in the process of canonisation of new saints (new martyrs and confessors). They function independently of each other in the district of Kaluga, and this is an important local peculiarity. The first of them is located in Optina Pustyn', where several of the monks have specialised in investigating testimonies and documents regarding the sanctity of their own predecessors from before and during the period of the closure of the monastery from 1918 to 1922. A member of the Commission of Canonisation of the Eparchy of Kaluga testified as follows concerning the monks, his "colleagues":

> They operate their own commission [of canonisation] there in Optina Pustyn'. The monk Platon, the hieromonk Joseph, and the hieromonk Methodius are [involved] there. They work only on Optina monks, they bring fame to those who suffered and [after the closure of the monastery] served in different locations.[16] (Aleksei, a customhouse officer, 50)

Optina Pustyn' has the status of a *stavropigial'nyi* monastery (Aleksahina & Bogatyreva 2003: 38), which means that it enjoys autonomy and is subordinated directly and solely to the Patriarch who carries the title of its archimandrite. This explains the independent work of the Optina clergy regarding the canonisation of its own predecessors. The monastery owns a publishing house of its own (Nizovskii 2000: 231),[17] which allows it to "bring fame" to martyrs by publishing their lives and related documents (see for instance Damascin [Orlovskii] 2007; Zhizneopisanie 2005).

The Commission of Canonisation of Saints, which is under the auspices of the Eparchy of Kaluga, was established in 2005. During the short period of its existence, it has selected around 35 candidates to be "celebrated" as locally venerated martyrs and confessors. Father Andrei Bezborodov, an influential priest, historian, and lecturer in the Seminary of Kaluga, is the president of the commission of ten members. My information about the activity of the commission is based on interviews with two of its members. The data is rather limited as written documents concerning the commission are not accessible; moreover, canonisation is an ongoing process. During the time of my fieldwork, proposals of the commission were still just proposals; apart from a few exceptions they have not been examined by the metropolitan, yet. Aleksii Kurovskii, the late priest of the village of Kurovskoe (located about twenty kilometres from Kaluga), has already been canonised. According to the interviews, proposals for canonisation concern mostly representatives of the clergy: priests, monks, and nuns. For example, all the monks from St. Trinity Liutikov monastery (*Sviato-Troitskii Liutikov monastyr'*) near the village of Peremyshl' were shot in 1918 together with eight villagers, who had helped the monks to protect the monastery from the attacks of (initially) deserters and the regular army (later on). Yet, only the monks have been listed in the proposal for canonisation. Maybe the lack of information concerning the biographies of the villagers was the reason for their exclusion. The Commission of Canonisation carefully evaluates the moral dignity of the candidates to be named martyrs throughout their lives, although the lack of information is a serious obstacle in that re-

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spect. Regardless of what kind of motives led to the decision of the commission in the aforementioned case, the tendency towards proposing mainly representatives of the clergy for canonisation is a fact. Striving for the reinstatement of the clergy as an estate is the primary motive here, as much as in other manifestations of religious life in Kaluga.[18] It would be helpful here to remember the interrelatedness between the politics of memory and the repressions of the past (Barahona de Brito, Gonzales-Enriquez & Aguilar 2001: 11). Since the clergy was particularly affected by repressions during different periods of the Soviet epoch, the aspirations for its moral rehabilitation in post-socialist times is an understandable reaction and purposeful politics of memory implemented by the present-day clergy.[19]

Actually, there is indirect evidence that dividing the work on canonisation between the monks of Optina Pustyn' and the Eparchial Commission reflects internal controversies between different factions of the clergy (see Mitrokhin 2004: 182–209).

At first glance, the activity of the Eparchial Commission looks like an intellectual task, motivated by specific moral models aimed at the rebuilding of religious institutions. This is a process, however, that inevitably has more than one aspect. To the compulsory "construction" of *passio* and icons – holy images – one should add the creation of both new "places of memory" and rituals connected to them. I shall address elsewhere the creation of new icons and new lives of the saints (and of new iconographies and hagiographies). I shall focus here on the construction of new sacred "places of memory" and on the rituals giving them sacredness.

