Religious Revivals, the Local State, and the Transition from State-Socialism

Prospectus for Dissertation Research

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Karrie J. Koesel
Department of Government
214 White Hall
Cornell University
Ithaca, New York 14853
kjk32@cornell.edu

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INTRODUCTION

In both Russia and China, the transition from state-socialism has been accompanied by a growth in popular religiosity.[1] Deep-rooted indigenous religious activities, such as shamanism, paganism, animism, goddess worship and syncretic sects have resurfaced alongside more traditional forms of religious expression. This resurgence of religion is puzzling, given the communist position that religion was "feudal superstition" and would gradually wither away. To help ensure its eradication, religious buildings were destroyed or converted to other uses; missionaries were expelled from the country for being instruments of Western imperialism; and decade-long campaigns touted the achievements of "science" and "modernization" over superstitious beliefs.[2] Religion, however, did not die out as Marxist ideology might predict, but rather flourished below the state – a development that has become more apparent in a time of economic and political liberalization.

Some suggest that this multifaceted religious revival is extensive, estimating hundreds of churches and temples being built and restored each year. Official calculations of this spiritual renaissance suggest that in Russia alone, over two-thirds of the population now identify with a religious confession (a higher rate of belief than in Germany, the Netherlands, and the Scandinavian countries), and a solid majority of Russians now want baptisms, weddings and funerals in churches.[3]

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[1] Several recent studies have remarked on the revival of religious practices in Eastern Europe and Asia. For example, see Froese (2004); Yang (2004); Fan (2003); Overmyer (2003); Potter (2003); Leung (2002); Kipnis (2001); Lambert (2001); Lai (2001); Bordeaux (2000); Filatov and Uzzell (2000); Filatov (2002; 2000; 1999); Chao (1999); Ownby (1999); Tu (1999); Whitte and Bordeaux (1999); Borowik and Babinski (1997); Jing (1996); Shahar and Weller (1996); Khazanov (1995); Rubinstein (1995); Chan and Hunter (1994); Seymour and Wehrli (1994); Dean (1993); Wang (1993); Harrell (1988); Anagnost (1987).

[2] State-sponsored ideological campaigns to eliminate religion in the Soviet Union are numerous. The 1920s and 30s experienced the most severe attacks on religious institutions and believers, where atheism became mandatory for members of the ruling Russian Communist Party. To eliminate the perverse influence of religion in society, religious dissenters were sent to the GULAG labor camps for reeducation or killed. In 1925 the League of Militant and Godless was formed under the motto "the Struggle Against Religion is the Struggle for Socialism" with the goal of suppressing the Russian Orthodox Church and other organized religions (Knox 2005: 45). Campaigns against the Russian Orthodox Church were relaxed in 1939 to the mid-1940s for the sake of national defense. The state allowed for the opening of several Orthodox churches in an attempted to build patriotic support among the people. The Khrushchev administration, however, reversed the liberal religious policies and launched a six-year violent campaign against all forms of religion (1959-64). In China, state-sponsored ideological campaigns against the religion are evident in the "Four Cleans" Movement (1965), which was designed, in part, to persuade religious practitioners to renounce their religious beliefs and hand over their religious items to the state. Other mass campaigns during the Cultural Revolution (1966-77) treated religious practitioners as "class enemies" and in the name of "making a clean sweep of monsters and demons" religious properties and cultural relics were destroyed (Luo 1991). Attempts to suppress religion, however, are not confined to the Communist period; the Republican regime believed that the eradication of "superstition" was crucial to the making of modern citizens (Poon 2004).

[3] Nezhny and Kharchev (1988); Kaariainen (1998); Froese (2004); Greely (2003) "Religious Revivals in Eastern Europe" posted on the JRL #5 - JRL 7036, 27 Jan 2003; available at: http://www.cdi.org/russia/johnson/7036-5.cfm [accessed 03 April 05.]

