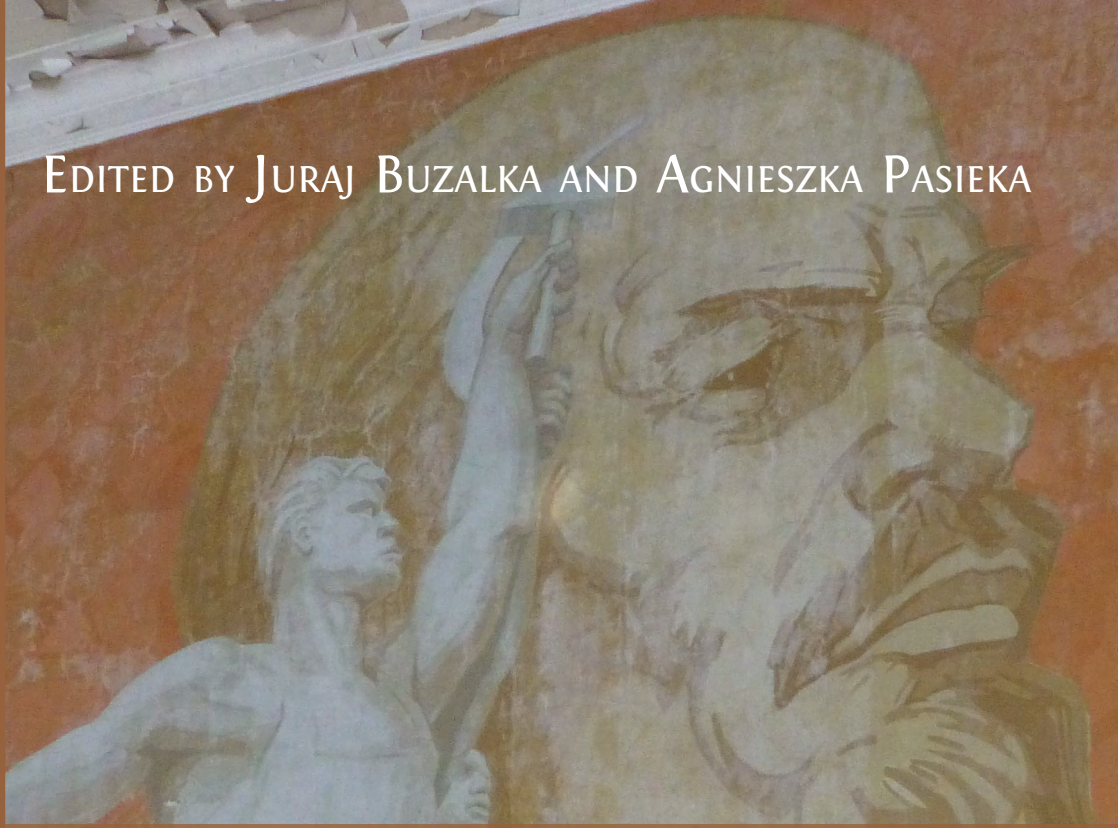

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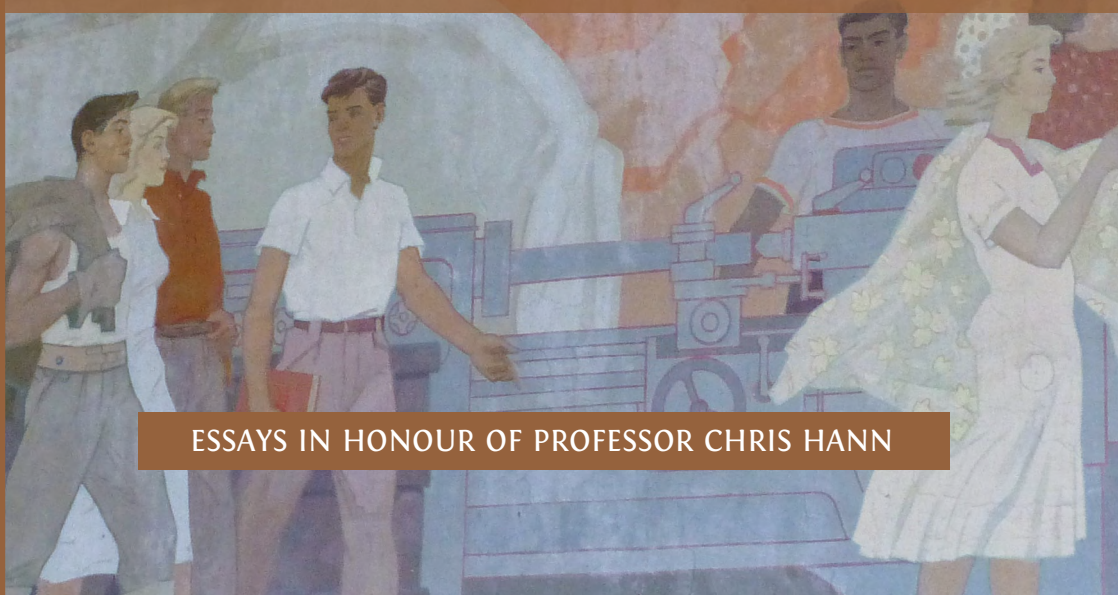
ANTHROPOLOGY OF TRANSFORMATION

From Europe to Asia and Back



ESSAYS IN HONOUR OF PROFESSOR CHRIS HANN

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4. "We Are Not Believers, We're Workers"

The Synchrony of Work, Gender, and Religion in a Priestless Orthodox Community[1]

Agata Ładykowska

"We are not believers, we are workers", said forty-five-year-old Tatiana on hearing what had brought me to her region. I had arrived in Prichud'e, a region on the western shore of the Peipus Lake that lies between Estonia and Russia, to study the interplay between economy and religion in a chain of settlements where both Orthodox believers and Old Believers have resided for centuries. "Orthodoxy? I have nothing to do with it. And besides, we do not live here; we only come to visit my mother. You know, nowadays, all the young people have left. There are only a handful of old ladies—*babushkas*—who live here. This village is dying." Initially, I was obviously disappointed to hear an answer which suggested that no religious or economic activity was to be found in my chosen fieldsite. However, this encounter proved revealing, as very soon I began to realise that utterances of this type—which I was to hear quite often—were at odds with everyday practice.