The simplest forms of new sacred "places of memory" are the crosses that mark the locations of abandoned or destroyed churches. One should also mention that the names of the priests of the Kaluga eparchy, who were subject to Soviet repressions, have been written on a memorial cross raised in 2005 in the churchyard of St. George's cathedral.

The creation of a new memorial centre for the new martyrs of Kaluga in an area that never had a church is a recent initiative. The completion of the project reveals the social fabric that stands behind the politics of memory. The project for building the memorial centre dates back to around late 2005, when the first symbolic actions of its inauguration took place. The initiator of the project was Aleksei (50, a custom-house officer), one of the lay members of the Commission of Canonisation of Saints. The very choice of the locality for the centre is full of symbolism. It is near the village of Kurovskoe, where Aleksii Kurovskii, the local martyr, spent part of his life. At the same time, this is the historic location where the historic "Great Stand on the Ugra River" (*Stoianie na Ugre*) took place in 1480 (Makarova & Kalashnikova 2006: 340–356).

Apparently, this was a deliberate choice aiming to combine and accumulate different symbolic characteristics. This becomes clear from the interview with Aleksei, the initiator, who is also a member of the commission:

> This is the place of the Great Stand of 1480. It is located on the bank of Ugra River, where Khan Akhmat led his troops into battle. […] And it is also an historic place. The bell tower of the Uspenskii Cathedral of Tikhonova Pustyn' monastery can be seen from there. On the other side, you see the Spaso-Vorotinskii monastery on the Ugra. It is a very sacred place, blessed by God, and we think also blessed by the Holy Mother. And, actually, the help of the Holy Mother can be felt here, and the prayers of the new martyrs can be felt.

National and local symbolisms overlap, secular and religious values merge, the locality makes the symbolic contact between the holy places connected with Kaluga possible (Tikhonova Pustyn' monastery, Spaso-Vorotinskii monastery). According to the project, the accumulation of sacred meanings will continue by symbolic actions aiming at the further integration of national and local sanctuaries through the memorial. In order to accomplish this, it is planned to wall up a capsule with soil from two other localities where hundreds of clerics were shot (the firing ground of Butovo, the prison of Sukhinichi). The integrative meaning of the memorial is emphasised by adding the names of the Optina Pustyn' *startsy* (the

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already canonised monks of Optina Pustyn') to the list of martyrs of Kaluga.

According to the project, the memorial is going to consist of a large chapel, a cross to bow in front of it, and a *kupal'nia*[20] (the latter is traditionally located near monastic buildings or other sacred places). The *kupal'nia* makes use of the spring near the house of St. Aleksii Kurovskii. Actually, the idea to build a memorial was initially taken from the proposal of a local priest to consecrate the spring, which was accepted and supported by Aleksei, the member of the Commission. Due to his efforts the spring was consecrated on 23 November 2005 (St. Aleksii's day) with a litany procession (*krestnyi khod*) from the village of Koslovo (presently at the outskirts of Kaluga) to the spring in Kurovskoe (see Kiziaev 2006: 22).

The new ritual has found a good reception among representatives of the clergy and was accepted by the local population, which was evident from the participation of seven priests and a large crowd during the second enactment of the procession in November 2006. The ritual creates a new sacred geography in Kaluga and the nearby villages. On its way, it features intermediary "stations" in order to honour the memory of a priest who served more than sixty years in one of the local churches. The procession was led by representatives of the local Cossack organisation, and their presence emphasises the martial features of both the event and the place (which obtains this characteristic also from its link to the historic military actions of 1480). Thus, the locality near the village of Kurovskoe is marked as a culmination and final destination of the ritual action. Blessing the idea to put a memorial by the spring of Kurovskoe, the metropolitan signed the document for the construction of the chapel. This is the way in which an initiative, initially a modest one, develops into an ambitious project.