The scale of this religious revival is equally as striking in Asia, when considering that China now has over 200 million "believers," making it the home to the world's second largest evangelical Christian population (behind only the United States).[4] Within a global context, this spiritual renewal parallels the larger trend of what Jose Casanova calls "deprivatization" – the process in which religion abandons its assigned place in the private sphere and enters the undifferentiated public sphere.[5]

The resurgence of religiosity has certainly not gone unnoticed by the Russian and Chinese states. Both Moscow and Beijing have taken considerable efforts in shaping the deprivatization of religion and controlling religious activities. At the central level, the state has attempted to create a more hospitable environment for religious expression by establishing a legal framework outlining acceptable confessions and setting parameters on religious activities. These religious policies are then implemented and enforced at the local level. However, as a consequence of both vaguely written reforms and enterprising local elites, central policies on religion have been unsystematically implemented. In some instances, Chinese local elites have been able to accommodate greater religious expression than the center may have approved by renaming places of worship as cultural relics and museums.[6] In other extremes, Russian local elites have outlawed centrally protected confessions by arguing that foreign missionaries foster local instability.[7] Thus, while central authorities have set the guidelines for religious expression across the region, it is at the local level where religion and ritual are regulated.

My dissertation project will compare how regimes in transition from state-socialism[8] are coping with the new religious and cultural realities they face. With a focus on Russia and China, I address the religious revival from two distinct levels. First, with a concentration on the top-down dynamics of religious regulation, I examine why and how Russia's and China's central governments seek to regulate religion. I argue that Moscow and Beijing's desire to control the resurgence of religious

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4 Lai (2001); Dean (1997); Ye (2002); Kindopp (2004: 1-2). It is important to mention that official statistics on religion in China are notoriously unreliable. State documents tend to estimate the number around 100 million religious adherents (in 1997) to 200 million religious adherents (in 2002); external estimates suggest this number is closer to 200 million and rapidly growing. For a comparison of internal and external estimates, see the Information Office of the State Council of the People's Republic of China, "Freedom of Religious Beliefs in China," White Paper, available at: http://www.china.org.cn/e-white/Freedom/f-1.htm [accessed March 14, 2005] and US Department of State, International Religious Freedom Report 2004 available at http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/irf/2004/35396.htm [accessed March 14, 2005].

5 Casanova (1994: 65-6).

6 See, for example, Chau (2005); M. Yang (2004a; 2004b); Szoyni (forthcoming).

7 Levison (1997: 4).

8 To be clear, I mark the beginning of the Russian transition from state-socialism in 1985 when Mikhail Gorbachev liberalized laws on religious expression. In China, 1982 serves as the start of the transition when the Party Central Committee issued *Document 19 – The Basic Concept and Basic Policy Concerning the Religious Question in China's Socialist Period.*

groups is not surprising, as all states attempt to regulate religion; however, ambiguity in central policies in both countries leaves considerable discretion to local elites in how they interact with religious groups. Given the importance of the local state, I secondly investigate under what conditions local elites support, tolerate, or suppress – politicize or depoliticize – local religious groups and communities. In the regulation of religion and ritual, religious communities are not passive actors in the process. Therefore, I hypothesize how both the complexion of religious communities and competition among confessions effects local variation of the regulation of religious groups. I hope to isolate the factors that shape the attitudes and behavior of local elites and religious groups and their interactions with each other. For example, how and why do local elites attempt to exercise authority over religious communities, and how do these communities in turn try to influence the local governments and bureaucracies? What do these relationships in the public sphere suggest in turn about the changing boundaries between public and private, cultural and political arenas of cooperation and contestation? To answer these questions, I develop three sets of hypotheses which consider political, economic and ideological variables shaping local state behavior toward religious groups, and hypothesize religious communities' strategies for influencing the local state.

In this prospectus, I address how Russia and China have attempted to control the religious renaissance from the central and local levels of governance, and how religious communities influence the local bargaining game. I then discuss my research strategy, methodology and case selection. I conclude with a brief discussion of the implications of my project and suggest how it serves as a point of departure for future research on the intersection of religion and politics.

PART I – THE CENTRAL STATE

WHY DO STATES SEEK TO REGULATE RELIGION?

