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## IMPERIOLOGY AND RELIGION: SOME THOUGHTS ON A RESEARCH AGENDA

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Although the national idea became increasingly important for the ways in which imperial elites conceptualized the diversity of their realms in the nineteenth century, it was above all by confessional criteria that the cultural diversity of Eurasian empires was ordered and institutionalized. This fact alone demonstrates the importance of confessional issues for understanding imperial politics and practices. This chapter is accordingly concerned with the contribution that the study of religious questions can make to the study of empire. My principal goal is to identify a number of topics that I consider to be especially promising in this regard and to highlight some of the resulting methodological implications. I focus primarily on Russia, while also offering some discussion of issues in neighboring empires.

On the whole there has been a remarkable renaissance of scholarship on religiosity in Russia in the last decade or so. Focusing primarily on Orthodox spirituality, much of this scholarship creatively treats religion as “vital terrain of social imagination and practice” and shifts our gaze “from the formal configuration of the church to the circumstances in which the religion was taught, internalized or practiced at the local level.”<sup>1</sup> In those works and in research on religious philosophy of the Silver Age and spiritual dissent, scholars have effectively disrupted simplistic interpretations that place spirituality in stark opposition to

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<sup>1</sup> Citations from Heather Coleman and Mark Steinberg, in the introduction to *Sacred Stories: Religion and Spirituality in Modern Russia* (Bloomington, forthcoming); and Valerie A. Kivelson and Robert H. Greene, “Introduction: Orthodox Russia,” in *Orthodox Russia: Belief and Practice under the Tsars*, ed. Kivelson and Greene (University Park, Penn., 2003), p. 9. Other examples of such scholarship include Nadieszda Kizenko, *A Prodigal Saint: Father John of Kronstadt and the Russian People* (University Park, 2000); Chris J. Chulos, *Converging Worlds: Religion and Community in Peasant Russia, 1861-1917* (DeKalb, 2003); Vera Shevzov, *Russian Orthodoxy on the Eve of Revolution* (Oxford, 2004).

modernity.<sup>2</sup> Understandably, perhaps, this scholarship has paid only limited attention to the imperial character of the Russian polity and to the resulting implications for the development of Orthodoxy. To be sure, the imperial theme is clearly implicated in recent works on Orthodox missions, for example in the Volga region and Siberia, and Nicholas Breyfogle's new book analyzes specifically links between dissent and empire-building in the Caucasus.<sup>3</sup> I nonetheless hope in this chapter to illuminate a range of other ways in which the imperial and religious themes in Russian history may be fruitfully combined.

### COMMUNAL ORGANIZATION AND RELIGIOUS TRANSFORMATION

If we recognize diversity as representing one of the central characteristics of imperial polities, then we are compelled to focus our attention on confessional issues, for in most cases imperial governments institutionalized diversity in their vast realms principally along religious lines. From the late eighteenth century into the 1830s, the Tsarist autocracy created a series of institutions and statutes designed to regulate the religious affairs of Russia's "foreign confessions." Only in a few

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<sup>2</sup> On religious philosophy, see the contributions of Paul Valliere and Bernice Rosenthal in *Sacred Stories*, as well Paul Valliere, *Modern Russian Theology* (Edinburgh, 2000); and Catherine Evtuhov, *The Cross and the Sickle: Sergei Bulgakov and the Fate of Russian Religious Philosophy* (Ithaca, 1997). On dissent, see J. Eugene Clay, "Orthodox Missionaries and 'Orthodox Heretics' in Russia, 1886-1917," in *Of Religion and Identity: Missions, Conversion, and Tolerance in the Russian Empire*, ed. Michael Khodarkovsky and Robert Geraci (Ithaca, 2001), pp. 38-69; Sergei Zhuk, *Russia's Lost Reformation: Peasants, Millennialism, and Radical Sects in Southern Russia and Ukraine, 1830-1917* (Washington, 2004); Daniel Beer, "The Medicalization of Religious Deviance in the Russian Orthodox Church (1880-1905)," *Kritika: Explorations in Russian and Eurasian History* 5:3 (2004), pp. 451-482; and Heather Coleman, *Russian Baptists and Spiritual Revolution, 1905-1929* (Bloomington, 2005).

<sup>3</sup> Khodarkovsky and Geraci, *Of Religion and Identity*; Andrei Znamenski, *Shamanism and Christianity: Native Encounters with Russian Orthodox Missions in Siberia and Alaska, 1821-1917* (Westport, 1999); Robert Geraci, *Window on the East: National and Imperial Identities in Late Tsarist Russia* (Ithaca, 2001); Paul W. Werth, *At the Margins of Orthodoxy: Mission, Governance, and Confessional Politics in Russia's Volga-Kama Region, 1827-1905* (Ithaca, 2002); Nicholas Breyfogle, *Heretics and Colonizers: Forging Russia's Empire in the South Caucasus* (Ithaca, 2005).