Tatiana and her husband did indeed live in Tartu, an urban centre located nearby, and had jobs in the service sector: this was a fact. But each of their visits to the village would last at least four days a week. Moreover, these visits were also enormously busy, filled with providing

1 The research on which this article is based was conducted within a project financed by the National Science Centre, DEC-2016/21/B/HS3/03136.

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a helping hand to their mothers. The latter needed to be driven by car to visit the church or the cemetery, or a family gathering or neighbours who did not live close enough to be reached on foot. They also asked for assistance in shopping or doing all kinds of renovations in their old houses, and most of all in tending to the gardens on their plots of land. There was an urgent need to mow the lawn, which required regular attention, but most importantly the vegetable plots, which were planted with onions, cucumbers, carrots, potatoes and plenty of other vegetables, begged for the hard and frequent physical work of gardening. While being involved in all of these activities, Tatiana and Sergey demonstrated full familiarity with the local ways of acting: as they had grown up in the countryside, they knew how to cultivate the soil. They were also perfectly in tune with all the church practices. After a while I learnt that Sergey's mother played an important role in the priestless Old-Believer ritual community, and was therefore called by her son "*batiushka*" (lit. 'father'; the term denotes a priest in the Orthodox Church). In light of the couple's initial denial of contact with religion, this information provided firm confirmation not only of the fact that both strands of Orthodoxy can be found here, informing each other in multiple ways, but also that religion mobilises different generations in different ways. It soon became clear that they are not the only middle-generation couple who are closely connected to the village, as on a daily basis many younger faces were also to be seen. Moreover, these people's connection with the village comprised both active engagement in their parents' religious practices, as well as involvement in processes which supported the economic dimensions of their own existence.

The vegetables grown on their mothers' plots were sold by them for a profit, and the empty rooms in their mothers' houses were rented out to tourists and to the fishermen who regularly come to the shores of Lake Peipus to enjoy fishing. I learned that it is particularly in winter, when fishermen regularly come here from Latvia, that local home budgets are supplemented by revenues from tourism. I thus soon understood that, despite my initial apprehensions, both fields of my inquiry, religion and economy, would yield abundant ethnographic information in this site. Only with time, upon hearing the life stories of the older generation, did I begin to see the trajectories of the interconnection between the two which remained invisible to the middle generation. While these

trajectories were locally specific, as they were experienced by a specific group in a specific period of time, they proved to be illustrative of more widespread debates concerning the logic of the relationship between economic prosperity and religion, and helped shed light on how this entanglement may be resolved within Orthodoxy.

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Taking its inspiration from the Weberian agenda (Weber 2001[1905]), this paper aims to illustrate the interrelation between economic decision-making and religious identity within the ethnic Russian Eastern Christian communities inhabiting the western bank of the Chudskoe/Peipus Lake, paying particular attention to the historical dimension from which these interactions emerge. It builds on a combination of archival research, interviews and participant observation in everyday rural life. The study investigates patterns of labour and exchange, gender and age in communities termed here 'priestless Orthodox', and thereby explores the particularities of the alignment of economy and religion in Eastern Christianity. In this way, the study contributes to the project of the anthropology of Christianity by providing a comparative perspective on matters of materiality, individual and collective conceptualisations of personhood and the pertinence of belief.

The anthropology of Christianity is dominated by studies of particular forms of Protestantism, notably Pentecostalism, which results in a series of distortions: 1) an imbalance in representation of other branches of Christianity; and consequently, 2) limited theoretical opportunities for comparative research. A similar state of affairs exists beyond this subfield of anthropology and concerns social theory more widely: existing analytical frameworks within the social sciences are distorted by a 'Protestant bias' (Hann 2007) and as such they do not provide an adequate paradigm for the analysis of the patterns of the Orthodox world. As a consequence, in the scant literature engaging with Orthodoxy this significant branch of Christianity is largely misrepresented. In proposing a historical-ethnographic view on the economic life of Eastern Christians, this article aims to fill the gap in existing scholarship resulting from Protestant overrepresentation and a concomitant lack of interest in Eastern Christianity, and in particular a negligence of its historical dimension. A combination of in-depth

anthropological analysis with a historical approach offers an original perspective for ethnographic exploration of Eastern Christians' well-documented adherence to 'Immutable Tradition'. At the same time, it renders religion a contributing, not a 'genetic' factor in long-term patterns of political and economic development. Avoiding simplistic explanations emphasising the absence in the Orthodox tradition of a Protestant ethic based in interiorised asceticism—which identify this as the cause of Orthodoxy's failure to develop the combination of political, legal and economic conditions that enabled the breakthrough to an increasingly secular modernity in the West—this article looks at the distinctive ways in which Orthodoxy has shaped, but not necessarily determined, indigenous conceptions of the relationship between self and wealth.