The monitoring and regulation of religious groups is a practice as old as states themselves. Political regimes as ancient as the Tang dynasty (618-907) and as recent as the Taliban (1994-2002) have monitored, co-opted, and regulated religion and religious activities. The motivation for surveillance and control of religious groups is complex. States may support religious groups for instrumental means, as religion may be used to bolster the legitimacy and popularity of the rulers. This motivation is particularly important where boundaries between the Church and State are blurred. States may seek to regulate religion for financial means, as historically temples served as

important commercial centers and links between trade routes.[9] States may further regulate religious activities for altruistic reasons, driven by a desire to protect its citizens from charlatans and to provide a moral basis for society.[10] Alternatively, states may desire control over religious groups to ensure their own survival, because when left unchecked religion may provide an alternative spiritual core; a focus for grassroots organizational challenges to the regime; a force to bolster the legitimacy of opposition groups; and a standard for governance that incumbent regimes cannot meet.[11] Religion, according to Gunter Lewy, is a "double-edged sword" that can be used to both support the government and encourage revolt against it.[12] Given the multiple reasons for state intervention into religious affairs, the desire for state control over religious groups is neither unique to Russia nor China, nor is it entirely new. Moscow and Beijing, as well as their communist and pre-revolutionary predecessors have all sought systemic policies that monitor, constrain, divide and even empower religious groups.

The relationship between Church and State in Russia has historically been quite close.[13] The symbolic crowing of Ivan IV, the Terrible, by the Russian Orthodox Church (ROC) in 1547 solidified a mutually beneficial relationship between the ROC and the state.[14] The coronation of the tsar by the ROC served two functions: first, it politically legitimated and theologically consecrated the tsar's position as being the anointed of God; and second, the coronation guaranteed Orthodoxy the status as the "true faith" of the Russian people.[15] The relationship that resulted from this coronation, however, was not always amicable. The popularity of patriarch and the large landholdings of the Church drove several tsars to attempt to subordinate the Church under their authority.[16] Peter I, the Great, was the most successful at limiting the power of the Church. Peter the Great "considered monks to be shirkers and wastrels and undertook steps to limit ecclesiastical possessions and eventually to control ecclesiastical wealth."[17] Therefore, when the patriarch Hadrian died in 1700, Peter the Great kept his seat vacant for over two decades in order to weaken the political and economic influence of the Church.

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9 Kurtz (1974).
10 Spruyt (1994); Reus-Smit (1994).
11 Bak and Benecke (1982: 9).
12 Lewy (1974: 550-51).
13 Riasanovsky (2000).
14 While Ivan I (Ivan Kalita or Prince of Moscow) is accredited with making Moscow the spiritual center of the Russian Orthodoxy, it was Ivan IV who was first crowned as tsar in an act approved by the Orthodox Patriarchs; thus solidifying the link between Church and State (Riasanovsky 2000).
15 Soroka (2003:5).
16 The ROC controlled over one-fourth of Russia's cultivated farmland (Riasanovsky 2000).
17 Riasanovsky (2000: 233).

Although there was no equivalent of the Orthodox Church to crown the Chinese emperor, this does not mean that the Chinese state did not cultivate close ties to religious groups or harness the power of religious claims for instrumental means.[18] In the 12th century, the deity of the Mazu cult (Goddess of the Sea) was canonized into the imperial pantheon of gods.[19] Mazu, who had been exclusively worshipped by fishermen and merchants in the Fujian area, was given the official tile of Divine Kindly Lady (*Linghui furen*) in 1156 and, this title was upgraded to the illustrious Imperial Concubine (*Linghui Fei*).[20] By conferring an imperial title upon Mazu the emperor attempted to absorb some the popularity of Mazu and strengthen his authority in the region. Mazu "served the government as a symbol of solidarity; a guardian figure in whom the masses were known to place unquestioning trust."[21] Thus, the canonization of Mazu by the imperial state illustrates that "beneath the formulaic bureaucratic surface was a calculated desire on the part of the imperial authorities to cultivate civic identity and order by expanding the sovereign reach of the goddess together with a corresponding desire by regional elites to acquiesce as means to their own ends."[22]

Parallel to Russia, relations between religious groups and the Chinese state were not always harmonious; in fact, they were often quite the opposite. Throughout Chinese history there is a common occurrence of popular religious groups and grassroots religious sects challenging the authority of the state.[23] For instance, the White Lotus Rebellion (1796-1805), the Taiping Rebellion (1851-64), the Muslim Rebellion (1862-1878), and the Boxer uprising (1899-1900) all integrate religious beliefs and symbols with revolt. The strong correlation between religion and rebellion places the Chinese regulation of religion in a unique context, and suggests that the state's insistence on monitoring religious affairs is self-interested, rather than the result of paranoia or ideology.