What has been said so far demonstrates how the creation of sacred "places of memory" demands and generates a ritual, and how this ritual itself has become a final stage of the sacralisation of the place. From the interviews, I derived useful information concerning the social interactions through which events have been accomplished. The memorial project and the creation of the ritual connected to it is a result of the work at different levels of church institutions. Although local in its character, the project was constructed "from above". This became possible through the interaction between an ordinary priest, an influential laymen representative (integrated into church institutions through his participation in the local Commission of Canonisation in Kaluga), and the metropolitan. The position of the layman, playing the role of intermediary between the law and the higher level of the church hierarchy, is of key significance.

Moreover, his role in the practical implementation of the initiative to build the memorial was decisive. It was he who organised the litany processions on St. Aleksii Kurovskii's day. What is more important, he coordinated the construction of the Centre of the New Martyrs.

This specific social actor's activities are not limited to the initiative for the memorial centre (and ritual events connected to it), it should be stressed. It is worth noting his efforts to regularly publish articles dedicated to specific new martyrs of Kaluga in local Orthodox periodicals. Some of his publications are simply entitled "The Life of Saint X". The articles do not intend to popularise the local Commission of Canonisation or its activities. Published biographical narratives about new martyrs[21] actually aim to construct (and not reconstruct) their memories, at least at regional and local level. Obviously, the orally transmitted memories of people who accepted martyrdom decades earlier (in certain cases as far back as more than eighty years ago), have either faded almost to nothing or live on only in the immediate family and/or estate circles. At best, remembrance is concentrated in the settlements where they lived. Published narratives put an end to the anonymity of the martyrs and overcome (to a certain extent) oblivion. However, the audience of the local church press is rather limited consisting only of the most active parishioners.

One should address here the question of how the local community accepts the veneration of new martyrs, especially in comparison to its worshipping of well established and popular saints. Interviews, as

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well as observations, demonstrate that the saints, old and new ones, tend to be accepted according to the contexts of the holy places. New martyrs connected to Optina Pustyn' monastery – a "magnet" for pilgrims from all over Russia – attract to themselves and draw somewhat on the aura of the shrine. Even people largely indifferent to religion visit Optina Pustyn' and honour the saints (both the already accepted and the new ones) following common itineraries of the numerous pilgrims. The new martyrs whose veneration is connected to less popular places tend to attract the attention of the most committed believers and church activists.

Returning to the author of biographies of martyrs, one can draw the conclusion that as a member of the local Commission of Canonisation in Kaluga he fulfils the function of "impresario" of the cult of the martyrs (Brown 2002[1981]: 73, 64–65), which has been an invariable part of the support for this cult from late Antiquity onwards. Of course, Aleksei is not the only one active in this area. Some local journalists, guides organising pilgrimage travels, church *kraevedy* etc., play similar roles depending on their access to economic, social, or cultural resources. They could all be called "Orthodox activists". Their integration into church activities is as a kind of semi-professional.

The role Aleksei plays could be defined by the synonymous (but not identical) term of "religious entrepreneur": a clergyman or layman performing an intermediary function between society and religious experts (see Christian 1996: chapters 3–5; Bax 1995: 33–48).[22] In this case, "religious entrepreneurship" includes the construction of the memorial centre: collecting funds through donations; mediating between local authorities and the church in the struggle of the latter to get legal ownership of the land on which the memorial is to be built; providing construction materials; organising the actual construction. All this becomes possible due to the influential positions of Aleksei in the economic and social life of Kaluga. In other words, my interviewee invests his personal social capital in his activities in the religious sphere. On the other hand, in doing so, he enhances his prestige among the community of "church people" in both the city and the district.

