Martyrs and Heroes: the politics of memory in the context of Russian post-Soviet religious revival

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Abstract

The return to the practices and values of religion in post-Soviet Russia is often described through the metaphorical expression of 'religious revival' (*religioznoe vozrozhdenie)*, used both at *emic* and at *etic* level. This notion refers to a complicated and often debated process, which is either glorified or denied. Analytically, the 'religious revival' could be described as an overarching frame, uniting the heterogeneous manifestations of the revitalisation of religious life in Russia after 'the long winter' of Soviet atheism. This paper is based on field research carried out in the city of Kaluga for two weeks in September 2006 and during July and August 2007. Russian examples analysed here eloquently confirm the observation that political and religious movements often involve the same processes, particularly evocations and appeals to the past. I am going to address different manifestations and aspects of the politics of memory as an intersection of religious and secular activities: the proliferation of so called 'church *kraevedenie*' (*tserkovnoe kraevedenie*) and the worship of the 'special dead', respectively, martyrs and heroes.

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Introduction

The return to the practices and values of religion in post-Soviet Russia is often described by the metaphorical expression of 'religious revival' (*religioznoe vozrozhdenie*), used both at *emic* (Senina 2000: 1–37) and at *etic* level (Lebedev 2004a, Lebedev 2004b, Greely 1994: 253–272, Dubas 2004: 216). This notion refers to a complicated and often debated process, which is either glorified or denied. Analytically, the 'religious revival' could be described as an overarching frame uniting the heterogeneous manifestations of the revitalisation of religious life in Russia after 'the long winter' of atheism, uncompromisingly imposed by the Soviet state politics.

   This paper is based on field research carried out in the city of Kaluga for two weeks in September 2006 and during July and August 2007. Initially, my fieldwork has been oriented to a broader scope of topics, namely to the strategies of the Russian Orthodox Church (ROC) under the condition of post-Soviet religious pluralism. Closer insight into the local contexts of Kaluga led me to reformulate the objectives and the research questions of my project. An orientation to the past, whether idealised or imagined, is an obvious particularity of social practices connected to the religious life in Russia. Besides, this orientation implies not just Orthodoxy, but certain social practices of secular character as well. How to explain the focus on the past, which is imprinted on various aspects and manifestations of the symbolic practices otherwise projected over the complexities of current everyday life of Russians? Which are the manifestations of the politics of memory on the local level? These have been questions that intrigued me during my fieldwork in Kaluga and these are, respectively, the research questions to which the present article is looking to find answers. It is the aim of the present work to provide an analysis of the politics of memory as an aspect of the 'religious revival' and as an intersection of symbolic practices in the religious and secular spheres of life.

Field Site and Ethnographic Methods

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

   The first historical reference about Kaluga dates back to 1371 (Pamiatniki 1880: 136, Kaluzhskii krai 1976: 22). Serving as a borderline fortification during the Middle Ages, the city developed into a commercial and industrial centre since early modern times. Industry (manufactures and factories) developed as early as in the 18th century and even before the era of Peter the Great. The guild of

merchants shaped the (historic) city architecture and the identity of the population. The 18th century turned out to be a century of economic proliferation and welfare, despite the massive fires and epidemic diseases that occurred during that time. Numerous churches, constantly built and rebuilt, used to give symbolic expression of economic success but also of strong Orthodox belonging. There were 40 churches in Kaluga in 1910[3] (Malinin 1992 [1912]: 30–67).

Since the early Soviet times, Kaluga has experienced a period of intensive industrialisation; the share of military production reached approximately 30 per cent of industrial production in the 1980s (Popkov 2004: 167–178). Industry is still an important source of income for the population, although a significant number of enterprises was shut down during the 1990s, and only some of them reopened recently. Heavy industry is well represented; the recently opened *Volkswagen* plant in Kaluga (2007) is a matter of pride and gives rise to expectations of economic success.[4]

Kaluga is also a university city. At present, there are thirteen universities and colleges, two of which are local institutions and eleven local branches of central universities.

It is essential to point out a special aspect of the local context: the proximity of Optina Pustyn' monastery. Located 60 kilometres from Kaluga and about two kilometres from the town of Kozel'sk, it is one of the most venerated and most visited monasteries in Russia (Kuchumov 2002: 232–238, Zyrianov 2002: 314). The monastery was established in the 15th century but became an important centre of religious life of Russian-wide significance in the beginning of the 19th century. During the same century, the specific Russian religious phenomenon of *starchestvo*[5] was established and developed in Optina Pustyn' (Solov'ev 1899 [2005]: 3–7, Gorbacheva 2006: 5–23, Kuchumov 2002: 223–244). Optina Pustyn' had been repeatedly visited and appreciated by some of the greatest Russian writers of the 19th century such as Gogol' (Evgin 2003: 209–220), Tolstoi (Berestov 2003: 290–325), Dostoevskii (Solov'ev 1899 [2005]: 3–7), and by the Kireevskii brothers.[6] Dostoevskii wrote his famous novel *The Brothers Karamazov* under the impressions of his meetings with *starets*[7] Amvrosii (in 1878) in Optina Pustyn', and thus the monk became the prototype for Dostoevskii's character of father Zosima (Dostoevskaia 1981: 329, Pavlovich 1980: 88, Solov'ev 1899 [2005]: 3–7). This has often been addressed in local conversations, too. The geographic proximity of Optina Pustyn' to Kaluga has strengthened the local identity of the city, mapping its significance for the symbolic geography of Russia (Avramenko 2001: 95). What is important from present day perspective is the immediate and powerful impact, which the monks of Optina Pustyn' exercise onto the religious life of Kaluga.

During my fieldwork, I have made observations and took 30 in depth life history narratives and/or autobiographical interviews and also a number of informal interviews. Interview partners are balanced in terms of age, education, and social status, but not so much with regard to gender. Women prevail and, apparently, this fact reflects the practices of church attendance. The information obtained orally through interviewing intersects written sources, mostly from church periodicals. Some of my interview partners have also contributed to the local church press; these publications are also addressed here, to verify oral information. Quoting these publications, I will try to avoid revealing the identity of these informants by not establishing connections between

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[3] According to other sources, there were 47 churches in the beginning of the 19th century (Kliment 2006).

[4] The plant was officially opened on 28.11.2007. The average expected production is 115,000 cars per annum; furthermore, 5,000 new jobs are to be created up until 2010 (see Ivkin and Gusev 2007: 2).

[5] One very simplistic definition could be the veneration of monks and nuns practicing and confessing extreme asceticism.

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

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

interviews and publications. I will use fictitious names when mentioning my informants, except for persons who obtained public status by their numerous publications. All quotations from interviews are translated from Russian into English by the author.