The article thus places religion within the context of wider institutional changes and power relationships, and their consequences for self-understanding. In this way, by investigating the different, alternative notions of modernity, secularity and identity at play, the study challenges unidirectional models of modernity grounded in an interweaving of secularity, individualism and the spread of capitalism. Inspired by the approach of the historical anthropology of the former Soviet bloc, the article foregrounds complex—synchronic and diachronic—local responses to the shifting demands of secular and religious regimes, and highlights the social conditions and motivations generating those responses in looking for their underlying, long-term logic. Social anthropological research in the communities of the region known in the Russian language as Prichud'e (Peipsimaa in Estonian) suggests that over the period of the life of the last three generations, during which religion was subjected to severe political pressures, these communities developed a tacit strategy based on the compartmentalisation of religion by age and gender, which allowed them to maintain an Orthodox identity at the community level despite the demands of consecutive political regimes. While similar observations have been recorded in Old Believers' communities in Russia (Rogers 2009) and Romania (Naumescu 2016), here I propose to look at a mixed Orthodox and Old Believers' society whose main religious characteristic I denote through the working notion of 'priestless Orthodoxy'. My point is that it is a distanced attitude to the clergy, developed over centuries as a result of shifting politics towards Orthodoxy, that supported local

ways of acting that contributed to these communities' unique sense of engagement with the material dimension of life, existing alongside their self-avowed secularity.

Theoretical Considerations: Deorientalising Orthodoxy

In this article I follow Chris Hann's line of argument that the relationship between Western social theory and Eastern Christianity is problematic in the sense that it both obscures and exposes the ethnocentric premises of the theory (Hann 2011). Eastern Christianity as an area of study remains under- and/or mis-represented in social scientific writings (Hann and Goltz 2010; Hann 2011; Lubańska and Ładykowska 2013), and its interplay with different fields of power, including that of the economy, remains understudied. This neglect extends beyond the ethnographic study of Orthodoxy, concerning this entire branch of Christianity more generally, with serious implications for anthropology and for social theory more broadly (Hann 2011; 2012).

Social theory owes much to Max Weber in this respect (Hann 2011; 2012). Weber's framework stresses the economic ethic (*Wirtschaftsethik*) of Protestantism as the key to the genesis of modernity, secularity and European exceptionalism, but an inadvertent result of this line of thought is an emphasis on Protestantism, which has exerted a long-term and widespread domination over anthropological reflections on religion. The 'Christian bias' embedded in the deep structures of anthropological theory (Cannell 2005; Robbins 2007) proves to be a "Protestant bias" (Hann 2007) and continues to distort the "anthropology of Christianity" (Cannell 2006; cf. Hann 2007; Lubańska and Ładykowska 2013) resulting in the above-mentioned general neglect of anthropology in favour of other branches of Christianity (Hann and Goltz 2010; Hann 2011; 2012; Zowczak 2000; Lubańska 2007; Lubańska and Ładykowska 2013). Under the heading of the 'anthropology of Christianity', one finds almost exclusively ethnographies of Protestant or Pentecostal movements from the post-colonial world (e.g. Cannell 2005; 2006; Robbins 2003a; 2003b; 2004; 2007; Keane 2007; Tomlinson 2006; Engelke 2006; Tomlinson and Engelke 2006).[2] Eastern Christianity seems excluded from many levels

2 However, some balance in the field has appeared lately. For example, the *Current Anthropology* Special Issue of 2014 (vol. 10) offers some fresh perspectives. Moreover,

of anthropological reflection, including from the deep structures of anthropological theorising.

In particular, the link between material/financial success and interiorised belief occupies a special position in anthropological/theoretical meta-representations. This coinage has a specific historicity. Weber's agenda consisted in the argument that the emergence and spread of capitalism relied on mobilising Protestantism's stress on hard work and productivity. The cornerstone of Weber's concept of work ethic was Luther's notion of work as vocation. The link between a Protestant ethic and economic success has been pursued by numerous authors since Weber to describe a distinctive evangelical spirit of American capitalism, and has established a firm representation for 'prosperity theology' (a.k.a. the health and wealth gospel) that links faith with financial success. Outside the US context, prosperity theology has been linked to the globalisation of charismatic Christianity (Coleman 2000), and described as a highly "portable", transnational entity that is easily adopted into new social contexts (Bielo 2007). Studies addressing 'Weber's question' in the Orthodox context are almost non-existent, with a few remarkable exceptions, such as Köllner (e.g. 2012). Another corollary of Weber's influence is the biased definition of religion, based on the Christian (or, more precisely, Protestant) idiom that anthropologists have at their disposal (Asad 1997; Cannell 2005). This means that they ideologically privilege a notion of religion that prioritises personal, private faith[3] over collective, public practice.[4] This makes them inherently discriminatory

it hosts at least three contributions investigating Eastern Christianity, in which the research agenda of the anthropology of Christianity (materiality, dis/continuity, theology-led kinds of social change) is applied (Hann 2014; Humphrey 2014; Keane 2014). However, the articles by Webb Keane (2014) and Caroline Humphrey (2014) are not based on original ethnographic research, which means that the demand for more anthropological research on Eastern Christianity applies *a fortiori*. This claim is consensually recognised within the anthropological milieu with an interest in the anthropology of Christianity (Boylston 2013), which established an electronic forum for intellectual exchange, namely 'New Directions in the Anthropology of Christianity' (formerly 'AnthroCyBib'; administered from the University of Edinburgh; https://www.new-directions.sps.ed.ac.uk/).