The intellectual work that provides the background for the process of canonisation brings together controversial and allegedly irreconcilable legacies. In fact, the archives of the KGB are the main and the only trustworthy source of information regarding political persecutions, arrests, trials, and imprisoning. And the people entitled to carry out research in these archives cannot always be regarded as "unrelated" to the repressive state apparatus of the past. Because of the distance in time, it is not the tormentors themselves who are personally involved in the current symbolic rehabilitation of the martyrs, their victims. Rather they are the heirs of the tormentors. Two of my interlocutors graduated during the Soviet period in "scientific atheism".[23] One of them is currently a university professor of history of religions. The second is involved in investigating the KGB archives in order to discover documental evidence concerning prospective martyrs. And I have witnessed his genuine commitment and dedication to both religion and his mission.

Some of the interviews provide evidence that this controversial strategy for the reconciliation of seemingly irreconcilable memories finds supporters among some of the most active believers. They express negative concerns about atheist repressions and the godless life under socialism, but immediately add that "constellations of martyrs shone out instead" (Evgeniia, 38). It should be noted that this is just one aspect of the larger post-socialist problem: coping with the past and its legacies. As Adler notes, this is due to the fact that "Russia's experience is unique and difficult to compare with the other post-authoritarian political systems" (Adler 2001: 277).

The process of reconstruction of sacred buildings (churches, monasteries, etc.) also brings with it the need to handle dead bodies, not just symbolically, but in a very immediate and physical way. Under socialism, many of the cemeteries located in church and monastic yards were destroyed, while all monastic and most of the church buildings in the district of Kaluga were used for various secular purposes (often endorsing production enterprises). In the context of

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the post-Soviet religious revival, different ways of handling such situations are possible. For instance, a large-scale identification of the graves and genetic identification of the remains developed in Optina Pustyn'. It is not just about the restoration of historical justice, as in the case of politically coloured reburials (see Verdery 1999: 4–23). Bringing back the past pre-revolutionary fame of the monastery is another important motivation. One should point out the special role played in this initiative by monk F., a former scholar in biology (Larissa, 68, librarian).[24] Both the identified and recovered graves in the yard of Optina Pustyn' and the relics of the martyrs recognised recently are nowadays objects of veneration by pilgrims. The plausibility of identification is not a matter of discussion. On the contrary, the physical aspect of worshipping the dead contributes to the strengthening of the symbolic meaning of the cemetery and its transformation into a highly valued object of pilgrimage. In other words, the sacred status of the cemetery has been reformulated and reinforced. The latter is also an aspect of the struggle for symbolic and social capital in the competition between the religious communities identifying themselves with the sacred places. The more sacred a place is the more prestige and respect the given religious community receives.

Actually, the work of the Commission of Canonisation for the Eparchy of Kaluga closely parallels and even coincides to a certain extent with the functions of the lay Commission for Reconstruction of Memory (*Komissiia po Vosstanovleniiu Pamiati*) led by the governor of the Kaluga district. Some of the church *kraevedy* are involved in both the Commission of Canonisation and the *secular* commission belonging to the institutions of local authorities. Vitalii Legostaev, the most prominent church *kraeved* of Kaluga (see Benovska-Sabkova 2009: 125–126, 128–129), participates in both commissions. He has compiled a list of names of the priests who served in the Kaluga area from the nineteenth century onwards. Moreover, he enjoys the support of an adherent, a local priest who commemorates late clergymen by reading the list of their names while celebrating the liturgy. While working in the secular Commission for Reconstruction of Memory, one of his tasks is to take pictures of thousands of graves in different cemeteries of Kaluga in order to save the names of the dead from oblivion, that is, to help preserve the memory of them. In doing so, the layman-*kraeved* and the priest also symbolically reorder the hierarchy of social communities, bringing historical justice to the clergy.