There were 33 acting Orthodox temples (respectively parishes) in Kaluga 2006–2007, including monastic churches and so-called 'house temples' (*domovye khramy*)[8]. I have chosen to carry out observations in two parishes, the first one belonging to the church of "Shroud of the Holy Mother" (*Pokrova Presviatoi Bogoroditsy* or *Pokrova, chto na rvu*), the second one belonging to the church of "Martyr St. John the Warrior" (*Muchenika Ioanna Voina*). The first church is located in the city centre and it is a recognised architectural monument (Morozova 1993: 157); it was built before 1626 (Malinin 1992 [1912]: 100). In contrast, the church of "Martyr St. John the Warrior" is located at the very periphery of Kaluga and was only recently built, 1994–1999. The decision to choose two parishes was made in order to take into consideration different social backgrounds and, respectively, the variety of local practices.

The main interviewing strategy was to obtain information concerning both institutional strategies of the ROC 'from above' and the ideas and practices of common people 'from below'. Accordingly, I conducted interviews among: a) clergy and parishioners from both parishes; b) among librarians[9]; c) among people close to the local church elite and responsible for designing church strategies and policies. By interviewing randomly chosen librarians, in particular, I intended to obtain information from outside the circle of people expressing very high commitment to religion (those were mostly the parishioners). It is important to mention that the interviews were not specifically directed to the politics and practices of memory; the latter turned out to be a particular aspect of the general process of religious revival.

A large range of activities takes place in Kaluga, aiming to reconstruct, strengthen, and invent memory. The politics of memory exist in different spheres and develop on different societal levels. It could also be described in terms of interplay between different institutions and different social actors both at the local and the national level. As it has always been during historical periods of dramatic political changes, a process of intensive production of practices and places of memory is taking place in postsocialist countries (Pine, Kaneff and Haukanes 2004: 1), and Russia is far from being an exception. Constructing or reshaping memory, predictably, also triggers a whole avalanche of scholarly production dedicated to it (Kitzmann, Mithander and Sundholm 2005), and this is a manifestation of the politics of memory (Barahona de Brito, Gonzales-Enriquez and Aguilar 2001: 39). As theoretical point of departure, I support a notion of politics of memory, which unites "official or government sponsored efforts to come to terms with the past" and "unofficial and private initiatives emerging from within society to deal with the past" (ibid.: 1). According to this understanding, the politics of memory are in correlation with the historic legacies of past repressions.

The examples from Russia analysed in the following sections confirm the observation that "political and religious movements often involve the same processes, particularly evocations and appeals to the past" (Pine, Kaneff and Haukanes 2004: 2). I am going to address different

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[8] The latter are granted lower status.
[9] I chose librarians for different reasons. First, it was necessary to provide information about people's concern about religion outside the close circles of the parishioners. All librarians referred to are affiliated to the 'Belinskii' District Scientific Library, i.e. this is a professional group, which belongs to the local intelligentsia, but it is also part of larger social strata. Taking interviews in one institution was a practical solution in favour of clearer contextualisation and localisation of the fieldwork data.

manifestations and aspects of the politics of memory as an intersection of religious and secular activities: the proliferation of so called church *kraevedenie*, and the worship of the 'special dead' (see Brown 2002 [1981]: 69–85) respectively, martyrs and heroes.

In general terms, *kraevedenie* means expertise in local history (and/or geography, archaeology, folklore) and especially in the history of local cultural heritage[10], knowledge about prominent local personalities, interest in and producing of genealogical reconstructions[11]. Actually, neither *kraevedenie* nor the worship of the dead are Russian particularities, yet I argue that it is their combination in specific temporal and spatial contexts that makes the difference.

The Project of *Kraevedenie*

The project of *kraevedenie* is one important branch of the politics of memory and it can be defined as an intersection of: a) the central state political project; b) the work of local authorities and institutions on projects of strengthening local identity through the politics of memory; and c) genuine and spontaneous individual initiatives 'from below'. *Kraevedenie* has existed at least since the time of socialism, and not just in the Soviet Union but also in other socialist countries. Moreover, quite similar phenomena of 'local historical writing' have been observed in some countries, which have never been part of the 'socialist camp', such as West Germany for instance. There are remarkable similarities between what has been called German 'local historical writings', on the one hand, and Russian *kraevedenie*, on the other. As Eidson notes for the German case:

> "The term local historical writing refers both to relatively naïve compositions by amateurs, usually concerning organisations to which they belong and to more ambitious works by those amateurs or semi-professionals who seek public recognition as authoritative local historians. (…) In fact, public events of different kinds are often accompanied by historicising gestures and presided over by local historians, that is, librarians, teachers, school directors, civil servants and priests who research and write about local history in their leisure time or after retiring. Local historians are organised in local committees, in state commissions for public history and in regional historical societies." (Eidson 2004: 62, 67)[12]

Yet, in this section I will address several specific questions regarding Russian *kraevedenie* and its manifestations in Kaluga, in particular. In which way has it gained momentum since 2000? Which is the social status of *kraevedy* (people involved in *kraevedenie*) as social actors? How to define the status of their occupation in terms of the dichotomy professional – amateur? How to define social and economic mechanisms that are the vehicle of *kraevedenie* as politics of memory?

Kraevedenie in Russia was conceptualised during the times of the Soviet epoch, especially as a distinct sphere of activity aiming to produce knowledge. Thus, the Optina Pustyn' monastery was transformed (though for a relatively short time in the period 1919–1927) into the Museum of *Kraevedenie* according to the testimony of its director, A. Pavlovich (Pavlovich 1980: 88). The Museum of *Kraevedenie* of the town of Kosel'sk opened a branch in Optina three decades later, in 1957; the department of literature of the same museum still exists on the grounds of the

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[10] The term *kraevedenie* originates from *krai*, meaning 'region', 'land', 'countryside'.

[11] The dictionary defines *kraevedenie* as the 'study of local lore, history and economy' (see Oxford Russian Dictionary 1998: 164).

[12] Eidson refers here to several of his previous articles on that matter. For bibliographical references see Eidson 2004: 86–91.

monastery.[13] As in other big Russian monastic centres, these small museum units of *kraevedenie* have become niches where a few monks could act as museum workers while still living in the monastery. This small scale survival of monastic culture, however, could not be a significant source for spreading the values of Christianity under socialism. Instead, these niches became important sources of religious expertise during the process of 'religious revival' in the 1990s in order to overcome the loss of Orthodox knowledge.

The Museum of History in Kaluga (established in 1922) was renamed into Museum of *Kraevedenie* in 1930; it exists under the latter name until today. Moreover, pre-revolutionary practices and publications of ethnographic and/or historical character, focussing on particular regions yet meeting academic standards, were reconsidered and re-conceptualised later on as *kraevedenie* and, respectively, their authors, as *kraevedy*. For instance, Malinin (1992 [1912]) is an author on whom the *kraevedy* of Kaluga rely very often for information, and whose work is characterised by academic argumentation; currently he is being referred to as a *kraeved*. Pre-revolutionary church literature and periodicals of the 19th and 20th century are currently also being labelled as belonging to 'church *kraevedenie*' (Bauer 2001: 3). Apparently, by building symbolic bridges to the past, contemporary *kraevedy* strive to strengthen their own reputation through inventing both predecessors and 'tradition'.