cases – for example “pagans,” Anglicans, and Muslims in Central Asia and the North Caucasus – did religious groups remain without any official institutions or recognition of clerical servitors.<sup>4</sup> While this system in some cases took account of geographical distinctions, most notably in the case of Muslims and some Judaic groups, it paid virtually no attention to ethnicity, placing numerous ethnic groups under a single confessional administration. A roughly analogous situation pertained in the Ottoman empire, where the state developed a practice of organizing communities along religious lines and subordinating all members of a given confession to a single supreme spiritual authority. At least until the creation of the Bulgarian exarchate church in 1870 (more on this below), the Ottoman government recognized new communities by strictly confessional criteria, even creating new *millet*s for Catholics in 1831 and for Protestants in 1850.<sup>5</sup>

A crucial concern in analyzing this institutionalization is ascertaining the degree to which the respective confessional communities and their practices were transformed through their interactions with state authority. There is much evidence to suggest that such transformations occurred to a significant degree. Maria Todorova, for example, suggests that the Orthodox church in the Ottoman empire ultimately became an “imperial institution,” whose internal structure and lines of authority by the nineteenth century depended substantially on the church’s implication in the Ottoman system of administration.<sup>6</sup> Analogous developments are discernable in the Russian empire. Robert Crews argues that Muslim communities in Russia were refashioned through the interaction of pious activists with the state, which was made possible in new ways by the state’s formal institutionalization

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<sup>4</sup> On these institutional arrangements and their origins, see E. A. Vishlenkova, *Zabotias’ o dushakh poddannyykh: Religioznaia politika v Rossii pervoi chetverti XIX veka* (Saratov, 2002); V. G. Vartanian, *Armiansko-Grigorianskaia tserkov’ v politike Imperatora Nikolaia I* (Rostov-na-Donu, 1999); D. D. Azamatov, *Orenburgskoe Magometanskoe Dukhovnoe Sobranie v kontse XVIII – XIX vv.* (Ufa, 1999).

<sup>5</sup> Charles A. Frazee, *Catholics and Sultans: The Church and the Ottoman Empire, 1453-1923* (London, 1983), p. 259; Roderic Davison, *Reform in the Ottoman Empire*, 2nd ed. (New York, 1973), p. 122.

<sup>6</sup> Maria Todorova, “The Ottoman Legacy in the Balkans,” in *Imperial Legacy: The Ottoman Imprint on the Balkans and the Middle East*, ed. L. Carl Brown (New York, 1996), p. 49.

of Islam.<sup>7</sup> To judge from the complaints of conservative critics, laws regulating Buddhist affairs significantly strengthened Buddhism in eastern Siberia, by recognizing lamas as a “clergy,” establishing Buddhist “parishes,” and investing supreme religious authority in a single Bandido-Khambo-Lama.<sup>8</sup> To be sure, different religions changed as a result of imperial institutionalization to varying extents, just as the degree of innovation introduced by imperial authorities differed in each case as well. With a supreme head located beyond the borders of the various empires, the Catholic church proved comparatively (though by no means entirely) impervious to imperial intervention. A comparative account of the degree of religious transformation resulting from state intervention would contribute significantly to our understanding of the imperial experience.

### CONFESSION AND NATION

Although diversity in the Russian empire was institutionalized along confessional lines, recent scholarship has nonetheless documented the growing tendency of institutions and political elites in late-imperial Russia to deploy ethnicity as a mode of classification. Even as existing bureaucratic structures and legal statutes remained geared primarily towards regulating diversity in its confessional manifestations, the political salience of ethnicity was rapidly increasing.<sup>9</sup> It would be misleading,

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<sup>7</sup> Robert D. Crews, “Empire and the Confessional State: Islam and Religious Politics in Nineteenth-Century Russia,” *American Historical Review* 108:1 (2003), pp. 50-83. See also Crews’ illuminating discussion of the transformation of *sharia* from a pattern of ethical conduct to a fixed code of law and a statement of orthodoxy backed by police power: “Islamic Law, Imperial Order: Muslims, Jews, and the Russian State,” *Ab Imperio* 3 (2004), pp. 467-90.

<sup>8</sup> See for example *Institut Bandida-Khambo-Lamy u buriat i ego otnoshenii k lamaizmu i missii* (Kazan’, 1911); Veniamin (Episkop Selenginskii), *O lamskom i idolopoklonnicheskom sueverii v vostochnoi Sibiri* (Irkutsk, 1882).

<sup>9</sup> See, for example, Charles Steinwedel, “To Make a Difference: The Category of Ethnicity in Late Imperial Russian Politics, 1861-1917,” in *Russian Modernity: Politics, Knowledge, Practices*, ed. David Hoffmann and Yanni Kotsonis (New York, 2000), pp. 67-86. A political program based on national distinctions was most fully implemented in the context of World War I. See Eric Lohr, *Nationalizing the Russian Empire: The Campaign Against Enemy Aliens during World War I* (Cambridge, Mass., 2003).

however, to suggest that nationality simply eclipsed confession as the most salient factor in the conceptualization of difference. It is important also to consider the ways in which conceptions of confession and nation interacted with one another, and the ways in which nationality became increasingly important *within* existing confessional communities, as opposed to merely arising in parallel to them.