3 A feature which makes religion a 'portable' idea, easily exported mainly to the post-colonial world.

4 This leads inevitably to methodological failures in applying the anthropological conceptual apparatus to many other (not only non-Christian-derivative, but also non-Protestant-derivative) religions (see, for example, the category of 'belief', discussed by Rodney Needham (1972), Edward Evans-Pritchard, and Malcolm Ruel

toward religious traditions in which public manifestations of religion are privileged, such as Islam, which places emphasis on external, embodied behaviour (Asad 2003; 1997; Mahmood 2005), or Eastern Orthodox Christians. For the latter, religion: 1) is a core constitutive element of ethnic and national identity (Agadjanian and Roudometof 2005), which 2) relies heavily on the territorial spread of faith (which means that Orthodoxy remains a matter of birthright rather than personal belief, and that the globalisation paradigm produces remarkably different effects in these societies), and which 3) in some instances does not necessarily require belief in any form of divinity (Ghodsee 2009). Weber's influence thus remains fundamental in the way his thought constitutes anthropological common sense, and consequently, forms a methodological and theoretical impediment to the anthropological study of Eastern Christianity.

The issue of a meaningful definition of religion forms an especially fruitful direction of research, since still the most widespread construction is Clifford Geertz's universalisable definition of 1966 in which religion is separated from all forms of power. This contemporary hegemonic concept of religion has become "a modern Western norm", paradigmatic for contemporary social theory, whereas it is rather the product of a unique, Western European post-Reformation historicity (Asad 1997: 28), and as such lacks explanatory value for religions and societies which have never been subject to these historical processes. For example, Orthodox ecclesiology understands 'culture' and 'religion' as inherently related (Tataryn 1997), and thus offers an alternative to Western presuppositions of the nature of that relationship. In contradistinction to Western conceptualisations of personhood as a

(1982), and also, in a different vein, by Robbins 2007). The interiorised state that 'belief' denotes to certain Christians remains beyond the reach of ethnographers, who nevertheless tend to ascribe it to the members of religious communities that they study, often without empirical evidence. Hann argues against this evident ethnocentric distortion, calling for a more reflexive attitude with regard to the 'Christian' bias of the dominant European intellectual traditions: "Perhaps this criticism would be better formulated as the 'Protestantism of anthropology', since the liturgical traditions of the other branches of Christianity do not place the same one-sided emphasis on texts and interiorized belief [...] The basic challenge remains: how to understand the religions (or cosmologies, or simply world views) of other peoples, without distorting them through our own dominant conceptual prisms" (Hann 2012: 8).

liberal subject (autonomous, choosing, individualised) that remain the assumed unit of analysis in most social science, particularly in contemporary economics and political science, typical of Eastern Christianity is a relational person: a notion of personhood epitomised theologically as "being in communion" (Knight 2007; Zizioulas 1997; Chirban 1996; Agadjanian and Rousselet 2010). Casting the subject in social scientific terms, Gabriel Hanganu (2010), who engaged in an ethnographic investigation of theology and the materiality of icons in eastern Romania, found that Eastern Christians elaborate in their practices a peculiar version of "distributed personhood", which occupies an intermediary position between the notion of the individual as a self-contained unit and the various non-Christian forms of distributed personhood described by Strathern (1988). Hanganu's study enquires into many material, temporal and theological dimensions of Eastern Christians' "relational personhood".

Another Eastern Orthodox peculiarity is inherent in its theology of salvation, which developed outside the shadow of Augustine and the attendant debates on faith, good works and justification so prominent in the Christian West. With a much less negative and absolute view of the fall of man and original sin than in the West, theologians in the East (particularly Maximus the Confessor, and, later, Gregory Palamas) concentrated on the ways in which human beings could themselves participate in the process of self-transformation that would mitigate the effects of sin and lead to deification: returning to become one with God (Pelikan 2003: 10–16). On the practical level, such a conceptualisation triggers everyday responses very different to those suggested by Weber, as I hope to demonstrate in the following pages (but see also Rogers 2009; Ładykowska 2017). Such Eastern Orthodox peculiarities are often viewed in the West as Orthodoxy's inability to deal with religious pluralism or to accept the modern, liberal agenda with its emphasis on the rights of the individual. However, this 'East' versus 'West' tension is brought about by an essential discordance in ecclesiologies, and in definitions of person and community between the Western and Eastern Churches. This means that on one level they are a manifestation of a fundamental theological and ecclesiological position that cannot be 'corrected' by a simple acceptance of the principle of religious liberty (Tataryn 1997), as is often expected of these churches. This conflict

also reflects the danger of approaching 'the East' in narrow, 'Western' terms: for this helps to perpetuate the principal premise that Orthodoxy has failed to develop the combination of political, legal and economic conditions that allow for a breakthrough to the increasingly secular modernity found in the West (Hann and Goltz 2010: 11). I argue here that it is yet another misrepresentation of Orthodoxy, appearing so only when seen through the lens of the narrow definition of modernity.