According to some local opinions, *kraevedenie* has been strongly promoted in Russia since former President Putin came to power in 2000. A quotation from a slightly sarcastic interview provides a good insight into that phenomenon:

> "*Kraevedenie* has become a fashion just after the President [Putin] said that children should be patriotically educated, and the subject of *kraevedenie* had been introduced into the schools. Until then, no one even knew what sort of subject it was. Nobody had paid attention to *kraevedy*, they used to write, but [their books] had not been published. But now they [*kraevedy*] publish, they started organising conferences and printing books. Actually, the problem is that there are lots of fairy-tale tellers among them. That is why they have been fighting at conferences. There will be many such conferences in September and in October [2006]."[14] (Nina, librarian, 32)

This reference is informative concerning some important peculiarities of *kraevedenie*: the semi-professional or amateur status of *kraevedy* (their actual professions often have nothing in common with academic work), the 'patriotic' overtones, and sometimes completely fictitious additions to the facts and their interpretation. To be more specific, the literature in question counts numerous books, booklets, newspaper articles, albums, etc. Church *kraevedenie* is already a separately marked category on the shelves of church book shops and parish libraries. It is no surprise that *kraevedenie* often serves as a vehicle for the appropriation of a national narrative as a local asset.[15]

In the following I will explore in more detail the social and professional profiles of local church *kraevedy*. Most often, they belong to the local intelligentsia but are rather close to the background of the local community: teachers, librarians, local writers, museum workers, civil servants, and, in one prominent exception, a specialist in cars. In principle, *kraevedenie* is an amateur and/or semi-

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

[14] Quotation from an interview taken on 21.09.2006. The words and phrases in square brackets were added by the author. All quotations from interviews were translated from Russian by the author.

[15] For similar observations concerning the practices of commemoration of World War I in Argonne (France), see Filipucci 2004: 46.

professional occupation, as mentioned before. The fact that teaching church *kraevedenie* in Sunday schools might be either on a paid or on a voluntary basis (depending on personal negotiations or agreement between the main priest [*nastoiatel'*] and a given teacher) confirms the validity of that observation. The amateur or semi-professional character has prevailed until recently, when professional museum workers got involved in church *kraevedenie* exploring the original locations of abolished churches and organising exhibitions dedicated to the history of Orthodox religion (Bauer 2001: 3). Church *kraevedenie* is certainly not a permanent occupation for museum experts. Their involvement is indicative for a certain development in the direction towards more visible engagement of professionals in *kraevedenie*.

The degree of personal commitment of church *kraevedy* to religion is noteworthy. It is the 'patriotic' interest in both Orthodoxy and in the cultural heritage connected to it, which is the leading motivation for some of the writers. One may define their participation in church life as rather sporadic. The preoccupation with church *kraevedenie* brought others to the internalisation of religious values and to a change in their behaviour: being atheists in Soviet times, they eventually converted to being believers and active participants in the church life. There is also a third type of people with concern for religion. These are people among the *kraevedy* of Kaluga for whom the religious motivation is the main factor, and their infatuation with *kraevedenie* is rather a consequence of it. These people could be defined not just as rigorists (see Makrides 2004: 511-521), but rather as church activists who are closer to the so-called "in-church circle" (in terms of Tarabukina 2000).

The 'group portrait' of *kraevedy* is supplemented by an interesting detail. Those of them born in Kaluga (or in the district Kaluga) are a minority: most of them originate from other regions of Russia. This is neither surprising, nor does it lessen their legitimacy among the local community: one should take into consideration the intensive processes of migration under Soviet rule and afterward.

Kraevedenie was institutionalised in Russia, notwithstanding the intermediate status it obtained in terms of 'amateurship – professionalism'. In particular, the Museum of *Kraevedenie* is referred to as an important cultural institution in Kaluga[16]. In the 'Belinskii' District Scientific Library of Kaluga there is a special department and reading room for *kraevedenie*. Courses of *kraevedenie* are also taught in Sunday schools (Razumovskaia 2002: 12–13). Exhibitions, seminars, and numerous conferences provide occasions where *kraevedenie* gains the momentum of public attention and imposes its claims of 'scientific occupation'. It is worth to note the important institutional role played by the district library in the promotion of *kraevedenie* in Kaluga. It is not just about the special department, but it also concerns conferences endorsed or organised by the library and books edited and published by it. Furthermore, one of the most popular *kraevedy* in Kaluga, the late Genrietta Morozova, also was a prominent librarian (see Morozova 1993), and the next director of the library, S. Mironovich, has kept contributing to *kraevedenie* (Berestov and Mironovich 2003).

The analysis of all the *kraevedenie* publications dedicated to Kaluga, the city and the district, would be beyond the aim and the capacities of this work (their impressive number alone would demand the separate study of certain genres instead). Thus, I rather focus on the so called church *kraevedenie* (*tserkovnoe kraevedenie*) as a specific phenomenon, which has been recently discerned. There is indirect evidence in favour of this assumption: publications on the subject date back as early as 2000.

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[16] See http://kaluga.amr-musum.ru.

Church *kraevedenie* is involved in discovering the locations of abolished churches, exploring chronicles of existing or vanished temples (Bauer 2001: 3), providing archival information concerning biographies and genealogies of pre-revolutionary clergy (Legostaev and Pautova 2004: 132–210), data about activities of the parishes in the past, the history of important icons, etc. These activities have practical aspects in the process of the so called 'religious revival', especially if one takes into consideration the significant loss of Orthodox cultural knowledge in Russia at large (see Kaarinen and Furman 2000: 39–41) after more than seventy years of militant atheism. Maybe the first person, who started searching for locations of abandoned churches since 1992 and erecting crosses at these locations, was Vitalii Legostaev. The interview with him demonstrates that this is not just an archive and library research but an investigation involving serious efforts in exploring *in situ* different locations, which are often not easily accessible:

> "Well, I have worked on it since [nineteen] ninety two. (…) I have studied this county [*uezd*[17]] of Kaluga for more than ten years. [There are about] sixty temples and they are all listed in a register. We erected a cross in place of a destroyed temple for the first time in this Eparchy. The cross looks quite nice, made from iron and concrete. I visited the sites of all these sixty temples. I have made an itinerary and marked them on the map. In the winter, I made the itinerary; and during the summer I travelled there [by car] and put the crosses up. I also photographed all the sites."[18]

We can learn from the same interview that this work has been a voluntary one for a long time. Since the first publications of Vitalii Legostaev have gained local popularity and recognition after the year 2000, he started receiving offers to work on particular projects. It is in this way that the amateur work was transformed into a semi-professional one. Moreover, his different projects have been gradually involved in a network of exchanges. Legostaev supplemented a data base consisting of about 3000 names of priests (mostly pre-revolutionary ones) with little personal data about each of them. Until the time of the interview, sponsors willing to support the publication of the document had not been found, yet. One of the local priests decided to commemorate his late colleagues, instead, by reading all their names during the course of church services. When Legostaev was approached by monks of one of the local monasteries asking him to provide data of persecuted black clergy, he agreed to help only in return for sponsorship of the publication of the data base. One can see how church *kraevedenie* might become a source not just of personal prestige and recognition but also a resource for building social capital and even a potential to transform the latter into economic capital.