In this regard the Ottoman experience is instructive. Even as the *millet* system construed communities almost exclusively in confessional terms, in one important case – the creation of the Bulgarian exarchate church in 1870 – the Porte actually institutionalized a national distinction within a single confessional community. On the one hand, the creation of this autocephalous Bulgarian church should undoubtedly be seen in terms of the establishment of a series of new national churches in the nineteenth century in Serbia, Romania, and Greece.<sup>10</sup> Nonetheless, even when viewed in this broader context, the Bulgarian case stands out, for in contrast to other Balkan cases, Bulgarian ecclesiastical autonomy *preceded* political independence rather than following it. Whereas autocephaly for the other Balkan states was in all cases a consequence of the attainment of national independence, the creation of the Bulgarian exarchate – with the explicit sanction of the Ottoman government and in the face of the bitter opposition of the Greek-dominated Patriarchate – involved the Porte’s acceptance of the national principle, alongside the confessional one, as a basis for the organization of communal autonomy.<sup>11</sup>

Although no Orthodox ethnic group received autocephaly in the Russian empire, this does not mean that the national issue was irrelevant within the Orthodox community. On the contrary, by the early twentieth century the growth of national consciousness and tendencies towards Russification in the administration of the church combined to create considerable dissatisfaction among Orthodox non-Russian popu-

<sup>10</sup> Paschalis M. Kitromilides, “‘Imagined Communities’ and the Origins of the National Question in the Balkans,” *European History Quarterly* 19:2 (1989), pp. 165-166; Ekkehard Kraft, “Von der Rum Milleti zur Nationalkirche: Die orthodoxe Kirche in Südosteuropa im Zeitalter des Nationalismus,” *Jahrbücher für Geschichte Osteuropas* 51:3 (2003), pp. 398-401.

<sup>11</sup> Kraft, “Von der Rum Milleti,” pp. 401-404, 408; Carsten Riis, *Religion, Politics, and Historiography in Bulgaria* (Boulder, CO, 2002), pp. 123-125. The patriarchate condemned the Bulgarians for “philetism” – the love of ethnicity, or the sin of having introduced ethnic difference into the church. See Kitromilides, “‘Imagined Communities,’” pp. 181-82.

lations. Ricarda Vulpius has recently identified important Ukrainophile tendencies among some of the clergy in the “little Russian” dioceses. Initially producing critiques of assimilation and calls for the retention of local particularities, these tendencies led after 1917 to demands for Ukrainian autocephaly, which was attained – with Bolshevik support, curiously enough – in 1921.<sup>12</sup> There were similar stirrings in Bessarabia after 1905, while in the Volga region the non-Russian Orthodox clergy began actively to criticize crude and heavy-handed forms of Russification in favor of “spiritual” forms of union that would allow for the preservation of ethnic particularity.<sup>13</sup> The most striking manifestation of national sentiment within Orthodoxy, however, was undoubtedly the campaign for Georgian autocephaly, which began in 1905 and ended, after the fall of the autocracy, with the proclamation of ecclesiastical independence in 1917. Autocephalists agitated actively on behalf of this cause and even assassinated the Russian Exarch of Georgia in 1908 to protest his opposition to autocephaly.<sup>14</sup>

National distinctions were increasingly relevant not only for the Orthodox confession, but for others as well. Particularly in the early twentieth century, Lithuanians became much more insistent about the “restoration and defense of the rights of the Lithuanian language in Roman Catholic churches of ethnographic Lithuania,” especially in those places where that language “has already been banished by the Polonizing clergy.”<sup>15</sup> Similarly, Estonians and Latvians demanded reform of

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<sup>12</sup> Ricarda Vulpius, “Ukrainische Nation und zwei Konfessionen: Der Klerus und die ukrainische Frage, 1861-1921,” *Jahrbücher für Geschichte Osteuropas* 49:2 (2001), pp. 240-256 (esp. pp. 248-254). See also Bohdan Bociurkiw, “The Rise of the Ukrainian Autocephalous Orthodox Church, 1919-1922,” in *Church, Nation and State in Russia and Ukraine*, ed. Geoffrey A. Hosking (London, 1991), pp. 228-249.

<sup>13</sup> Paul W. Werth, “*Inorodtsy on Obrusenie*: Religious Conversion, Indigenous Clergy, and the Politics of Assimilation in Late-Imperial Russia,” *Ab Imperio* 2 (2000), pp. 105-134. On the founding of non-Russian Orthodox monasteries, see Leonid Taimasov, “Nerusskie monastyri Kazanskogo kraia: Orientry konfessional'nogo obnoveniia (vtoraia polovina XIX veka),” *Acta Slavica Iaponica* 21 (2004), pp. 88-114.

<sup>14</sup> I have analyzed the issue of Georgian autocephaly in “Georgian Autocephaly and the Ethnic Fragmentation of Orthodoxy,” *Acta Slavica Iaponica* 23 (2006), pp. 74-100.

<sup>15</sup> Cited from *Ustav soiuza dlia vozstanovleniia prav litovskago iazyka v R.-Katolicheskoi Tserkvi v Litve* (Vil'na, 1907), p. 1. See also RGIA, f. 821 (Department of Religious Affairs of Foreign Confessions), op. 150, d. 155 (a report of the chairman of the union).

ecclesiastical administration, in which ethnic Germans predominated.<sup>16</sup> Significantly, in many cases the imperial state concluded that these disaffected and subordinate nationalities within non-Orthodox confessional communities could serve as useful allies against the dominant ones, whose aspirations and pretensions seemed increasingly at odds with the empire's integrity. Accordingly, the state became much more interested in the national composition of the different "foreign" confessions under its administration, particularly after 1905.<sup>17</sup> The multi-national composition of different confessions created new complications – and provided new opportunities – in the age of nationalism.