Indeed, modernity becomes a crucial issue in this debate. Even the multiple modernities (Eisenstadt 2002) paradigm presents a problem in this regard, as visible in the modest number of serious proposals discussing Orthodox Christian modernity (e.g. Agadjanian 2003; 2010; Makrides 2005; 2012; Stöckl 2006; 2011; Buss 2003). For such works either ask a question of whether and how Orthodoxy defines 'what it means to be modern' in its own terms, that is they argue for a *sui generis* Orthodox modernity, or they attempt to approach it through what they perceive as 'culturally normative', that is through the 'Western' mode of modernity and its terms. The latter approach reveals an inherent tension in basic tenets: Western modernity is defined by 'the breakthrough', whereas Orthodoxy defines itself through the "immutability of Tradition" (Agadjanian and Roudometof 2005: 11). This strained relationship unfailingly leads to negative conclusions, in which Orthodoxy's 'irrationality' is emphasised as responsible for its incompatibility with 'modernity' (as in Huntington's "clash of civilizations" theory, for example). 'Normative modernity' in these cases is conceptualised as 'rationalisation'. Another essentialising view of Orthodoxy, often invoked in order to defend it from the charge of its alleged incompatibility with modernity, highlights its intrinsically otherworldly orientation, meaning a less engaged attitude towards the material dimension of existence (cf. Kenworthy 2008). This otherworldly orientation includes a series of other essentialising categories allegedly inherent to Orthodoxy, such as a less individualistic attitude, a passive attitude towards the transformation of the world, sentimentalism, mysticism, asceticism, a strong communitarian spirit, social conservatism and anti-materialism (Makrides 2005: 183). Such a defence, however, despite its recognition for ethnographically recorded alternative notions of "rationalisation" and "modernization" (Makrides 2005: 198–200), in fact contributes to a reification of the conceptualisation of modernity as 'rationalisation'

and 'progression', that is to the Western-centric perspective of modes of thought and action. This is not completely unfounded as Orthodoxy has developed a critical discourse on Western modernity, pointing to overall negative consequences of its development, such as secularisation, and then tries to solve these Western impasses by reference to Orthodoxy's own philosophical heritage. There is a pervasive discourse presenting Western Christianity as abandoning authentic Christian roots and thus currently experiencing this step's tragic consequences. Secondly, there has been a continuous influence exerted by the religious philosophical thought of nineteenth-century Russia, a current including the Slavophiles, which developed a strong anti-Western critique.

However, different levels of analysis allow for a variety of approaches. Historically speaking, despite the fact that Orthodoxy had many difficulties accepting 'modernity' because it arose from a geographical/cultural/religious conglomerate of Western Europe, which was thought to have deviated from the true Christian doctrine and tradition preserved in the East, these countries have been not only continuously influenced by the "Western paradigm", but also expected to embrace it (Makrides 2013: 250). Orthodox societies which, based on different theological premises and with their own peculiar histories, may have produced an entirely different conception of religion or modernity, remain an unexplored, yet potentially promising area of study that can lead to the deconstruction of established definitions and notions. Thus, investigating alternative conceptions of religion does not only help to understand the political, legal and economic reasoning behind certain social developments which come under assault or critique from Western societal forces and policy-makers. It also sheds light on how our scientific vocabulary draws on concepts that rely on a specifically Protestant- (or Calvinist-) derivative soteriology and, as such, cannot be extrapolated to societies based on a different cosmological paradigm. Western social theory remains ethnocentric in the sense that it relies on categories originating from specifically Western currents of Christianity (Cannell 2005), while anthropology, itself a product of a "unique Western historicity" (Asad 1997), continues to be insufficiently reflexive towards its own origins. Orthodoxy, in this perspective, is an often-unremarked victim of orientalisation: it remains at the margins of anthropological reflection, both as an object of study and as a site from which anthropological

definitions are formulated. Foreclosing Orthodoxy from both of these levels of anthropological interest culminates in the lack of an adequate framework for researching it (Lubańska and Ładykowska 2013).

Prichud'e

The research on which this article is based was conducted among Eastern Christians (both Orthodox and priestless Old Believers) of the region known in Russian as Prichud'e (Peipsimaa in Estonian). The region is composed of a chain of villages, of roughly comparable size (each numbering around 100 inhabitants), placed in a 20km-wide lane along the western bank of the Chudskoe/Peipus Lake. The villages of Logoza (in Estonian: Vene Lohusuu), Chorna (Mustvee), Raiusha (Raja), Kikita (Kükita), Tikhoka (Tiheda), Krasnye Gory (Kallaste), Rotchina (Rootsiküla), Nos (Nina), Malye and Bolshye Kol'ki (Väike ja Suur Kolkja), Sofiya (Sofia), Kazapel' (Vene Kasepää), Voronya (Varnja) and Kostina (Kirepi) are in the majority populated by Russian-speaking communities. Historical sources indicate that Orthodoxy was registered in this area as early as the late sixteenth century. Also, the Russian names of several of the villages listed above were already registered in the earliest available documents (mainly censuses) for the region dating from the late sixteenth to early-seventeenth centuries. During the Livonian war (1558–1582), Russia conquered this part of Estonia and established the Orthodox diocese of Jurjev-Viljandi.[5] In 1582, however, Tartu was conquered by Poles, and then later by Sweden. Due to the unfavourable conditions brought about by state regulations introduced following these conquests (supporting Catholicism and Protestantism, respectively), Orthodoxy was suppressed. Orthodox churches were closed, Orthodox priests were sent off to Russia, and the states' policies aimed at the reconversion of Orthodox believers to Catholicism or Lutheranism (Savikhin, Kasikov, and Vasil'chenko 2011: 119). As a result, Orthodox communities lived in isolation from mainstream Orthodoxy: without priests and without knowledge of the Nikonian reform (Savikhin, Kasikov, and Vasil'chenko 2011). These

5 During this period, a large number of Russians relocated to Prichud'e to take part in the construction of roads and bridges (Savikhin, Kasikov, and Vasil'chenko 2011: 119).