Publishing is sometimes financially supported by public funds, but it is often sponsored by local businessmen (see Legostaev and Pautova 2004: 236). Usually, a book of church *kraevedenie* is a mixture of different genres[19]: histories, descriptions and chronicles of churches, publications of archival documents, memoirs, manuscripts, genealogies, etc.

The very term "church *kraevedenie*" aims to differentiate the particular profile of the subject, to stress its specificity and thus to achieve its higher social recognition and symbolic status. Yet, it is difficult to discern church *kraevedenie* and to distinguish it from both *kraevedenie* as construction of the local significance and uniqueness and from the public national-affirmative discourses in

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[17] *Uezd* has been a pre-Soviet administrative unit of intermediary character; *guberniia* consisted of several *uezd*.
[18] The words and phrases in square brackets were added by the author.
[19] The same mixed character of genres has been noted by Eidson 2004.

Russia as well. This is clearly observed in social practices of the implementation of church *kraevedenie* as a discipline taught in Sunday schools. I have been personally involved in an event, which (unintentionally) demonstrated the gap between the concept of church *kraevedenie* and its practical implementation. It happened during one of the periodically organised "excursions in the temple" (on August 8, 2007), in the church "Shroud of the Holy Mother". It is the aim of these excursions to familiarise the audience with the history of the temple, with its internal settings, with complications in its reconstruction after 1994, and with its present-day spiritual treasures: relics, icons, church utensils. It was the director of the Sunday school (a teacher by profession) who skilfully assumed the part of the guide and kept the attention of the children up for two hours.

Excursions like this one are part of education in church *kraevedenie* in Sunday school, but they are open for visitors, too. It is worthy to comment on the ideas of the same director concerning teaching church *kraevedenie*, especially regarding the reputation of that particular Sunday school as the best one in Kaluga. It was namely the reflections of said director (published in the Eparchial magazine) that revealed the hardship church *kraevedenie* faces in the efforts to define its own profile:

> "The native countryside is a small image of the Fatherland – Russia. For that reason we need to talk about *kraevedenie*. (…) Following the rather short experience of our [Sunday, M.B-S.] school (the school opened in 1998, thus three years ago), I would like to note a different kind of experience we made during the implementation of the elements of *kraevedenie*. (…) From the beginning, the work of *kraevedenie* has been conducted fragmentarily, with no particular system, at four levels: at the level of the history of the parish, of the city of Kaluga, of the Eparchy, and of the native land. Yet, the necessity to study the native countryside according to the history of the Fatherland has only taken shape over time. But it is impossible to teach Orthodox *kraevedenie* without knowledge and understanding of national history." (Razumovskaia 2002: 13)

Apparently, memory and history overlap, the same is valid regarding the sacred and the secular, and the local countryside and the native country turn out to be functionally equivalent. The fact that the most active church *kraevedy* do not originate from Kaluga, whose cultural heritage they glorify, may suggest that the national bias is stronger than the local one. Some forms of appropriation of national history and imagery as local assets lead to this conclusion. This is valid, for instance, regarding the exaggerated attention, which is locally paid to an important event of Russian medieval history, known as "Great Stand on the Ugra River" (*Stoianie na Ugre*). It took place within the territory of the contemporary district of Kaluga, on the bank of the river Ugra. It was the decisive confrontation between troupes of the Russians and the Tatars in 1480, which turned out to be victorious for the Russians and is considered, at least by some Russian historians, as the final act in the shaping of Russian statehood. This historic episode is a moment in time when Kaluga turns out to be in the focus of fateful events of all-Russian significance. Therefore it is periodically commemorated and symbolically reproduced through different – as Eidson puts it – "historicising gestures" (Eidson 2004: 67).

One can clearly follow the trajectories of the politics of memory to 1980, when the 500 year jubilee of the event was celebrated. New 'places of memory' were produced: an impressive monument near the river, tourist routes in the national park *Ugra*, pilgrimage travels including visits of the temples located near the bank of the river Ugra (see Makarova and Kalashnikova 2006:

351–352). Meanwhile, numerous publications were printed: popular, journalistic, *kraevedenie*, and historical literature.[20] The peak of these practices took form in the publishing of a prestigious collection dedicated to the 525 year jubilee of the event; it is titled *1480 in the History of Russia* and it consists of articles, documents, and reprints. Here, *kraevedenie* is in collaboration with professional historians. The publication was sponsored by the local and central authorities and under the auspice of the head of the city administration of Kaluga (sees Chaikina and Chaikin 2006).

Historic narratives about the "Great Stand on the Ugra River" have also been coded in the language of religion and this aspect is strongly represented in the literature of church *kraevedenie*. One may find a medieval historical legend about the victory of the Russian troupes thanks to the miraculous intervention of the Holy Mother. Due to that legend, locations near the bank of the river Ugra were called "The Belt of the Holy Mother". Similar historical legends are widespread in the Christian world, of course, this narrative pattern could not be a trade mark neither of Russia nor of Orthodoxy. What is significant here is that church *kraevedenie* actively reproduces the legend (see Makarova and Kalashnikova 2006: 343–344), and due to that the legend has become well known among the local community. Moreover, the perception of the territory of Kaluga and the district as being specially chosen, protected, and sacred gained popularity.

These manifestations of the politics of memory are obviously constructed 'from above', with direct involvement of central and local state institutions. One may claim that *kraevedy* play the role of mediators, transmitting important messages between different strata of Russian society. This intermediary role is clearly visible when mediating between the middle social level and the larger societal background. The case of a small school museum in Kaluga, called *Ugra* and dedicated to the events of 1480 and the rule of Ivan the Terrible, provides a good example in that respect. The teacher, who was also the initiator of the museum, is actively involved in (church) *kraevedenie*: she is one of the two editors of the collection *1480 in the History of Russia* (Chaikina and Chaikin 2006). Furthermore, she is a pioneer in the teaching of "Foundations of Orthodox Culture" in Kaluga as a school subject, a discipline contested and disputed nation-wide. Located in a class room, the museum surprises its visitors with the wax statue of the monarch Ivan the Terrible (Arsent'ev 2007: 18–19). Obviously, local and national as well as religious and secular are unalienable, and the messages of *kraevedenie* are directly transmitted to the school students.