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18 Some scholars might draw a parallel with the ROC and Confucianism as the official religion of the state, particularly at the beginning of the Han dynasty. However, there is considerable debate whether Confucian can be treated as a religion. Scholars who view Confucianism as a purely secular ideology argue it is not a religion because it lacks a priesthood and organized church; makes no distinction between the sacred and secular or eternal and temporal realms; Confucius himself never claimed divinity and is not worshiped as a god; temples built to honor Confucius are not places or worship, but serve as meeting points for a community; and the linchpin of traditional Confucianism rests on the family (filial reverence or *xiao*) and the state (political allegiance or *zhong*) not faith or belief in eternal salvation (Hahm 2005; de Bary 1991). For a discussion of the religious dimensions of Confucianism, see Tu (1989); Taylor (1990a, 1990b).

19 *Fujian wenhua gailan* (1994: 180-82).

20 Rubinstein (1995). The state even went so far as to print sketches of Mazu on currency, see *Fujian wenhua gailan* (1994: 184-88).

21 Boltz (1986: 231).

22 Nyitray (2000: 169). This argument has been made by several scholars, including Watson (1985); Sangren (1988); Hymes (1996); Boltz (1986).

23 On the role of religion in fostering rebellion, see B.J. Terr Haar (1990); Harrell and Perry (1982); Perry (1982); Seiwert (2003); Shek (1990); Overmyer (1999); Spence (1996). For the post-Mao link between religion and violence, see (Perry 2002: 294-7).

RELIGIOUS REVIVAL UNDER CONSTRUCTION

The monitoring of religious groups and communities in the post-socialist transition has brought about the familiar tensions between Church and State. As the Soviet Union began to liberalize under the leadership of Mikhail Gorbachev, the political opportunity structure shifted and the Russian Orthodox Church (ROC) was recognized as a legitimate public institution. Gorbachev needed moral and material support for the movements of *glasnost* and *perestroika,* and the restitution of religious groups, particularly the Orthodox Church, provided him with some political capital among Soviet citizens.[24] The hospitable climate for religious freedom was further protected in the *1990 Law on the Freedom of Conscience and on Religious Organizations*,[25] which was designed to bring Russia in line with the democratic civil rights tradition in Western Europe. The law declared that "freedom of worship is an inalienable right of the citizens of the RSFSR [Russian Soviet Federative Socialist Republic], guaranteed by the Constitution and international obligations of the RSFSR" and included "the right to select and hold religious beliefs and to freely change them."[26]

One unexpected outcome of increased religious freedom was the flood of foreign missionaries into Russia and the explosive growth of new religious movements. These groups were diverse in beliefs, ranging from the Unification Church (Moonies) and Scientologists to followers of the Japanese Aum Shinrikyo sect.[27] The response to this religious deluge was largely negative and fed into the larger domestic struggle between "Westernizers" and "Slavophiles." The Russian media sided with the "Slavophiles" and devoted significant attention to the harmful activities of foreign "totalitarian sects;" candidates in the 1996 federal election campaigns additionally promised to take measures against harmful religious groups; and the ROC and communists-nationalists formed a surprising, though convenient coalition against the influx of foreign religious groups. The orthodox-red-brown coalition argued that the religious policies of the early 1990s were whimsically adopted "on a wave of democratic romanticism," thereby giving too much freedom to proselytizing western religious organizations and failing to protect traditional denominations, such as Orthodoxy.[28] Metropolitan Kirill expressed his contempt at this influx of Western missionaries:

> Proselytism is the fact of invasion by another culture, even if Christian, but developing according to its own laws and having its own tradition. This invasion is taking places after the old missionary patterns of colonial times. It is not merely a desire to reveal Christ to

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[24] Whitte and Bourdeaux (1999).
[25] Religion in the Soviet Republics (1990) *Zakon svoboda sovesti SSSR* (1990); *Zakon o svobode veroispovedenii; Vedomosti Verkhnogo Soveta RSFSR* (1990).
[26] As quoted in the preamble of the 1990 law.
[27] Ramet (1998).
[28] Filatov (1999: 163).