conditions not only made the local Orthodox communities more open to priestless Old Believer newcomers fleeing from persecution, but they also allow for a common framework through which both of these strands of Orthodoxy can be examined. Priestly Old Believers developed multiple hierarchies of ordained clergy separate from and critical of the mainstream Russian Orthodox Church. By contrast, priestless Old Believers were convinced that Patriarch Nikon's reforms had driven sanctity from the world and inaugurated the reign of the Antichrist. The ordination of new priests by bishops as a result became impossible, as did sacraments that required the participation of clergy. With the world in this state, priestless Old Believer theologians came to locate religious authority and its transmission increasingly in the collective decision-making capacity of the people themselves (Robson 1995: 25). This theological move lent a particular social shape to the kinds of Christian communities that sought salvation along the priestless Old Believer path. Most notably, it removed the authority of a specialist, ordained and self-perpetuating hierarchy regulating moral conduct. Residing side by side, both priestless Old Believers and Orthodox believers without churches and clergy not only continued to cultivate their faiths and identities, but also shared a common framework regarding the location of religious authority. I will illustrate this argument further on in the chapter. During the Great Northern War (1700–1721), Estonia became subject to Russia and as a result mainstream Orthodoxy received full privileges (Toom 2011).[6] Also, as part of the Russian Empire, it became the object of political interests connected to the expansion of that empire. As Paul Werth (1996) brilliantly illustrates, the extension of the empire implied a growing diversity of its subjects, a reported tenacity of indigenous beliefs and persistence of local identities, and consequent administrative concerns over their loyalty.

In response to this diversity, the second quarter of the nineteenth century witnessed the development of a new ideological formulation positing the existence of a peculiarly Russian spirit and set of morals that should serve as the basis for the Russian Empire's organic and distinct development. This new ideological formulation, promulgated

6 This fact has stimulated production of a large scholarship on the entanglements of Lutheranism and Orthodoxy in Estonia, a topic which remains beyond the scope of this article.

as Official Nationality in 1833, consisted of three principles: Orthodoxy, autocracy and *narodnost'* (a term usually translated as 'nationality'). Its exponents believed that these traits were deeply rooted in Russian history and defined Russia as a political entity and community. This emerging ideology asserted the need for a greater cultural and social unity of diverse, multiethnic and multireligious identities centred around these three principles. This shift necessitated greater administrative centralisation, and some fundamental transformations in the lives and attitudes of non-Russians. Russian administrators saw a specific need to inculcate among non-Russians a basic understanding of the Russian language, institutions and the morals and spirit on which they were founded. The empire's population—including Russian peasants—needed a certain basic knowledge in order to perform their assigned functions in society and to understand the broader social whole in which they were located, and whose interests they should serve. Thus, Orthodoxy was one of the basic principles included in Alexander I's and especially Nikolai I's mission of enlightenment and formation of an empire. In an institutional sense, the Orthodox Church's many local parishes served as a node of contact between the Russian state and the indigenous population. Thus, the Orthodox Church acted as a conduit for the ideas and conceptions that Russian administrators wished to foster in the subordinate population. The enactment of this policy meant a growing number of church buildings in newly acquired lands, including Prichud'e, where Orthodox churches began to be built around the 1820s. The construction of new churches in this period was an expression of the empire's Christianisation-cum-civilisation mission in the non-Christian edges of the empire, and it explicitly aligned modernity and progress with Orthodoxy (Jersild 1997; Jersild and Melkadze 2002; Manning 2008; Werth 1996).

While the reader may find the need to achieve this goal more obvious in areas such as the empire's eastern lands or the Caucasus populated by non-Christians, one must bear in mind that the church was part of the administrative apparatus in the Russian Empire and that, accordingly, it performed administrative functions. Modernity was a key concern of the growing state, and Orthodoxy occupied a principal position in this project. Throughout the nineteenth century until 1905, the Russian Empire witnessed a whole array of changes in the policies concerning

religion (e.g. Werth 1996) and serfdom. Then came the revolution with its entirely new vision of modernity. This period marked antireligious campaigns and imposed dramatically new configurations in the arrangement of class, land, property and labour. However, despite the imposition of anti-religious policy, I believe that it is possible to argue that underlying structures of Orthodox community life persisted. The example of Prichud'e provides an exceptional but illustrative case of the continued role of Orthodox and Old Believer practices in preserving community identities.

The Prichud'e region has been the central focus of attention of a number of Estonian and Russian researchers (e.g. Jaanus Plaat, Tatjana Shor, G. Ponomarieva, Irina Külmoja, Kristin Kuutma, Fedor Savikhin, Aarne Kasikov, Evgenii Vasil'chenko, A.A. Ageeva, or the pioneering E.V. Richter and A. Moora, to name but some of the authors who have produced an enormous amount of literature over the last century). The main object of their interest was Old Belief rather than the Orthodox faith, with the prominent exception of the work of Patriarch Aleksii II (1999), who focused on the fate of the Orthodox Church structures in the region.[7] These studies primarily concentrate on: 1) the periodisation and routes of migration of this population(s); 2) linguistic issues; 3) the Old Believers' subculture, mentality, folklore, folk religion and customs. Especially the issue of the origins of this Orthodox population (have these populations appeared on what is today Estonian soil from Russia, fleeing from the persecutions of Old Belief, or from the western parts of historical Livonia?) seems to be very salient, as is perfectly understandable given the highly politicised question of contemporary Estonian (ultimately EU)-Russian relations.