Going back to the question of appropriation of the national history as a local asset, one has to note the paradoxical character of this trend. While in some other countries it is the local community that stands behind the invention of memory and the appropriation of national heritage aiming to outrun neighbouring communities (see Forbess 2005: 49–51, Benovska-Sabkova 2007: 295–296), the practices observed in Kaluga should be interpreted as working in a different direction. Texts of *kraevedenie* and *lieux de mémoire*, as said school museum, give me a reason to assume that what we see here is a symbolic operation in which the local is not just a belittled version of the national, but in which the former is an epitome of the latter.

Yet, it would be simplistic to claim that church *kraevedenie* has been completely constructed "from above". Some of the most active *kraevedy* in present-day Kaluga have spontaneously developed their amateur interests in and infatuation with the subject. The initial motivation could have been far from any religious commitment. Vitalii Legostaev, widely known among the local intelligentsia of Kaluga, is a passionate amateur photographer. His pictures of the churches in

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[20] Makarova and Kalashnikova list 160 titles in their bibliography before 2006; ibid.: 352–356.

Kaluga have provoked his intellectual curiosity, and, in 1984, he started investigations in the local state archives. He created an impressive data base and published whole series of books and booklets (Legostaev 2000a, Legostaev 2000b, Legostaev 2000c, Legostaev 2001, Legostaev 2003, Legostaev and Pautova 2004). His life-history narrative is marked by an obvious split: there are both commitment to religion and passion for photography, but he kept them separate until very recently. Nonetheless, the autobiography eloquently demonstrates the spontaneous nature of Legostaev's early commitment to *kraevedenie*, but it also reveals how spontaneity has been framed and disciplined by the existing socio-cultural practice. It also provides an insight into how *kraevedenie* functioned on an amateur or semi-professional basis during the late Soviet period:

> "[Since the 1960s] I have taken pictures wherever I was: I have been taking pictures in the open air, I have been taking pictures when I was still a child and when I came to Kaluga [1972]: I have photographed it all. [And then, already in Kaluga] I had so many photographs that I started sorting them out. I compiled different albums, domestic photos in a domestic album, photographs of workplaces (…), nature, sketches, butterflies, starlings (…) and also of monuments and temples. And this particular album I started in 1984, *Temples of the City of Kaluga*. It is in black-and-white, I have photographed everything I could find, there are also memoir plaques, and I added annotations concerning the temples. For the ones I had no [information] on, I went to the library and this ultimately started my interest in the literature of kraevedenie. It is from there that everything started (…) with that album. I decided to show it to somebody. In these days, the leading representatives of *kraevedenie* were Aleksandr Sergeevich Dneprovskii and Genrietta Mikhailovna Morozova. I first met Dneprovskii. There was a club named *Good Will*, and they used to meet there on Wednesdays for tea and conversations, discussing opinions etc.
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> Then I approached Morozova. Genrietta Mikhailovna used to work here [in the district library], in the department of bibliography. She said: 'Young man, you have to go to the archive'. It was complicated to get into the archive. A letter [of reference] was required, on behalf of the department of culture. 'I am going to provide it', she said, 'and you are going to go to work'."[21] (Legostaev, interview, 09.07.2007)

Similarly, the hobby of photography was also what brought Stepan, a middle-aged engineer, writer, and manager of a large local enterprise, to compile and publish several annotated albums of local churches and monasteries just recently. One should note that photography is by no means the only impetus or inspiration for *kraevedenie*.

Apparently, the current development of church *kraevedenie* could be defined as an intersection of initiatives 'from below' and politics 'from above'. The latter is the decisive factor, which has transformed *kraevedenie* from peripheral individual infatuations into a socially visible and significant project.

One may assume that *kraevedenie* aims to strengthen the significance of the past in shaping both local and national identities. Forging symbolic bonds between the individuals and their native countryside, *kraevedenie* could suggest more answers to the popular question: "What does Fatherland begin with?" (*S chego nachinaetsia Rodina?*), if one refers to the famous Russian song under the same title. *Kraevedenie* has the capacity to provide local dimensions for the "national

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[21] The words and phrases in square brackets were added by the author.

sentiments" (Bendix 1992: 768–790). By giving strong religious connotations to this initially secular project, the church *kraevedenie* provides further instances of the synergy 'state-church'. It supports the sacred aura of both local and national identities. Church *kraevedenie* in Kaluga is one amongst the manifestations of the multifaceted power project of the ROC.

Martyrs and Heroes: the religious and secular worship of the dead

Kraevedenie overlaps with another manifestation of the politics of memory: the interest in and veneration of the 'special dead'. Some social actors actively involved in *kraevedenie* have also become a vehicle for the symbolic practices expressing the veneration of the dead. As Verdery noted, the postsocialist developments in Russia and Eastern Europe were accompanied by activities around the dead aiming at "reassessing or rewriting the past and creating or retrieving memory" (Verdery 1999: 3). In the following section, I will try to analyse certain interrelated manifestations of worshipping the dead, in which both religious and secular institutions are involved. Since 1989, the ROC has initiated a large scale project (at both national and local level) of canonisation of martyrs and 'new martyrs'. The latter concept implies political connotations: it concerns martyrs who have suffered and died 'in the name of the faith', predominantly during the time of socialism.[22] A second category of 'confessors' (*ispovedniki*) involves those who suffered but died 'without bloodshed' (Anonymous 2005: 265–272). Both central and local institutions of the ROC are involved in this canonisation. The central level is represented by the Synodal Commission of Canonisation of Saints (established in 1989)[23], and the local one, respectively, is the Commission of Canonisation of the Eparchy of Kaluga.[24] The latter is in charge of the investigation of the biographies of people of local origin (and/or church affiliation), who suffered severe persecutions, and of the verification of the testimonies for martyrdom. The local commission consists of ten members, all of them men, representatives of the clergy (both priests and monks) and laity as well. Two of the latter define themselves as *kraevedy*.

The canonisation of new saints is a significant aspect of the Russian religious revival, symbolically and politically loaded, as far as it resumes an important institutional activity of the ROC, which has been completely abandoned during the Soviet era. One should briefly note that canonisation is also a subject of violent disputes between the different factions of the ROC clergy, involving mostly the so called "church liberals" and their opponents, the rigorists, the latter are often emotionally referred to as "fundamentalists" by many authors (Mitrokhin 2004, Lebedev 2004a, Lebedev 2004b). The canonisation of the 'royal family' (i.e., the family of the last tsar of Russia, Nikolai II), which took place in 2000, was one of the examples of disagreement between these factions.