If one confession could include adherents of different nationalities, in other cases a single nationality could include adherents to different confessions. Ukrainians represent a paradigmatic case in this regard, as they were divided between the Uniate (Greek Catholic) and Orthodox confessions – a distinction that after 1875 corresponded to their division between the Austrian and Russian empires.<sup>18</sup> Romanians, too, were divided between the Orthodox and Uniate confessions, at least in Transylvania.<sup>19</sup> In the Russian empire, Belorussians were divided between the Orthodox and Catholic confessions, which created great epistemological difficulties for those ideologues who regarded Orthodoxy as an indispensable attribute of Russianness.<sup>20</sup> Armenians were also confessionally di-

<sup>16</sup> See, for example, RGIA, f. 821, op. 5, d. 6.

<sup>17</sup> For example, in 1910 the state requested governors to report on the nationality and language of all Lutherans and Reformed believers in their respective provinces. (RGIA, f. 821, op. 150, d. 618.)

<sup>18</sup> See Vulpus, "Ukrainische Nation und zwei Konfessionen," and John-Paul Himka, *Religion and Nationality in Western Ukraine: The Greek Catholic Church and the Ruthenian National Movement in Galicia, 1867-1900* (Montréal, 1999). In 1875 the last Uniates in the Russian empire were "reunited" with Orthodoxy. See Theodore R. Weeks, "The 'End' of the Uniate Church in Russia: The *Vozsoedinenie* of 1875," *Jahrbücher für Geschichte Osteuropas* 44:1 (1996), pp. 28–39.

<sup>19</sup> On this issue, see Keith Hitchins, *Orthodoxy and Nationality: Andreiu Saguna and the Romanians of Transylvania, 1846-1873* (Cambridge, Mass., 1977).

<sup>20</sup> On this score, see the discussion in Theodore R. Weeks, "Religion and Russification: Russian Language in the Catholic Churches of the 'Northwest Provinces' after 1863," *Kritika: Explorations in Russian and Eurasian History* 2:1 (2001), pp. 87-110; Darius Staliunas, "Mozhet-li katolik byt' russkim? O vvedenii russkogo iazyka v katolicheskoe bogosluzhenie v 60-e gody XIX veka," in *Rossiiskaia imperiia v zarubezhnoi istoriografii. Raboty poslednikh let: Antologiia*, ed. Paul Werth, Petr Kabytov, and Aleksei Miller (Moscow, 2005), pp. 577-588.



vided between a majority that adhered to the Apostolic (Gregorian) faith and a smaller number in communion with Rome, and in the 1860s some began to convert to Protestantism under the influence of foreign missionaries operating across the border in Persia and the Ottoman empire.<sup>21</sup> With the appearance of the Baptist faith in Russia – and in particular with the legalization of conversion to that confession in 1905 – even the Great Russian ethnicity itself began to experience divisions on the basis of confession, with significant implications for the imagining of the Russian community.<sup>22</sup> In the German empire, the problem was particularly complex, as a segment of the dominant nationality – Germans – shared a confession with an especially resistant national minority – Poles.<sup>23</sup> In each of these cases, albeit to varying degrees, these religious divisions complicated and conditioned the process of imagining and constructing national communities. They also created opportunities and complications for the state, which, as the ultimate arbiter of religious affairs in the empire, found it virtually impossible to occupy a position of neutrality in adjudicating the conflicts that emerged from these divisions.

In short, because of existing confessional institutions and because of the continued salience of confessional affiliation for nationalist imaginings, a full account of the “national question” in empires such as Russia and Turkey is impossible without attention to the religious side of the issue. Future research, one may hope, will do more to analyze the interaction of confession and nation in diverse imperial contexts, thereby permitting us to establish a more nuanced and comprehensive picture of this fundamental juxtaposition.

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<sup>21</sup> On Armenian Catholics, see Graf D. A. Tolstoi, *Rimskii Katolitsizm v Rossii* (St. Petersburg, 1877), vol. 2, pp. 50-54, 346-352; Rita Tolomeo, “Russko-Vatianskie otnosheniia i armianskatoliki Kavkaza,” in *Rossii i Vatikan v kontse XIX – pervoi treti XX vv.*, ed. E. S. Tokareva and A. V. Iudin (St. Petersburg, 2003), pp. 115-47. On Armenian conversions to Protestantism, which had significant implications for St. Petersburg’s claims of patronage and protection for the Gregorian confession, see my article, “Schism Once Removed: State, Sects, and the Meanings of Religious Toleration in Imperial Russia,” in *Imperial Rule*, ed. Alexei Miller and Alfred J. Rieber (Budapest, 2004), pp. 85-108.

<sup>22</sup> Coleman, *Russian Baptists*.

<sup>23</sup> On these dynamics, see the interesting discussion in Helmut Walser Smith, *German Nationalism and Religious Conflict: Culture, Ideology, Politics, 1870-1914* (Princeton, 1995), esp. pp. 169-205.