The guiding question is whether this population thrived as a result of the schism of the seventeenth century (e.g. Richter 1976 and her followers), which would mean that the Orthodox are the descendants of Old Believers, or much earlier, as is suggested by sources from 1582 when the region was administered by the Polish King Batory (Savikhin, Kasikov and Vasil'chenko 2011), which would mean that favourable

7 It should be stated that in Estonia there are two main Orthodox Churches: the Estonian Apostolic Orthodox Church, an autonomous church subordinate to the Ecumenical Patriarchate of Constantinople, and the Estonian Orthodox Church of the Moscow Patriarchate, a semi-autonomous diocese of the Russian Orthodox Church. The Orthodox communities of Prichud'e belong to the latter.

conditions for Orthodox settlement already existed earlier and persisted until the time of the immigration of the Old Believers (e.g. isolation from mainstream Orthodoxy and the state ban on priests). A number of these studies have been carried out in an archaeo-graphic manner, which means that their guiding question is the preservation of Old Believer traditional culture. These studies usually assume a once strong, systematic and coherent Old Belief, and set out to measure the level of traditional culture still remaining in the locale. Thus, there is little analytic room in these studies for lived practice or literally for anything other than the preservation of this tradition or its demise. Eschewing such a research agenda, on the basis of the picture sketched above I intend to make a point that so far has been omitted from the literature. Namely, I propose to look at both communities as similarly centred around Orthodox values and concerned with the preservation of their faith in the face of dramatic political, structural and social changes. That they are able to succeed in this, to some extent, is due to their distanced relationship with the clergy and a shared, specific—and tacit—policy of the rythmisation of their religious and economic lives.

Priestless Orthodoxy

The Orthodox parish of *Pokrova Presviatoi Bogoroditsy* (The Protection of Our Most Holy Lady) in the village of Nina, for example, was described in a chronicle (*letopis'*) maintained by consecutive parish priests in the period 1824–1927. Parts of this document have been published (Danilevskii 2018). The chronicle not only contains quite rich information about ritual life, but also constitutes a kind of diary of these clergymen's largely unsuccessful attempts to become part of the village community. Written through the prism of an outsider, almost always dealing with the organisation of liturgy and more concerned with their relation to their hierarchs than to their flock, the chronicle nevertheless sheds some light on local interrelations between the Orthodox and Old Believers. For instance, on 7 December 1923,[8] the parish received an order to begin performing liturgy according to the New Style, following the official

8 Estonia was at this time already an independent state, following the 1920 Treaty of Riga. It was, however, a turbulent time and legislation was still subjected to negotiation on the path to full independence from the previous hegemon.

switch from the Gregorian to the Julian calendar adopted during the All-Orthodox Congress in Constantinople. This rule was supposed to come into force from 14 October, which is the Day of Pokrova, in the name of which the parish is consecrated. This move, introducing a substantial change in ritual life, was highly controversial: it triggered a high level of discontent among believers. A reaction must have been expected, as potential dissent was threatened with extremely severe punishment. Insubordinate priests were to be deprived of the right to perform liturgy and to keep their posts. Parishioners who resisted respecting this decision and incited disorder or performed illegal actions of their own will were to be punished not only by the church authorities, but also by state authorities. Rebellious parishioners were to be considered apostates, and to be deprived of the right to participate in sacraments and prayers and, should they not repent, of the right to a Christian funeral. Parishes without parishioners (as a result of such behaviour) were to be removed, with church buildings being closed and shifted with all their assets into the property of the closest functioning Orthodox parish. In the chronicle, the then parish priest expresses his anxiety over the necessity to perform liturgy during the upcoming Christmas and the celebration of the Baptism of Jesus (*Kreshchenie Gospodne*/Jordan) on a new date, which parishioners "did not accept at all". During the actual liturgy in the church, only ten people were present. The culmination of tension came with the official (New-Style) celebration of *Kreshchenie Gospodne*, the date of which corresponded with that of the Old-Style Christmas Eve.

The procession into the symbolic water of the Jordan gathered only a small number of people, while the remaining inhabitants of the village stood aside and just watched the "familiar ritual" with interest, but without participating. The resolution of this conflict was incited by an Old Believer deputy, P. Baranin, who came to Nina with a political lecture. Baranin, an active member of the priestless Old Believer community, had established his political agenda in independent Estonia around the issue of the separation of church and state, arguing for the full autonomy of the Russian parishes in Prichud'e (Danilevskii 2018: 267). Asked to express his opinion on the situation with regard to the church calendar, the deputy responded that, as an independent community, Old Believers enjoy freedom from the authorities in this respect and there is no pressure to intervene in their religious life. The audience became

excited and turned to the priest, who was present during the meeting, asking for his decision with reference to the switch to the New Style. When he answered that he would comply with the new church rules, the priest caused uproar. Parishioners called him a betrayer of Christ, and told him that they would replace him. Over the following months the situation simmered down somewhat, but the approach of Easter sparked fresh discussions. The bishop received a letter from the Nina Parish Council with a question as to how to proceed with the calendar during Easter. The chronicle mentions that a large number of such requests were sent from across the entire region. The church hierarchies, afraid of a radicalisation of discontent, agreed to make concessions: they did not protest against celebrating Easter in 1924 according to the Old Style, and later they left this decision in the hands of parishes.

This historical account demonstrates clearly that the principle of *poslushanie*—obedience—typically indicating the locus of authority in Orthodox communities, may locally be, at least at times, reversed. This picture teaches us that power relations may be reversed and that the religious authority of the priest can be compromised in the name of the authority of tradition. This situation occurred in this particular village, because of the presence of Old Believers and the familiarity of Orthodox parishioners with their Old Believer neighbours' ways of organising religious hierarchies and the rights that this implied. The next section aims to illustrate that such inspiration goes beyond the structures of the church itself, and that other forms of social activity may be subject to similar influences.