The canonisation of prominent *startsy* (who lived during the second half of 19th and the beginning of the 20th century) from the monastery of Optina Pustyn' was a process in which local and national dimensions overlapped. Because Optina Pustyn' is located in the district of Kaluga, the Eparchy of Kaluga provides a territorial aspect of the first stage of the transformation of the

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[22] Some new cases of canonisation also fit the notion of 'new martyrdom', although the death of the martyrs concerned occurred after the end of the Soviet era, for example the three monks of Optina Pustyn' who were murdered on Easter in 1993, see Optinskaia Golgofa 1994, Zhizneopisanie 2005.
[23] The Synodal Commission of Canonisation of Saints has been defined then as a 'research organ'. See http://www.patriarchia.ru/db/text/65980.html.
[24] It started working in 2005, according to the interview with Aleksei, quoted below (see also the official internet site of Kaluga Eparchy: http://www.kaluga-eparhia.ru/abbats_churchs/mon_opt.htm).

memory about *startsy* into national sanctuaries. Twelve of the *startsy* of Optina Pustyn' were announced to be 'locally venerated' (*mestnochtimye*) martyrs and confessors on 26 July 1996, which caused Patriarch Aleksii II to visit the monastery. The Patriarch also transmitted the relics of seven of them into one of the seven monastic churches.[25] The canonisation was confirmed at the national level in 2000, when 1,097 persons were canonised[26]. Another three monks of Optina Pustyn' have recently been added to the list of national Russian martyrs: in 2005 and on 27 December 2007.[27]

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

> "They operate their own commission [of canonisation] there in Optina Pustyn'. The monk Platon, the hieromonk Joseph, and the hieromonk Methodius are [involved] there. They work only on Optina monks, they bring fame to those who suffered and [after the closure of the monastery] served in different locations".[28] (Aleksei, a custom-house officer, 50)

Optina Pustyn' has the status of a *stavropigial'nyi* monastery, which means that it enjoys a certain level of autonomy and is subordinated directly and solely to the Patriarch who carries the title of its archimandrite[29]. This explains the independent work of the Optina clergy regarding the canonisation of its own predecessors. The monastery owns a publishing house of its own[30], which allows it to 'bring fame' to martyrs by publishing their lives and related documents (see for instance Damascin [Orlovskii] 2007, Zhizneopisanie 2005).

The Commission of Canonisation of Saints, which is under the auspice of the Eparchy of Kaluga, was established in 2005. During the short period of its existence, it has selected around 35 candidates to be 'celebrated' as locally venerated martyrs and confessors. Father Andrei Bezborodov, an influential priest, historian, and lecturer in the Seminary of Kaluga, is the president of the commission of ten members. My information about the activity of the commission is based on interviews with two of its members. The data is rather limited as written documents concerning the commission are not accessible; moreover, the canonisation is a 'project in progress'. During the time of my fieldwork, proposals of the commission were still just proposals, apart from a few exceptions they have not been examined by the Metropolitan, yet. Aleksii Kurovskii, the late priest of the village of Kurovskoe (located about 20 kilometres from Kaluga), was already canonised. According to the interviews, proposals for canonisation concern mostly representatives of the

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[25] For the official internet site of the Kaluga Eparchy see:
http://www.kaluga-eparhia.ru/abbats_churchs/mon_opt.htm.
[26] This took place in the year 2000 during the *Arkhiiereiskii Sobor*, the official meeting of the prelate council (the second important ruling body of the ROC), see http://www.patriarchia.ru/db/text/65980.html
[27] Ibid.
[28] The words and phrases in square brackets were added by the author.
[29] See the official site of the Kaluga Eparchy, chapter "monasteries":
http://www.kaluga-eparhia.ru/abbats_churchs/mon_opt.htm.
[30] Similarly to other important monastic centres of national Russian significance, such as Troitse-Sergieva Lavra in Sergiev Posad, Diveevo monastery, etc., see Mitrokhin 2004: 110.

clergy: priests, monks, and nuns. It would be premature to generalise, but the interviews definitely do not refer to the canonisation of any laymen. For example, all the monks from St. Trinity Liutikov monastery (*Sviato-Troitskii Liutikov monastyr'*) near the village of Peremyshl' were shot in 1918 together with eight villagers, who had helped the monks to protect the monastery from the attacks of (initially) deserters and against the regular army (later on). Yet, only the monks have been listed in the proposal for canonisation. Maybe the lack of information concerning the biographies of the villagers was the reason for their exclusion. The Commission of Canonisation carefully evaluates the moral dignity during each period of the lives of the candidates to be named martyrs, although the lack of information is a serious obstacle in that respect. Regardless of what kind of motives led to the decision of the commission in the aforementioned case, the trend to propose mainly representatives of the clergy for canonisation is a fact. Striving for the reinstatement of the clergy as an estate is the leading motivation here, as much as in other manifestations of the religious life in Kaluga.[31] It would be helpful here to remember the interrelatedness between the politics of memory and the repressions in the past (Barahona de Brito, Gonzales-Enriquez and Aguilar 2001: 11). Since the clergy has been particularly affected by repressions during different periods of the Soviet epoch, the aspirations for its moral rehabilitation in postsocialist times is an understandable reaction and purposeful politics of memory implemented by the present day clergy.[32]

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

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

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

The creation of a new memorial centre of the new martyrs of Kaluga in an area that never accommodated a church is a recent initiative. The completion of the project reveals the social fabric, which stands behind the politics of memory. The project for building the memorial centre dates back to around late 2005, when the first symbolic actions of its inauguration took place. The initiator of the project was Aleksei (50, a custom-house officer), one of the lay members of the Commission of Canonisation of Saints. The very choice of the locality for the centre is loaded with symbolics. It is near the village of Kurovskoe, where Aleksii Kurovskii, the local martyr, spent part

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[31] Numerous Orthodox educational institutions function in Kaluga aiming at strengthening the clergy, see Aleksakhina and Bogatyreva 2003: 24–31. I will discuss that matter thoroughly in another publication.
[32] Even taking into consideration collaboration of certain wings of the clergy during the Soviet era, repressions and atrocities are undeniable facts.

of his life. At the same time, this is the historic location where the "Great Stand on the Ugra River" (*Stoianie na Ugre*) took place in 1480.

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

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

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

According to the project, the memorial is going to consist of a large chapel, a cross to bow in front of, and a spa (*kupal'nia*)[33] (the latter is traditionally located near monastic buildings or other sacred places). The *kupal'nia* is to use the spring water near the house of St. Aleksii Kurovskii. Actually, the idea to build a memorial was initially taken from the proposal of a local priest to consecrate the spring, which was accepted and supported by Aleksei the member of the Commission. Due to his efforts the spring was consecrated on 23 November 2005 (St. Aleksii's day) with a litany procession (*krestnyi khod*) from the village of Koslovo (presently at the outskirts of Kaluga) to the spring in Kurovskoe (see Kiziaev 2006: 22).