> people – people have confessed Christianity for over a thousand years at that – but also to refashion their culture in the Western mode.[29]

Following this domestic debate, central control over religious expression was tightened.[30] The 1997 federal law *On Freedom of Conscience and Religious Association*[31] distinguished between "religious organizations" and "religious groups." This distinction is significant, because it created a hierarchy among religious confessions in Russia.[32] Orthodoxy enjoys a privileged status at the top as a religious organization similar to its pre-revolutionary position as the center of Russian religious life and the preamble of the 1997 Law recognizes "the special contribution of Orthodoxy to the history of Russia and to the establishment and development of Russia's spirituality and culture." The second-tier grants full legal protection, but less state benefits to other "traditional religious organizations" with historical roots in Russia, such as Islam, Judaism, and other indigenous religions. Within the third-tier of the law, the language shifts from "religious organizations" (*organizatsiia*) to "religious groups" (*gruppa*), with the latter defined as new or non-traditional confessions in Russia, such as Catholicism.[33] This third-tier distinction is critical, because religious groups are denied rights that are guaranteed to religious organizations, such as the right to publish and distribute literature; to invite foreign guests to Russia; to have access to schools, hospitals, and prisons; and to tax exempt status. Religious groups within this third-tier must additionally register annually with local authorities. This accreditation process can be cumbersome, if not politically invasive, requiring religious leaders to prove that their religion is "real," supply a comprehensive list of all members and their addresses, and provide minutes from religious meetings.[34] If a group cannot present these documents to the satisfaction of the local state, they may be denied registration, and therefore, deemed illegal.

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[29] Metropolital Kirill of Smolensk and Kaliningrad, "The Russian Orthodox Church and the Third millennium," reprinted in *Ecumenical Review*, 52/3 (2000: 74).

[30] Gradual restrictions include the 1993 attempt to amend the 1990 Law on the Freedom on Conscience and Religious Organization. While this attempt at shifting federal law was vetoed, several regions passed local laws in the spirit of the 1993 amendment to control the religious revival; see especially, Marsh and Froese (2004).

[31] Federal law No 135-FZ (September 26, 1997) *'O svobode sovesti i o religioznykh ob'edineniiakh'*; hereafter the 1997 Law. It is interesting to note that this law was passed with a 337 to 5 vote in the Duma.

[32] One of the privileges the 1997 confers on the ROC is the use of "Russian" within its name. According to the 1997 Law, "only centralized religious organization which have been active [in Russia] on a legal basis for no fewer than 50 years may use the term 'Russian' in their title. In practice, the ROC is the only group that qualifies. Other traditional religions of Russia, such as Muslims, Jews, and Buddhists, were "illegal" after 1917 and before 1905. And while they were 'legal' briefly between 1905 and 1917, they were not 'centralized.' The Orthodox Church's right to use the term "Russian" is more than honorary. In practice, this is the only religious organization that receives the promised government subsidies for the restoration, maintenance, and protection of buildings and objects what are monuments of history and culture" (Whitte 1999: 14).

[33] Specifically, historically new refers to a religious group that has not existed in Russia for the past 15 years (Article 9.1).

[34] *Religionznaja zhizn' v zerkale statistiki sociologii*. Moskovskie novosti, No. 11/1997.

One of the consequences of the 1997 Law is that it grants significant power to local officials in regulating religion. This is because local elites determine whether a group has "traditional" roots in the region, whether its liturgical texts are "authentic," and whether its leaders are "competent." This can be highly problematic, because "many regional administrations conclude that they can act arbitrarily and with impunity in dealing with religious minorities and newer religious organizations."[35] Moreover, "every bureaucrat at any level can decide the fate of a religious organisation 'according to his understanding.'"[36] The local autonomy and the arbitrary acts of local elites are illustrated in the Volga region, where the mayor of Kazan, Tatarstan passed a local ordinance denying accreditation to one Protestant community, because it was accused of "prompting protest from residents."[37] In Tula, the local state has initiated an intimidation campaigns toward Baptists, including shutting off power and water to the church and hiring local laborers to break up a tent revival. In June 2004, a Moscow district court banned all organized activity of the city's 10,000 Jehovah's Witnesses on the grounds that they posed a threat to society and the Salvation Army is currently fighting a legal battle in Russian courts to defend its right to exist after Moscow city authorities brought the local branch to court to liquidate it.[38] Thus, while the Russian central state has set guidelines for religious expression, it is at the local state where religion and ritual are regulated.