Work and Prayer

My research has revealed some peculiarities that are common to both Orthodox and Old Believer villages. Historically, the main economic activities in the region have been fishing and farming (mainly onions). Before the Soviet period there was a fishermen's *artel'* (a kind of cooperative), providing employment for male members of the community. Women were busy with growing vegetables. With the rise of collectivisation, *kolkhozes* and *sovkhozes* were established, but working in these was not considered prestigious. Families adopted a tactic of delegating men for collective work, while women performed only minimal compulsory duties to the *kolkhoz* in order to reserve time to be

able to take care of the household, a highly valued activity. That this was a deliberate move is attested to by a development of the 1970s, when the *kolkhoz* made available small plots of arable land for private use. From this moment, under the conditions of the Soviet planned economy, men continued to work in the *kolkhoz*, while women began a semi-official but full-scale entrepreneurial activity of growing vegetables (very much in demand on the Soviet-era food market), distributing them to Leningrad and its vicinities, and selling them for a market price. This move contributed to the accumulation of wealth of all the families, with women being the central agents of this change. With perestroika, the material status of these families deteriorated; but by the time of my fieldwork (2014–2019) these villages were again materially flourishing, benefiting from a growing tourism industry which again relied on women's engagement.

A significant element here is that these economic activities, both those that are profit-oriented and those performed as a part of socialist duty, are undertaken by a middle generation (of men and women) that at this period in their life are not concerned with parish life (even though local churches remained open during the entire Soviet period). Today, all the women involved in these activities during Soviet times are elderly, and are now committed Orthodox and Old Believers. Their today middle-aged children, meanwhile, remember being actively involved in ritual life in their childhood, but nowadays define themselves as "workers, not believers". While the pervasive discourse is that of a "dying village, where only the elderly generation remains", ethnographic observation reveals that the majority of the current middle-aged generation maintains very close relations with their parents, and despite the fact that they locate their main employment beyond Prichud'e, they actually continue to live in the village on some basis. In so doing, they are part and parcel of the life of a parish whose existence, as I was repeatedly told by all generations alike, continues to determine the identity of the village. On the basis of this historical analysis of the biographies of various village inhabitants, my argument is that there is an underlying logic that compartmentalises and separates, but also ultimately connects the spheres of economy and religion between different genders and age cohorts within this community. Despite it appearing that at some stages of their lives community members are focused uniquely on economic

matters, the overall aim of these behaviours is to maintain the collective, Orthodox identity. This argument takes some inspiration from the work of Douglas Rogers (2009), who, nevertheless, attempted to escape the questions of the relationship between religion and economy that have been guiding my research. Rogers combined archival and fieldwork methodologies in studying an Old Believer community in the Urals. Employing an 'ethical' framework, Rogers discovered that these Old Believers appear to have maintained ethical continuity throughout the most dramatic changes of Soviet atheistic rule.

According to Rogers, this was possible thanks to what he calls an "ethical repertoire", ranging from work to prayer, that allowed different age cohorts of subsequent generations to engage in different domains of social life for over three centuries without the necessity of abandoning their faith altogether. The community members were

> by turns, serfs on a feudal estate, peasants in a thriving merchant town, exemplary Soviet state farmers, and shareholders in a struggling post-Soviet agricultural enterprise. Each of these organisations of labour, land, and money, and of state power and rural landscape, has generated ethical expectations and aspirations every bit as powerful as—if also often in conflict with—the precepts and practices of Old Belief (Rogers 2009: xi)

By creative responses to the civil regulations of subsequent regimes and the compartmentalisation of religion by age and gender, they have managed to ensure that their faith endured despite unfavourable conditions. Rogers calls this a tradition of "differing ritual participation", and argues that, "generation became a key category for the formation of different kinds of ethics and subjectivities [...]: deferring ritual participation until late in life mapped a distinction between prayer and work as fields of ethical practice onto a social distinction between older and younger generations" (Ibid.: 46).

The separation of worldly affairs—reserved for younger and middle age community members—and of ritual practices (including the spiritual development of one's soul and an interest in salvation), reserved for those of older age, helped these Old Believers adapt to the demands of subsequent civil regimes, while reproducing religious practices through the activities of the very young and the old. This practice, called *obmirshchenie*, allowing for "temporary secularisation"

(Naumescu 2016) and thus successful reproduction of tradition within a world at odds with the precepts of their faith, is typical for Old Believers. Prichud'e, however, developed historical conditions in which the effect of this entanglement of economy, religion, age and location of religious authority resonates beyond the community which engendered it. In the exceptional situation of Prichud'e, the differences between Old Believers and Orthodox beliefs in fact facilitate the overall continuity of the village's identity.

Conclusion

The combination of anthropological and historical approaches in my study enables an elucidation of how priestless modes of Orthodoxy, which developed in an earlier period, interacted with subsequent pro- and anti-Orthodox political regimes, and how they coped under these shifting regimes of regulations. My argument in this article is that there is an underlying logic that compartmentalises the spheres of economy and religion between gender and age cohorts that aim at maintaining a collective, Orthodox identity. This collective identity is strongly rooted in the history of the region, where specific regimes and oppressive politics imposed on Orthodox communities inspired creative responses allowing them to preserve continuity of tradition in the face of shifting visions of modernity. The church and its hierarchies are secondary to the success of this strategy. Rather, it is the cohabitation of two strands of Orthodoxy, which in these specific conditions have allowed mutual imports, that has further structured the economic and religious lives of each. Whereas elsewhere, Orthodox and Old Believer strands stand in marked contrast, in the Prichud'e case, Old Believer distance from church organisation of religious life has also informed the preservation of these villages' Orthodox identity.

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