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

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

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

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

This specific social actor's activities are not limited to the initiative for the memorial centre (and ritual events connected to it), one should stress. It is worthy to note his efforts to regularly publish articles dedicated to specific new martyrs of Kaluga in local Orthodox periodicals. Some of his publications are simply entitled 'The Life of Saint X'. The articles do not intend to popularise the Commission of Canonisation or its activities. Published biographical narratives about new martyrs[34] actually aim to construct (and not to reconstruct) their memory, at least at regional and local level. Obviously, the orally transmitted memory concerning people, who accepted martyrdom decades earlier (in certain cases as far back as more than eighty years ago), either almost completely turned pale or is limited to the immediate family and/or estate circles. At best, remembrance is concentrated in the settlements where they lived. Published narratives put to an end the anonymity of the martyrs and overcome (to a certain extend) oblivion, nonetheless the audience of the local church press is rather limited consisting only of the most active parishioners.

One should address here the question of how the local community accepts the veneration of new martyrs, especially in comparison to its worshipping of well established and popular saints. Interviews, as well as observations, demonstrate that the saints, old and new ones, are rather accepted depending on the contexts of the holy places. New martyrs connected to Optina Pustyn' monastery – a 'magnet' for pilgrims from all over Russia – attract to themselves and draw somewhat on the aura of the shrine. Even people largely indifferent to religion visit Optina Pustyn' and honour the saints (both the already accepted and the new ones) following common itineraries of the numerous pilgrims. The new martyrs whose veneration is connected to less popular places rather attract the attention of the most committed believers and church activists.

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

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[34] I would avoid calling them 'lives of the saints', as far as these written narratives still lack stylistic elaboration, which is rather compulsory for the hagiographic genre.

The role Aleksei plays could be defined by the synonymous (but not identical) term of 'religious entrepreneur': clergyman or layman performing an intermediary function between society and religious experts (see Christian 1996: chapters 3–5, Bax 1995: 33–48).[35] In this case, religious 'entrepreneurship' includes the construction of the memorial centre: collecting funds through donations; negotiating between local authorities and the church in the struggle of the latter to get legal ownership of the land on which the memorial is to be built; providing construction materials; organising the actual construction. All this becomes possible due to the influential positions of the mentioned person in the economic and social life of Kaluga. In other words, my interlocutor invests his personal social capital in his activities in the religious sphere. On the other hand, in doing so, he enhances his prestige among the community of 'church people' in both the city and the district.

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

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

The process of reconstruction of sacred buildings (churches, monasteries, etc.) also brings with it the necessity to handle dead bodies, not just symbolically, but in a very immediate and physical way. Under socialism, many of the cemeteries located in church and monastic yards were abandoned, while all monastic and most of the church buildings in the district of Kaluga were used for various secular purposes (often endorsing production enterprises). In the context of post-Soviet religious revival, different ways of handling such situations are possible. For instance, a large scale identification of the graves and genetic identification of the remains developed in Optina Pustyn'. It is not just about the restoration of historical justice, as it is the case for politically coloured reburials (see Verdery 1999: 4–23). Bringing back the past pre-revolutionary fame of the monastery is another important motivation. One should point out the special role played in this initiative by a monk, an ex-academic scholar in biology (Larissa, 68, librarian)[36]. Both the identified and recovered graves in the yard of Optina Pustyn' and the relics of the martyrs recognised recently are nowadays objects of veneration by pilgrims. The plausibility of

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[35] The term 'religious entrepreneur' has been introduced in the study of Orthodox Christianity by Galina Valchinova (2006: 221–222).
[36] Interview taken on 26.09.2006.

identification is not a matter of discussion. On the contrary, the physical aspect of worshipping the dead contributes to the strengthening of the symbolic meaning of the cemetery and its transformation into a highly valued object of pilgrimage.

In other words, the sacred status of the cemetery has been reformulated and reinforced. The latter is also an aspect of the struggle for symbolic and social capital in the competition between the religious communities identifying themselves with the sacred places. The more sacred a place is the more prestige and respect does the given religious community receive.

Actually, the work of the Eparchial Commission of Canonisation is in close parallel and even overlaps to a certain extent with the functions of the Commission for Reconstruction of Memory (*Komissiia po Vosstanovleniiu Pamiati*) led by the governor of the Kaluga district (*oblast'*). Some of the church *kraevedy* are involved in both the Eparchial Commission of Canonisation and the *secular* commission belonging to the institutions of local authorities. Vitalii Legostaev, the *kraeved* whom I have mentioned several times, participates in both commissions. He has compiled a list of names of priests who served in the Kaluga area since the 19th century. Moreover, he enjoys the support of an adherer, a local priest who commemorates late clergymen by reading the whole list while performing liturgy. While working in the secular Commission for Reconstruction of Memory, one of his tasks is to take pictures of thousands of graves in different cemeteries of Kaluga in order to save the names of the dead from oblivion, i.e. to help preserve memory. In doing so, the layman-*kraeved* and the priest also symbolically reorder the hierarchy of social communities, bringing historical justice to the clergy.

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

The parallels between secular and religious manifestations of the politics of memory could be extended. The activities for the identification of graves, the relics of the 'special dead', and the reburial of anonymous dead strikingly correspond to a large-scale secular initiative. This one aims at the identification of mass graves of Soviet soldiers who were killed in the Second World War. Said long-term initiative is being carried out in all of the Russian Federation, and it should be noted that the territory of the district of Kaluga is only one part of it.

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

Remembrances of the Second World War are not the central topic of discussion in Kaluga, unlike other places in Russia where social memory of the war is still very strong, as Tocheva (2007) reports concerning Gatchina. In fact, initiatives such as the one I mentioned are reminders of not allowing the memory of war to be transformed into history.[37] Who are the social actors behind this initiative? Why is it so important more than sixty years after the end of the war? It is no surprise that specific social groups stand behind this initiative, and at the local level these are the Patriotic Union of Teams of Explorers named *Pamiat'* (memory) and the city and district Committees of the Veterans of War and Military Service (Gorolevich 2006: 31). In other words, the military professional community and societal circles connected to it are the driving forces of the initiative.

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

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

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

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

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[37] Concerning similar reminders, but about the First World War in Argonne, France, see Filipucci 2004: 44–46.

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

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

> "Gunmen [came to] the monastery, [they] demanded the handover of [monastic] horses. The abbot of the monastery refused to give them horses. So the gunmen started to threaten the monks. They sounded alarm by ringing the bells; then peasants came and chased the gunmen away. At the end of the day, regular troops came from Kaluga and, you see, they imposed revolutionary order. They shot all the monks and eight other people, peasants. (…)
> This was in the middle of [nineteen]eighteen. When they were shot they had to stand at the edge of a [grave] hole. [The soldiers] did not succeed in killing one of the monks. They shot him over and over again (…) the soldiers were already afraid, and they wanted to run away. But the monk said: 'Well, what's the matter! Go ahead, do your job!' He gave his blessing, and only then were they able to kill him. He must have been a very devotional monk!" (Aleksei, a custom-house officer, 50)[38]

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

Although the images of new martyrs belong to the religious sphere and the images of war heroes are of secular character, one finds points of contact between them. This analogy is far from surprising, at least because of the fact that the images of the martyr and the hero are closely related since the early Christian times. Extraordinary sufferings, which have been experienced by the martyrs, are a kind of miracle and sign for divine presence. "The heroism of the martyrs has always been treated as a form of possession, strictly dissociated from normal human courage" (Brown 2002 [1981]: 79). Heroisation contributes in this particular case to a new elaboration and reformulation of the memory: atrocities committed by the tormentors remain in the background, while the attention is focused on the valour of a martyr as chosen by God. This is the way to achieve symbolic reconciliation of allegedly irreconcilable fragments of the social memory. The narrative of martyrdom is implemented as a tool to positively perceive traumatic experiences from the past. Actually, both the secular project and the Orthodox project successfully transform and reformulate collective memory by constructing a positive vision of the past.