Chinese religious policy during the post-Mao period has followed a similar trajectory of central liberalizing reforms that depend on local implementation. The cornerstone of Chinese religious reforms is the *Article 36* of the Constitution, which protects the freedom of religious beliefs (and the freedom not to believe) as well as guarantees of legal protection for "legitimate religious organizations."[39] What constitutes a legitimate religious organization, however, is unspecified by the Chinese Constitution. In attempts to clarify this definition and aid in the regulation of religious activities the Party Central Committee issued *Document 19 – The Basic Concept and Basic Policy Concerning the Religious Question in China's Socialist Period.* This 1982 document outlines the general philosophy of state-religious relations for the reform period. It maintains that Marxist theory is correct and that

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35 Homer and Uzzell (1999: 285); Knox (2005) makes a similar argument.
36 Taken from a speech for the book launch of the Encyclopedia of Religious Life in Russia Today, at the Carnegie Center, Moscow. Available at: http://www.starlightsite.co.uk/keston/encyclo/knorretranslation.html [accessed March 01, 05].
37 Levison (1997: 4).
38 Uzzel (2004). Since the closing of the tent revival, there have been 10 arson attacks on Baptist churches in the region. Pastor Nikolai Dudenkov, of the Tulan Baptist Church, told International Religious Freedom Watch that the local police are the key suspects. See also US Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe (Helsinki Commission) on Hearing of Unregistered Religious Groups in Russia, April 14, 2005, full transcript available at *Congressional Quarterly* 2005.
39 MacInnis (1989); Liu (1996).

religion will eventually die out; however, when religious beliefs are driven underground (as during the Cultural Revolution) they will grow stronger and are more difficult to control. Therefore, the state must permit and protect "legitimate" religious activities and ensure that religious practices "safeguard the people's interests, the sanctity of the law, ethnic unity, and unification of the nation."[40] Much like the 1997 federal law in Russia that sets up a hierarchy of religious confessions, *Document 19* defines legitimate religious activity as involving one of the five major religions of China: Buddhism, Daoism (Taoism), Islam, Protestantism, and Catholicism.[41] Groups operating outside of these five religions have no legal protection by the state and are deemed illegal.

This five-fold category of legitimate religions (or sometimes called 'normal religions') is particularly problematic, because much of the current religious revival and popular religious practices in China do not fall neatly in one category of religion, but rather blend elements of popular religion with Daoism or folk culture with Christianity.[42] Thus, it is often increasingly difficult for local officials to make a distinction between what is legitimate religion and "feudal superstitions."[43]

To help distinguish between illegal and acceptable religious activities and to bring consistent identification of religious activities among localities several policy statements were issued during the eighties.[44] Through these directives local bureaucratic structures were given a clearer role in controlling religious activities. The Religious Affairs Bureau (RAB)[45] and the United Front Work Department (UFWD) were both designated to help register and oversee the implementation of religious groups. Religious Patriotic Associations (RPA), which had been disbanded since the Cultural Revolution, were reorganized for each of the five religions to ensure that religious groups

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40 White Paper: Freedom of Religious Belief in China (1997). It is interesting to note that the 1997 White Paper and the 1997 Federal Law in Russia both stress that religious activities must safeguard ethnic unity. Both Russia and China are largely homogenous states – Han Chinese comprise 91percent of the population and Slavs (Russians, Ukrainians, and Belarusians) makeup over 85 percent of the Russian population.

41 Legitimate Chinese Catholicism is considered to be distinct and autonomous from the authority of the Pope and Vatican. Recent accounts, however, suggest that the two Catholic Churches of China are rapidly moving closer together. The Vatican last year revealed that it had secretly approved 49 of 79 government-sanctioned bishops (Weisman 2005). On the history and conflict between the Catholic Church and Chinese state, see, Weist (2004); Madsen (2004).