## RELIGION AND IMPERIAL BORDERS

Another fundamental characteristic of religious issues is that they often went across the borders of imperial states, involving communities and religious personnel who were the subjects of different rulers. Pilgrimage, for example, could often take believers beyond the borders of the Russian empire, whether to Mecca (Muslims), Urga (Buddhists), Rome (Catholics), or Jerusalem (Orthodox). The requests of believers for permission to travel abroad on pilgrimage raised crucial issues about issuing passports and granting leaves of absence to mullahs and imams. The travel of pilgrims abroad compelled the imperial state to develop travel and consular services and to attend to the health and welfare of its subjects during their stay abroad. The state was also compelled to contemplate the political consequences of closer contacts between believers in Russia and their counterparts abroad, and whether and how to establish surveillance over such contacts. There were also opportunities to promote particular regions of the empire by developing the transport infrastructure with pilgrims in mind—for example in Transcaucasia, so as to direct Muslim pilgrims from Persia and Central Asia through that region to Mecca. A few sites in Russia itself—such as the Catholic monastery at Częstochowa in Poland—drew numerous pilgrims from abroad as well. In short, pilgrimage served to implicate both believers themselves and the imperial government more deeply in international affairs.<sup>24</sup>

Complicated issues also arose in connection with the recruitment of religious personnel from abroad, for in certain cases St. Petersburg found it desirable or necessary to fill clerical vacancies in Russia with the subjects of other states. In order to influence “foreign” Armenians,

<sup>24</sup> On Muslims and the *hajj*, see Daniel Brower, *Turkestan and the Fate of the Russian Empire* (London, 2003), pp. 114-125, as well as his earlier article “Russian Roads to Mecca: Religious Tolerance and Muslim Pilgrimage in the Russian Empire,” *Slavic Review* 55:3 (1996), pp. 567-586. On other examples of pilgrimage, see V. Vashkevich, *Lamaity v vostochnoi Sibiri* (St. Petersburg, 1885), pp. 100-104; Theofanis George Stavrou, “The Russian Imperial Orthodox Palestine Society, 1882-1914” (Ph.D. diss., Indiana University, 1961), pp. 50-53, 63-64, 136-144, 206-218, 259-264. One should also note the dissertation by Eileen Kane, “Pilgrimage and Holy Places in Russo-Ottoman Relations, 1774-1854” (Princeton University, 2005), which addresses several religious traditions (Islam, Orthodoxy, and the Armenian Apostolic confession).

the imperial government often promoted Ottoman subjects to the position of Catholicos, the spiritual head of all Armenians of the Apostolic (Gregorian) confession.<sup>25</sup> With the expulsion of Jesuits from Russia under Alexander I, the imperial government sought to attend to the religious needs of Catholic foreigners in Russia by recruiting (non-Polish) Catholic priests from abroad, primarily from Bavaria.<sup>26</sup> At various times foreign missionaries of different Christian confessions received permission from St. Petersburg to conduct their activity in different borderland regions. After the insurrection of 1863, but before the “reunion” of Russia’s last remaining Uniates with Orthodoxy in 1875, St. Petersburg actively recruited Uniate clergy from Austrian Galicia, who were perceived to be more Russophile than their Polonized counterparts within Russia itself.<sup>27</sup> Faced with a dearth of qualified candidates for Protestant clerical positions trained inside Russia, the government also found it necessary to accept such candidates from abroad, especially for placement in the colonies of Samara and Saratov provinces.<sup>28</sup> In many of these cases the imperial government was compelled to deal with foreign states and foreign institutions – for example, the Basel Missionary Institute in Switzerland, which supplied many of the clerics for German colonists – and also had to determine whether and under which conditions these servitors from abroad would be required to become Russian subjects.<sup>29</sup> There were also important questions about their knowledge of Russian, which was understood as being necessary both to understand the empire’s laws

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<sup>25</sup> On the Catholicos, see the brief discussion below.

<sup>26</sup> Gosudarstvennyi Arkhiv Rossiiskoi Federatsii [GARF], f. 1165 (Special Chancery of the Ministry of Internal Affairs), op. 1, d. 33.

<sup>27</sup> Himka, *Religion and Nationality*, pp. 33-35; E. Kryzhanovskii, *Kniaz’ V. A. Cherkasskii i Kholmские greko-uniaty*, vyp. 1 (Warsaw, 1879), pp. 34-41; RGIA, f. 821, op. 4, d. 1512; RGIA, f. 821, op. 4, d. 2050.

<sup>28</sup> RGIA, f. 821, op. 6, d. 13; RGIA, f. 821, op. 6, d. 33; RGIA, f. 821, op. 5, d. 7; RGIA, f. 821, op. 5, d. 1518; RGIA, f. 821, op. 133, d. 978.