The long-term politics of suppressing memory during the Soviet period (Adler 2001: 275) is sometimes reflected in frustrating challenges during post-socialist times. In reconstructing and rebuilding churches one tackles not just "the very special dead", but also the nameless and anonymous dead. Unlike the cases of (ex) Yugoslav or Serbian reburials of the nameless victims of mass murders wherein "entire social groups are repositioned" (Verdery 1999: 20–23) and serious political claims are raised, bones found in a churchyard in Kaluga have turned into a source of frustration. The Soviet "politics of forgetting" (Adler 2001: 275) is the reason for a complete oblivion and a lack of knowledge regarding certain bodies. In July 2007, I noticed a modest grave in a churchyard with no name on the cross and I asked to whom it belonged. Bones had been found repeatedly during construction works around the church, and the priests had reburied them. When I asked about the origin of these bones, one of the parishioners told me that no one knew whether the bones were from soldiers of the Second World War, and if so, whether they were Soviets or Germans. Telling me this, the woman whispered and asked me not to mention the matter to *matushka*, the wife of the priest. My astonishment became even greater when I noticed a bag of bones left among construction materials waiting for the next reburial. Obviously, the presence of the anonymous dead had caused serious confusion, because anonymity did not allow proper treatment of the dead. The "special dead" bring fame to a shrine; anonymous dead are a source of disorder and a potential threat to the sacred aura of a church.

The parallels between secular and religious manifestations of the politics of memory could be extended. The activities involving the identification of graves, the relics of the "special dead", and the re-

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burial of the anonymous dead strikingly correspond to a large-scale secular initiative named *poiskovoe dvizhenie* (movement of explorers). This one aims at the identification of mass graves of Soviet soldiers who were killed in the Second World War. Although long-term initiatives are carried out across the whole of the Russian Federation, Kaluga occupies a special place in this process because the movement was inaugurated there in 1988.[25]

In particular, the local teams of explorers (*poiskovye otriady*) have searched the place called "The Valley of Death" in the district of Kaluga for twenty years. Up to 2007, the remains of approximately 5,500 Soviet soldiers were found and reburied accompanied by great efforts to identify the remains. Due to the lack of physical evidence, however, identification was not always possible. On 22 June 2007, a similar ceremony took place in the village of Barsuki, where 145 soldiers were reburied (V "doline smerti" 2007: 23). Family members, heirs, and relatives of those whose remains had been positively identified were contacted and took part in the ceremony (ibid.). For example, one of my interviewees was also included in the ritual part of the initiative a couple of years ago. Her mother received a letter announcing that the place where her grandfather had died during the Second World War had been found and it turned out to be near Kaluga. Both the mother and the daughter (my interviewee) were invited to participate in the ceremony of his reburial, and for that purpose they travelled the tremendous distance from where they lived, Komsomol'sk na Amur in the far East of Russia, to Kaluga.

Remembrances of the Second World War are not the central topic of discussion in Kaluga, unlike other places in Russia where social memory of the war is still very strong, as Tocheva (2007) reports with reference to Gatchina. In fact, initiatives such as the one I mentioned are reminders of not allowing the memory of war to be transformed into history.[26] Who are the social actors behind this initiative? Why is it so important more than sixty years after the end of the war? It is no surprise that specific social groups stand behind this initiative, and at the local level these are the Patriotic Union of Teams of Explorers named *Pamiat'* (memory) and the city and district Committees of the Veterans of War and Military Service (Gorolevich 2006: 31). In other words, the military professional community and societal circles connected to it are the driving forces behind the initiative. School and university students are actively involved in it. The movement of explorers receives financial support from the central and local Russian authorities (Ministry of Defence and regional administrations).[27]

A published interview of a representative of Kaluga sheds some light on its motives. It confirms the observation that "social memory has been linked with the creation of 'imagined communities' and with a construction of moral order" (Barahona de Brito, Gonzalez-Enriquez & Aguilar 2001: 38). Deep social differentiation in present-day Russian society engenders feelings of a lack of justice projected onto history:

> White spots in our history turn to be a national disgrace, against the general background of the plunder of the people's property and of Russia's natural resources, the creation of absurd fortunes of native billionaires, the dire straits of the majority of the population…, and the rise of criminality. (Gorolevich 2006: 31)

The symbolic gesture of reburial also aims at symbolically overcoming unfairness:

> According to estimates of the District Committee of the Veterans of War and Military Service, there are more than 100,000 deceased defenders of the Fatherland left without proper burial on the territory of the district of Kaluga. […] Their relatives have suffered famine and deprivations and have not received any compensation for the loss of the breadwinner; no post-war privileges have been established [for them, M.B-S.]. Unwillingly, one asks the question: "For what did these people, full of vital energy, give their lives, if for sixty years since then we have not been able to rehabilitate their honest names or give to the earth their remains according to Christian customs?" (Gorolevich 2006: 31)

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As I have noted, the anonymous dead are a source of frustration. Identification (i.e. personalisation) and reburial change the symbolic status of the nameless dead soldiers. Here already, an entire social group is being repositioned, similarly to the victims of communist repressions; religious connotation is also being presented (Verdery 1999: 20). Thus, the anonymous dead are transformed into heroes via personalisation and "proper burial".

It would not be difficult to find similarities between the images of the new martyrs and the heroes, constituted through the politics of memory. Images of the heroes are overshadowed by the connotation of martyrdom through the discourse of "victimisation", as one can see from the quotation above. On the other hand, some of the martyrs acquire heroic features in the narratives created or popularised by Aleksei, the "religious entrepreneur", as well as through publications. According to these narratives, a monk from St. Trinity-Liutikov monastery demonstrated supernatural strength of the spirit in 1918:

> Gunmen [came to] the monastery, [they] demanded the handover of [monastic] horses. The abbot of the monastery refused to give them horses. So the gunmen started to threaten the monks. They sounded the alarm by ringing the bells; then peasants came and chased the gunmen away. At the end of the day, regular troops came from Kaluga and, you see, they imposed revolutionary order. They shot all the monks and eight other people, peasants. […]
>
> This was in the middle of [nineteen]eighteen. When they were shot they had to stand at the edge of a [grave] hole. [The soldiers] did not succeed in killing one of the monks. They shot him over and over again […] the soldiers were already afraid, and they wanted to run away. But the monk said: "Well, what's the matter! Go ahead, do your job!" He gave his blessing, and only then were they able to kill him. He must have been a very devout monk! (Aleksei, a custom-house officer, 50)[28]

The similarity to widespread (and stereotyped) literary and cinema plots connected to the mythology of revolutionary struggles and partisan wars is obvious.

Although the images of new martyrs belong to the religious sphere and the images of war heroes are of a secular character, one finds points of contact between them. This analogy is far from surprising, not least because images of martyrs and heroes have been closely related since early Christian times. The extraordinary sufferings experienced by the martyrs are a kind of miracle and sign of the divine presence. "The heroism of the martyrs has always been treated as a form of possession, strictly dissociated from normal human courage" (Brown 2002[1981]: 79). Heroisation contributes, in this particular case, to a new elaboration and reformulation of the memory: atrocities committed by the tormentors remain in the background, while attention is focused on the valour of a martyr as chosen by God. This is the way to achieve the symbolic reconciliation of allegedly irreconcilable fragments of the social memory. The narrative of martyrdom is implemented as a tool to positively perceive traumatic experiences from the past. Actually, both the secular project and the Orthodox project successfully transform and reformulate collective memory by constructing a positive vision of the past.

It is useful to remember the cross-culturally valid observation that

> historical memories and collective remembrances can be instruments to legitimate discourse, create loyalties, and justify political options. Thus, control over the narrative of the past means control over the construction of narratives for an imagined future. Memory is a struggle over power and who gets to decide the future. What and how societies choose to remember and forget largely determines their future options. Indeed, memories are constantly revised to suite current identities. (Barahona de Brito, Gonzalez-Enriquez & Aguilar 2001: 38)

Inferences

The politics of memory is marked by special intensity in the post-socialist context, but it is far from

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being unique, either for post-socialism or for Russia. Nonetheless, the Russian experience is special at least because the long duration of the Soviet period nowadays brings to life impressively large-scale social practices that aim at giving a specific response to the socialist politics of suppressing and forgetting memory. This is especially valid for the sphere of religious life. The extremes of socialist repressive politics as regards religion are seemingly symmetrical to the activities framed as "religious revival" in Russia.