42 See, for example, Dean (1989; 1993); Pas (1989).

43 Seymour and Wehrli (1994: 9).

44 These four policies include: (1) *Zhong Ban Fa 16* or *Document 16*, from the Ministry of Education which details who religion was to be treated in schools; (2) *Document 60* released by the Religious Affairs Office of the State Council, which contains information concerning mainly Han-area Buddhist and Taoist Monasteries and their reconstruction; (3) *Zhong Ban Fa 68* or *Document 68*, a combined document from 8 ministries to distinguish between religion and feudal superstition; and (4) 5-points Document emphasizing the need for "patriotism" in religion. For a discussion of these directives, see Seymour and Wehrli (1994).

45 The central RAB has been renamed as the State Administration for Religious Activities (SARA), whereas the provincial offices remain named the RAB.

worked with the Party-state.[46] Finally, the Public Security Bureau (PSB) was assigned the task of identifying and suppressing unregistered religious groups, as well as helping local officials distinguish between illegal and normal religions. Thus, it is fair to say that the 1980s was an attempt by the center to create bureaucratic accountability for religious groups and activities.

By 1991, Central Party Documents on religion began to reflect the leadership's escalating concern with religion as a force splitting the nation. This shift is not surprising considering the collapse of the Soviet Union and the view that Communist states in Eastern Europe had failed to repress, control, and co-opt religion.[47] To reflect these concerns and in keeping with the larger goal of rule of law as a mechanism for political stability, *Document 6* (released in February 1991) emphasized that religion must not be used by external forces to divide the nation. To help ensure that China was not infiltrated by "hostile forces from abroad," policies for the registration of religious groups and places of worship were tightened and clarified.[48] The regulation procedures of religious activities and venues of worship were standardized across China, and in order for religious groups to be guaranteed protection they were required to meet a series of registration criteria, including: being one of the five major religions, having a fixed place of worship, a professional clergy, and a legal source for funding.[49] Groups that did not satisfy any one of these criteria were supposed to be denied registration, legal protection, and considered illegal. In March 2005, the State Council has developed a series of new policies to standardize the registration of normal religious groups. The lengthy "Regulations on Religious Affairs" (48 articles and seven chapters) provides guidance to local officials in everything from how licensed organizations can accept religious donations and claim tax exemptions to how religious institutions may accept foreign students. Nevertheless, ambiguity in defining and identifying "normal and abnormal religious activity" and

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46 RPA's were originally established in the 1950s to assist the government in implementing religious policy and were disbanded during the Cultural Revolution. They are organized on the national, provincial, municipal and prefectural level to control various religious organizations within the regions. As for other bureaucratic organizations to regulate religion include: Buddhist Association of China, Taoist Association of China, Islamic Association of China, Chinese Patriotic Catholic Association, Chinese Catholic Bishops' College, Three-Self Patriotic Movement Committee of the Protestant Churches of China, and China Christian Council. [White Paper, Freedom of Religious Belief in China] available at: http://www.china.org.cn/e-white/Freedom/f-1.htm (assessed March 14, 2005)].

47 Two instances may have resonated with Beijing elites: the role of the Polish Catholic Church in the Solidarity Movement; and the 1989 "Revolution of the Candles" in East Germany which began as small candle-lit demonstrations around the Leipzig Nikolai Church and escalated into mass gathers of 300,000 protestors over several weeks. See, Ramet (1992); Tischner (1982); Nielsen (1991).

48 The (1994) religious standards additionally forbid religious organizations to be controlled by foreigners (Article 4); required approval of church related activities by the state, such as social services and exhibitions (Article 11); and limited the amount of donations received by foreign organizations (Article 6).

49 Spiegal (1997).

"religious extremism" remains.[50]

Although it is still too soon to evaluate the success of the most recent wave of central polices on religious affairs, the reforms reiterate the importance local elites and bureaucracies. It is the local governments and bureaucracies that decide whether religious practices in their region are illegal, whether they fall under the definition of feudal superstitions and should be suppressed, or whether they can be officially registered.[51] This has led to creative implementation by local elites. In Fujian, the popular Mazu cult, which falls within the center's definition of "feudal superstition" and is therefore illegal, has gained recent popularity with the help of the local state. Local elites permit greater popular religious freedom by "re-inventing" Mazu as a cultural relic and tourist attraction. Similarly, the island of Putuoshan in Zhejiang offers an example of how local officials have harnessed the healing powers of the Buddhist Goddess of Mercy, *Guanyin*, to serve the capitalist ideal of earning tourism revenue.[52] By treating popular religious practices as cultural or as tourism, the local state is able to ignore the central directives on religion – in short, using politics to expand the room for religiosity.