<sup>29</sup> In this regard it is curious that as of 1842 only candidates for placement in Lutheran parishes were required to become Russian subjects, whereas in other cases it was sufficient for the government to approve the given candidate and administer a service oath [*prisiaga na vernost’ sluzhby*]. See *Polnoe Sobranie Zakonov Rossiiskoi Imperii*, 2nd series, vol. 17, no. 15658 (19 May 1842) and RGIA, f. 821, op. 5, d. 7. The Armenian Catholicos was also required to become a Russian subject if recruited from abroad.

and to maintain parish records – one of the principal state obligations of clergies in Russia.<sup>30</sup>

Religious issues were also implicated in the conduct of diplomacy. From the signing of the treat of Küçük Kanarci in 1774, St. Petersburg afforded the status and condition of Orthodox believers in the Ottoman empire a significant place in its foreign policy, while its interference in Orthodox religious affairs often represented as much a challenge to Greek domination of those affairs – for example in favor of Bulgarians and Arab Christians – as it was to the Ottoman government itself.<sup>31</sup> But in no case was religion more fundamentally implicated in Russian diplomacy than in St. Petersburg's relations with the papacy, which were fundamental for the regulation of Catholic religious affairs in Russia. Rome and St. Petersburg struggled to reach agreement on a range of issues, such as the rules regulating mixed marriages, the method of correspondence between bishops and the Holy See, the canonical character of the Roman Catholic College in Russia, the procedure for the appointment of bishops, and the prospect of establishing new Catholic dioceses. A number of these issues were resolved in a Concordat concluded in 1847, yet others remained in dispute, and after the Polish insurrection of 1863, relations between the two sides were severed. Still, the virtual impossibility of maintaining Catholic affairs in Russia in the absence of relations with Rome drove St. Petersburg to seek new agreements with the Holy See in the 1870s and 1880s. To the extent that the interests of the two sides remained fundamentally at odds, relations continued to be extremely difficult, with significant consequences for Catholics in the empire.<sup>32</sup>

<sup>30</sup> Indeed, it was precisely this function, above all others, that made clergies into state servitors. See Gene M. Avrutin, "The Power of Documentation: Vital Statistics and Jewish Accommodation in Tsarist Russia," *Ab Imperio* 4 (2003), pp. 271-300; Paul W. Werth, "In the State's Embrace? Civil Acts in an Imperial Order," *Kritika: Explorations in Russian and Eurasian History* 7:3 (2006), pp. 433-458.

<sup>31</sup> On Russian support for Arab Christians in the Holy Land, for example, see Stavrou, "Russian Imperial Palestine Society." On Orthodox religious issues in Russia's 'eastern policy' more generally, see Lora Aleksandrovna Gerd, *Konstantinopol': Peterburg: Tserkovnaia politika Rossii na pravoslavnom Vostoke, 1878-1898* (Moscow, 2006).

<sup>32</sup> Relations between St. Petersburg and Rome have been fairly well studied. In addition to the recent collection *Rossii i Vatikan* (cited above), see the various perspectives provided by A. N. Popov, *Posledniaia sud'ba Papskoi politiki v Rossii, 1845-1867 gg.* (St. Petersburg, 1868); Adrien Boudou, *Le Saint-Siège et La Russie: Leurs Relations Diplomatiques au XIXe Siècle*, 2

Thus while Russia sought to use the Orthodox status of many Balkan peoples to promote its geopolitical interests in the region, conversely it was susceptible to interference on the part of the Holy See and, at times, Catholic powers in Europe.

The case of the Armenian Catholicos strikingly illustrates the degree to which confessional affairs in Russia could have an international dimension. Having liberated the Armenian monastery of Echmiadzin from Persia in 1827, Russia could claim as its subject the Supreme Patriarch or Catholicos, with spiritual authority over all Armenians of the Apostolic confession. Through this figure, the imperial government hoped to influence Armenians in neighboring Persia and especially the Ottoman empire. Over the course of the nineteenth century imperial authorities accordingly made great efforts to enhance the prestige of the Catholicos and to uphold his authority over the spiritual affairs of Armenian communities abroad, often at the expense of acceptable administration of Armenian religious affairs within Russia itself. The imperial government also became drawn into Armenian politics in the Ottoman empire, where the bulk of the world's Armenian population resided. At times, St. Petersburg made special efforts to ensure the election of an Ottoman subject to the throne at Echmiadzin, precisely in order to keep the Armenians of Constantinople content and spiritually subordinate to the Catholicos. With the rise of the Armenian national movement and policies of Russification, maintaining the balance between internal and external aspects of the Catholicos authority became much more complex. In essence, then, the Armenian Catholicos and the associated Russian policy are incomprehensible when taken out of an international context. St. Petersburg's attitude towards the Armenian Catholicos was deeply conditioned by processes within the Ottoman empire and indeed by the perceived viability of the Ottoman state itself.<sup>33</sup>

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vols. (Paris, 1922); E. Vinter [Eduard Winter], *Papstvo i tsarizm*, trans. R. A. Krest'ianinov and S. M. Raskina (Moscow, 1964); and Larry Wolff, *The Vatican and Poland in the Age of the Partitions: Diplomatic and Cultural Encounters at the Warsaw Nunciature* (Boulder, 1988).

<sup>33</sup> I have made a preliminary attempt to analyze the Catholicos and his place in imperial Russian religious policy in "Imperial Russia and the Armenian Catholicos at Home and Abroad," in *Reconstruction and Interaction of Slavic Eurasia and Its Neighboring Worlds*, ed. Osamu Ieda and Tomohiko Uyama (Sapporo, 2006), pp. 203-36.