It is useful to remember the cross-culturally valid observation that "historical memories and collective remembrances can be instruments to legitimate discourse, create loyalties, and justify political options. Thus, control over the narrative of the past means control over the construction of

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[38] Interview taken on 16.08.2007. The words and phrases in square brackets were added by the author.

narratives for an imagined future. Memory is a struggle over power and who gets to decide the future. What and how societies choose to remember and forget largely determines their future options. Indeed, memories are constantly revised to suite current identities" (Barahona de Brito, Gonzalez-Enriquez and Aguilar 2001: 38).

Inferences

Politics of memory are marked by special intensity in the postsocialist context, but it is far from being unique, neither for postsocialism nor for Russia. Nonetheless, Russian experience is unique at least due to the fact that the long duration of the Soviet period nowadays brings to life impressively large-scale social practices, which aim at giving specific response to socialist politics of suppressing memory. This is especially valid for the sphere of religious life. The extremes of socialist repressive politics as regards religion are seemingly symmetrical to the activities framed as 'religious revival' in Russia.

I have addressed the *kraevedenie* and the cult of the 'special dead' – martyrs and heroes – as two specific manifestations of the politics of memory. Exploring them in the local context of Kaluga allows for gaining an insight into the fabric of social life behind empirical evidence and summarising answers to the research questions asked initially.

Although the interest in local history and local cultural heritage has already existed in pre-revolutionary Russia, *kraevedenie* in Russia has been firmly conceptualised during the times of the Soviet epoch as a distinct production of knowledge. Church *kraevedenie* is, on the other hand, a product of postsocialism and has gained momentum after 2000, after President Putin took office. This could be explained by the aspiration to strengthen national-affirmative views in Russian society. Church *kraevedenie* is, on the other hand, an aspect of the return to Orthodoxy as (historic) identification, which is to fill the vacuum left after abandoning Soviet political identity. Thus, *kraevedenie* has been transformed from a peripheral project into a socially significant one. Furthermore, church *kraevedenie* is a result of both politics from 'above' and initiatives from 'below'. In other words, strategies of the central power are supported by initiatives from 'below'. *Kraevedy* are the social actors playing the role of the motor in this process; they are also the intermediaries passing important messages between distinct social groups of local society. Most often they belong to the local intelligentsia but are rather close to the large background of the local community. Their status is of amateur and/or of semi-professional character; since recently, they cooperate with professional historians in their activities. Church *kraevedenie* develops mostly in the secular milieu, although in close cooperation with local clergy. *Kraevedy* play a significant role in the process of 'religious revival' investing efforts to discover the locations of destroyed temples and monasteries and to revive names of late priests from oblivion. Their activity is in favour of the local professional community of the clergy and, as a matter of fact, supports the striving of the latter to strengthen its prestige and its position in the local social hierarchy.

Church *kraevedy* contribute to the sacralisation of both local and national history, popularising half forgotten legends and interpreting fateful historical events (like the mentioned '*Stoianie na Ugre*' in 1480). Most of the *kraevedy* of Kaluga originate from other places in Russia and this fact confirms the general impression that *kraevedenie* is less interested in local specificity and 'uniqueness', but rather involved in constructing a nationally-affirmative narrative of Russia.

Activity of *kraevedy* is extended also in the manifestations of worshipping 'the special dead': martyrs and heroes. The clergy plays a key role in this process. I have addressed some particular forms of the veneration of the dead: activities in canonisation of new martyrs who 'shined up' during the Soviet period; the project of the Centre of the New Martyrs of Kaluga as a 'place of memory' and the introduction of a new ritual related to it (litany); the construction of narratives dedicated to new martyrs: hagiography or legendary texts spread either in written or in oral form. Most of the venerated martyrs belong to the (historical) clergy and that is evidence for the striving to do this social group justice. This is also an expression of the current struggle of the clergymen to strengthen their own prestige and their positions in the social hierarchy. My observations document the significant role played by the 'religious entrepreneur', who acts as intermediary and makes the interchange between clergy and laity possible. As one of the aspects of canonisation, the recovery of graves and the identification of the bodies of new martyrs are related to another form of politics of memory: reburials of distinct categories of the dead, aiming at remodelling social memory and symbolic reposition of the social hierarchy. There are three categories of 'bodies' that are objects of concern: martyrs, anonymous dead, and nameless soldiers perished during Second World War. Physical remains of the anonymous dead are a cause for frustration and ambiguity. This explains the striving to put anonymity of the 'special dead' to an end. The aim is to achieve personalisation through identification of graves and remains; it includes both a physical process and a symbolic operation through which the bodies obtain the status and the aura of martyrs and heroes. The former belong to the religious sphere and the latter to the secular one, but there are similarities and interconnections between them. Narratives reveal the new martyrs through the prism of heroisation, while heroes acquire the aura of martyrdom. As I have mentioned earlier, neither active politics of memory nor the specific practices of reburials are uniquely Russian particularities. It is the strategy of reconciling irreconcilable historical legacies that is specific for Russia. The narrative of martyrdom is implemented as a tool to positively reformulate traumatic experiences of the past. In doing so, the Orthodox project of constructing memory successfully contributes to the larger societal project of elaborating a positive vision of the past. This conclusion is also supported by the fact that monuments of Soviet leaders and heroes remain untouched (unlike in the other former socialist countries) and peacefully coexist with the plurality of different new or old iconographies.

The politics of memory in context of the 'religious revival' in Russia are accomplished through an interchange between distinct social groups. Logically enough, it is firstly the clergy striving to acquire historic justice after the end of socialism, but also to achieve higher prestige for itself nowadays. My observations from Kaluga show that the clergy is supported by the central and local authorities. It cooperates with *kraevedy*, another community which became socially visible after the end of socialism and, in particular, after the year 2000. Both communities succeed (with the help of local elite) in the mobilisation of political and economic resources. Thus, they participate in the struggle for control over memory, which is actually a struggle for power. The politics of memory carried out in the context of 'religious revival' in present-day Russia aim not just at strengthening the background of this process, but at positively reshaping traumatic historic experiences. Thus, both politics of memory and 'religious revival' are involved in the construction of a new Russian identity, being parts of the large nationally-affirmative narrative of post-Soviet Russia.

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