Worshipping the "special dead" – martyrs and heroes – is an important aspect of the post-Soviet religious revival in Russia. The clergy plays a key role in this process. I have addressed some particular forms of the veneration of the dead: the canonisation of new martyrs who "shone out" during the Soviet period; the project of the Centre of the New Martyrs of Kaluga as a "place of memory" and the introduction of a new ritual related to it (litany); the construction of narratives dedicated to new martyrs: hagiographies or legendary texts spread either in written or in oral form. The canonisation of new saints resumes an important institutional activity of the Russian Orthodox Church, which has been impossible to carry out during the Soviet era. It is an important aspect of the Russian religious revival as far as it gives it "flesh and blood" by contributing to larger church attendance and pilgrimage.

Most of the venerated martyrs belong to the (historical) clergy and that is evidence of the attempt to do this social group justice. This is also an expression of the current struggle of the clergy to strengthen their own prestige and positions in the social hierarchy. My observations document the significant role played by the "religious entrepreneur", who acts as an intermediary and makes the exchanges between clergy and laity possible. As one of the aspects of canonisation, the recovery of graves and the identification of the bodies of new martyrs are related to another form of politics of memory: reburials of distinct categories of the dead, aiming at remodelling social memory and the symbolic reposition of the social hierarchy. There are three categories of "bodies" that are objects of concern: martyrs, the anonymous dead, and nameless soldiers who perished during the Second World War. The physical remains of the anonymous dead are a cause for frustration and ambiguity. This explains the attempt to put the anonymity of the "special dead" to an end. The aim is to achieve personalisation through identification of graves and remains; it includes both a physical process and a symbolic operation through which the bodies obtain the status and the aura of martyrs and heroes. The former belong to the religious sphere and the latter to the secular one, but there are similarities and connections between them. Narratives reveal the new martyrs through the prism of heroisation, while heroes acquire the aura of martyrdom. As I have mentioned earlier, neither the active politics of memory nor the specific practices of reburials are uniquely Russian particularities. It is the strategy of reconciling irreconcilable historical legacies that is specific to Russia. The narrative of martyrdom is implemented as a tool to positively reformulate traumatic experiences of the past. In doing so, the Orthodox project of constructing memory successfully contributes to the larger societal project of elaborating a positive vision of the past. Returning to the initial questions, the politics of memory provides a symbolic means of overcoming historical ruptures of identity. In doing so, it gives a sense of continuity at a collective and a personal level as well.

The politics of memory in the context of the religious revival in Russia is accomplished through an interaction between distinct social groups. Logically enough, it is firstly the clergy striving to acquire historic justice after the end of socialism, but also to achieve higher prestige for itself nowadays. My observations from Kaluga show that the clergy is supported by the central and local authorities. It succeeds (with the help of local elite) in the mobilisation of political and economic resources. Thus, clergy and authorities equally participate in the struggle for control over memory, which is actually a struggle for power. The politics of memory carried out in the context of religious revival in present-day Russia aims not just at strengthening the background of this process, but at positively reshaping traumatic historic experiences. Thus, both politics of memory and religious revival are involved in the

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construction of a new Russian identity, being parts of the large nationally affirmative narrative of post-Soviet Russia.

Notes

* This article was written due to my stay as a guest at the Max Planck Institute for Social Anthropology in Halle/Saale, in 2008. The research is based on fieldwork (2007) financed by the Max Planck Institute for Social Anthropology. I express my appreciation to this Institute.

1 According to other sources, there were 47 churches at the beginning of the nineteenth century (Kliment 2006).

2 The plant was officially opened on 28 November 2007. The average expected production is 115,000 cars per annum; furthermore, 5,000 new jobs are to be created by 2010 (see Ivkin & Gusev 2007: 2).