In short, there were extensive religious connections that went across imperial borders, connecting imperial states and deeply implicating them in one another's affairs.<sup>34</sup>

### UNIFYING CENTER AND PERIPHERY

Focus on religious issues can also perform the useful function of bringing the central, Russian provinces of the tsarist empire and the borderland provinces into a single analytical field. Such an approach not only serves to contextualize more thoroughly government policy towards borderland populations, but also to elucidate links between historical processes at the "center" and developments at the periphery. A fruitful way of getting at this issue is to consider institutions and practices that existed throughout the entire empire (or most of it), but that took specific forms as a result of confessional differences. On the imperial periphery, such institutions and practices fulfilled — or were expected to fulfill — functions similar to those of the Russian center. Yet in terms of their form — and thus, to an extent, their content — they remained distinct from the corresponding Russian institutions and practices. Here I will point merely to a few suggestive examples, with the recognition that many could be addressed under this rubric.

The first is marriage. Gregory Freeze has documented the central — indeed increasing — role of Orthodoxy in the regulation of matrimonial issues in modern imperial Russia.<sup>35</sup> Yet the state's support for the religious form of marriage also extended to the non-Orthodox religions. In most family matters, the imperial government deferred to the prescriptions of the different churches and religious elites, and the construction of marital law in Russia thus became primarily a matter of

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<sup>34</sup> Aleksei Miller makes a similar point about the "entangled" character of empires more generally. See his comments in "Between the Local and Inter-Imperial: Russian Imperial History in Search of Scope and Paradigm," *Kritika: Explorations in Russian and Eurasian History* 5:1 (2004), pp. 7-26 (esp. pp. 18-20); as well as those in his contribution to the present volume.

<sup>35</sup> Gregory L. Freeze, "Bringing Order to the Russian Family: Marriage and Divorce in Imperial Russia, 1760-1860," *Journal of Modern History* 62:4 (1990), pp. 709-749.

investing diverse religious requirements with the force of law.<sup>36</sup> To be sure, the government did seek to impose greater “order” on the marital affairs of all confessions, for example by standardizing rules and procedures for the adherents to any one religion and by imposing identical age requirements on (almost) all subjects of the empire regardless of their religious affiliation. Yet the fact remains that because marriage depended on the provisions of different religions, it represented a different institution in each case. Rules on divorce, consanguinity, and polygamy – all of this depended primarily on the precepts of the various confessions.<sup>37</sup> Nowhere was this more clear than in the matter of mixed marriage, which not only complicated the state’s efforts to balance its own secular statutes with the canon of different churches, but also was deeply implicated in political contests over the relationship between Russia’s most sensitive borderland regions and its central provinces and institutions.<sup>38</sup>

Another example concerns oaths, which were administered to each person on the basis of his or her faith.<sup>39</sup> Virginia Martin has recently analyzed the ways in which the Russian practice of oath-taking was incorporated into the colonial courtrooms of the Kazakh steppe. The Islamic oath created by imperial officials was foreign to Kazakh nomadic custom and Islamic legal procedure, and the spread of this practice among Kazakhs, Martin argues, should not be seen as the emergence of

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<sup>36</sup> See Laura Engelstein, *The Keys to Happiness: Sex and the Search for Modernity in Fin-de-Siècle Russia* (Ithaca, 1992), esp. pp. 31-41; William Wagner, *Marriage, Property, and Law in Late Imperial Russia* (Oxford, 1994), pp. 59-223.

<sup>37</sup> For consideration of marriage in the case of non-Christian groups, see M. Morgulis, “Ob otoshenii nashego zakonodatel’stva k obychnomu brachnomu pravu inoplemenikov-nekhrisian,” *Zhurnal grazhdanskago i ugolovnago prava*, book 4 (1884), pp. 105-127; ChaeRan Freeze, *Jewish Marriage and Divorce in Imperial Russia* (Hanover, 2002); and Robert D. Crews, *For Prophet and Tsar: Islam and Empire in Russia and Central Asia* (Cambridge, Mass., 2006)..

<sup>38</sup> On mixed marriage, see V. Shein, “K istorii voprosa o smeshannykh brakakh,” *Zhurnal Ministerstva Iustitsii* 3 (1907), pp. 231-273; Leonid E. Gorizontov, *Paradoksy imperskoi politiki: pol’iaki v Rossii i russkie v Pol’she* (Moscow, 1999), pp. 75-99.

<sup>39</sup> This was true both for oaths of subjecthood (administered upon the ascension of each new emperor) and those administered to witnesses in courtroom procedures. *Svod Zakonov*, vol. 1 part 1 (1857 ed.), art. 34; *ibid.*, vol. 10, *Zakony grazhdanskie*, (1842 ed.), art. 2383.

the “rule of law” in the steppe.<sup>40</sup> The confessional character of oaths also permitted religious servitors to contest demands made by the secular state. A major dispute with Armenians developed in the 1890s, when Catholicos Makarii and his successor Mkrtych rejected the demands of judicial authorities in Transcaucasia that adherents to the Apostolic confession take the oath in Russian. They insisted that the oath was not a state act but a religious one, and that its execution in canonical ancient Armenian represented a sacred obligation of the Armenian clergy.<sup>41</sup> In short, because the oath was at least partly a religious act, the adherents to different religious traditions each invested oaths with a particular form, content, and significance – or, in the case of groups like the Mennonites, rejected the act of oath-taking altogether, thus compelling state authorities to devise alternatives.