3 One very simplistic definition could be the veneration of monks and nuns practising and confessing extreme asceticism.

4 The Kireevskii brothers were among the founding fathers of Pan-Slavism (Duncan 2000: 23–24).

5 See also footnote 5: *starets* is a monk ascetic (masculine), who possesses divine wisdom; *staritsa* is the feminine form.

6 The latter are granted lower status. The number of temples had increased even under the short period between September 2006 and July 2007: two more churches (parishes) existed in Kaluga in 2007.

7 I chose librarians for different reasons. First, it was necessary to provide information about people's concern about religion outside the close circles of the parishioners. All librarians referred to are affiliated to the "Belinskii" District Scientific Library, i.e. a professional group that belongs to the local intelligentsia, but it is also part of larger social strata. Conducting interviews in one institution was a practical solution in favour of clearer contextualisation and localisation of the fieldwork data.

8 Some new cases of canonisation also fit the notion of "new martyrdom", although the death of the martyrs concerned occurred after the end of the Soviet era, for example the three monks of Optina Pustyn' who were murdered on Easter in 1993, see Optinskaia Golgofa (1994) and Zhizneopisanie (2005).

9 The Synodal Commission of Canonisation of Saints has since been defined as a "research organ". See http://www.patriarchia.ru/db/text/65980.html.

10 It started working in 2005, according to the interview with Aleksei, quoted below (see also the official Internet site of Kaluga Eparchy: http://www.kaluga-eparhia.ru/abbats_churchs/mon_opt.htm).

11 The term *kraevedenie* originates from *krai*, meaning "region", "land", "countryside". The dictionary defines *kraevedenie* as the "study of local lore, history and economy" (see Wheeler et al. 1998: 164). *Kraevedy* are the people involved in *kraevedenie*. Concerning church *kraevedenie* in Russia, see Benovska-Sabkova (2009: 121–132).

12 See http://www.fond.ru. Accessed 17.10.2008.

13 See also the official Internet site of the Kaluga Eparchy: http://www.kaluga-eparhia.ru/abbats_churchs/mon_opt.htm.

14 This took place in the year 2000 during the *Arkhiiereiskii Sobor*, the official meeting of the prelate council (the second important ruling body of the Russian Orthodox Church), see http://www.patriarchia.ru/db/text/65980.html. Accessed 17.10.2008.

15 www.fond.ru. Accessed 17.10.2008.

16 The words and phrases in square brackets were added by the author.

17 Similarly to other important monastic centres of national Russian significance, such as Troitse-Sergieva Lavra in Sergiev Posad, Diveevo monastery, etc., see Mitrokhin (2004: 110).

18 Numerous Orthodox educational institutions functioning in Kaluga aim at strengthening the clergy, see Aleksakhina & Bogatyreva (2003: 24–31). I will discuss that matter thoroughly in another publication.

19 Even taking into consideration the collaboration of certain wings of the clergy during the Soviet era, repressions and atrocities are undeniable facts.

20 *Kupal'nia* means a covered pool of a medicinal spring or holy water where people bath to improve their health.

21 I would avoid calling them "lives of the saints", as these written narratives still lack stylistic elaboration, which is more or less compulsory for the hagiographic genre.

22 The term "religious entrepreneur" has been introduced in the study of Orthodox Christianity by Galina Valchinova (2006: 221–222).

23 On the transformation of former experts in "scientific atheism" into experts in teaching religions after the end of socialism see Bourdeaux (2000: 10).

24 Interview conducted on 26 September 2006.

25 See the official Internet site of the region Medyn of Kaluga: http://www.medyn.ru/News/TopNOVOSTI/2008/Poiskovoe.htm.

26 Concerning similar reminders, but about the First World War in Argonne, France, see Filipucci (2004: 44–46).

27 See the Web site of *Nika*, a local TV network of Kaluga: http://www.old.nikatv.ru/index.php?newsid=6539, accessed 04.04.2008.

28 Interview conducted on 16 August 2007. The words and phrases in square brackets were added by the author.

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