As a third example I would point to the issue of “clergy” in imperial Russia. Our knowledge of the Orthodox clergy – its social characteristics and its legal status – is quite extensive, thanks primarily to the research of Gregory Freeze.<sup>42</sup> The same cannot be said with respect to the religious servitors of the so-called foreign confessions. The non-Christian religions lacked “clergies” in the Christian sense of the term, and it was therefore up to the imperial state to create and legitimize such a group for each religious tradition. Even so, it remained unclear who precisely constituted the “clergy” in each case and which rights and privileges they enjoyed, particularly since the state explicitly refused to recognize non-Christian servitors as distinct social orders, or *sosloviia*.<sup>43</sup> Among Muslims and Jews there were also numerous unofficial servitors – persons performing religious functions without legal authorization from the state – while in the case of Buddhism, the government was faced with

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<sup>40</sup> Virginia Martin, “Kazakh Oath-Taking in Colonial Courtrooms: Legal Culture and Russian Empire-Building,” *Kritika: Explorations in Russian and Eurasian History* 5:3 (2004), pp. 483-514.

<sup>41</sup> RGIA, f. 821, op. 150, d. 474, pp. 86, 93-94.

<sup>42</sup> Gregory L. Freeze, *The Russian Levites; Parish Clergy in the Eighteenth Century* (Cambridge, Mass., 1977); idem, *The Parish Clergy in Nineteenth-Century Russia: Crisis, Reform, Counter-reform* (Princeton, 1983).

<sup>43</sup> The Law Digest stated explicitly, “Persons performing religious services by the rituals of non-Christian faiths do not constitute particular social orders in the country.” *Svod Zakonov*, vol. 9 (1842 ed.), note to art. 457.



the proliferation of lamas well beyond the levels authorized by official statutes governing Buddhist affairs.<sup>44</sup> Even with respect to the Christian confessions the situation was complex. Like Orthodox religious servitors, those of the Armenian Apostolic confession represented a particular class or *soslovie*, while the situation for Catholic and Protestant clerics was a good deal more complicated.<sup>45</sup> Catholic servitors of noble origin continued to enjoy the rights of nobility even as members of the clergy, while all Protestant servitors enjoyed the rights of personal (non-hereditary) nobility as long as they served as pastors.<sup>46</sup> In short, “the clergy” represented quite different institutions and social configurations in the case of the different religions of Russia, and closer attention to both the similarities and the differences may provide us a much fuller picture of Russia’s social structure and legal system, not to mention significant elements of its forms of imperial governance.

One could point to numerous other practices that existed among virtually all of the empire’s subjects but in a confessionally specific form for each religious group. The larger point, however, is that by focusing on such institutions and practices we gain the opportunity both to benefit from broad comparative analysis and to incorporate the Russian provinces themselves – the core territories of the empire – into the analysis, thereby achieving a more fully integrated history of Russia.

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<sup>44</sup> On this problem of non-Christian clergy see Crews, *For Prophet and Tsar*; Freeze, *Jewish Marriage and Divorce*; RGIA, f. 821, op. 150, d. 423, ll. 17-19; Vashkevich, *Lamaity v vostochnoi Sibiri*; *O lamaistve v Zabaikal'skom krae* (n.p., n.d.); M. N. Farkhshatov, “Musul'manskoe dukhovenstvo,” in *Islam na territorii byvshei Rossiiskoi Imperii*, vyp. 2, ed. S. M. Prozorov (Moscow, 1999), pp. 67-72. On certain implications of the indeterminate status of Muslim “clergy” for criminal law, see Abby Schrader, *Languages of the Lash: Corporal Punishment and Identity in Imperial Russia* (DeKalb, 2002), esp. pp. 51-77.

<sup>45</sup> That is, only in the case of these two confessions was it possible for persons (wives and children, principally) to belong to the clerical estate (*dukhoivnoe sostoianie*) without holding clerical office (*dukhoivnyi san*). See K. Kavelin, “Ob ogranichenii grazhdanskoi pravospobnosti v Rossii po sostoianiiam i zvaniiam,” *Zhurnal Ministerstva Iustitsii* 11 (1862), pp. 504-05; RGIA, f. 1268, op. 3, d. 253, ll. 23-23ob. Less clear is the extent to which the Armenian clergy constituted a closed, hereditary social order to the extent that the Orthodox clergy did. On the latter, see Freeze, *Russian Levites*, ch. 7; and idem, *Parish Clergy*, ch. 4.

<sup>46</sup> *Svod Zakonov*, vol. 9 (1842 ed.), arts. 335, 385.

## CONCLUSION

This chapter has sought to be suggestive rather than conclusive. Each one of the topics identified above of course deserves far more attention than I have been able to give it here. I have nonetheless sought to emphasize that because the imperial state understood and institutionalized the diversity of its realm in largely confessional terms, attention to religious issues remains central to our efforts to study the empire. Speaking in the broadest terms, I contend that religious issues should be analyzed not strictly in their own terms, but in terms of their relationships to larger historical (and imperial) problems, such as national imaginings, international relations, and the development of imperial Russian law and institutions. In short, I call for historical analysis that recognizes the embeddedness of religion in a wide range of processes, practices, and institutions that were crucial to the development and functioning of imperial polities.