By contrast, local Jilin elites have zealously implemented central directives. With the rise of Falun Gong and their silent protests in front of *Zhongnanhai*[53] in 1999, religious policy shifted from external threats to internal illegal "cults."[54] Following the denouncing of Falun Gong, groups that engaged in *qigong* practices and traditional meditative practices also became targets of the new policy.[55] In Jilin, home to Li Hongzhi the leader of Falun Gong, the Avon Cosmetics and Amway Companies were temporarily shut-down in 1999 pending an investigation of their "cult-like"

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50 A recent roundtable discussion of the implications of the March 2005 decree was held in the US Congress, see "China's New Regulations of Religious Affairs: A Paradigm Shift, transcripts available at: www.cecc.gov/pages/roundtables/031405/Bays.php [assessed May 5, 2005].

51 Spiegal (1997); Seymour and Wehrli (1994).

52 For the "re-inventing" of religious activities as culture, see also Yang (2003); Wang (1993); Lyons (2000); Chu and Yeung (2000: 325); Yeung (2000: 367); Szonyi (forthcoming); Savadove (2005).

53 *Zhongnanhai* is the offices and residential compound used by high-ranking Party-state officials, adjacent to Tiananmen Square, in the center of Beijing.

54 From the vantage point of the Public Security Bureau (PSB), which has the bureaucratic reach to suppress cults, they are defined by five characteristics: (1) groups that set up illegal organizations in the name of religion or *qigong*; (2) groups that defy leaders; (3) groups that initiate and spread superstitious and heterodox beliefs; (4) groups which utilize various means to excite doubts and deceive the people and recruit and control members by force; and (5) groups who incite social disorder and bring injury to citizens. Notice on Various Issues Regarding Identifying and Banning of Cultic Organizations, The Ministry of Public Security of The People's Republic of China, (2000) No. 39; reprinted in "Religion and Public Security in China, 1999-2002," *Chinese Law and Government*, 36/2, 2003; hereafter cited as *Chinese Law and Government* (2003). On the political effect of the Falun Gong issue, see Kang (2002); Leung (2002).

55 For instance other *qigong* groups that have mystic elements were banned, including the *Zhonggong*, *Guogong* and *Xianggong* movements.

activities.[56] Local officials were concerned that both Avon and Amway used pyramid-schemes to swindle their customers and trick them into becoming addicted to their products. Avon and Amway, therefore, were classified under the center's definition of a cult: "groups which utilize various means to excite doubts and deceive the people and recruit and control members by force."

From this brief survey of central religious reforms in Russia and China we can draw two lessons. The first is that both Moscow and Beijing have created a more hospitable environment for religious expression while simultaneously enacting reforms to control growing religiosity. The second and more important lesson is that the implementation of central religious policy lies in the hands of local governments and bureaucracies. It is up to local elites to decide whether religious practices in their region are illegal, whether they fall under the definition of feudal superstitions and should be suppressed, or whether they can be officially registered.[57] This second lesson reminds us that religion is politics and that all politics, even in highly centralized states, is local. It also compels us to focus our analysis on the local state and to rethink systematically what factors: 1) shape local authorities' attitudes and behavior toward competing religious groups; and 2) the political strategies employed by religious communities to pursue their own cultural interests.

PART II – THE LOCAL STATE

"All politics is local." - Tip O'Neil

The central thesis of the previous section is that the regulation of religion and ritual is largely a function of the local state. It is the local state that both interprets central religious policies and determines whether religious groups are practicing within the boundaries of the law. But what do we mean by the *local state*? This is a term that refers primarily to provincial and republic governing structures. I am casting the local state widely because the provincial level is the first level of government removed from the center that must address the religious revival, the registration of religious groups, and the possible subsidies for reconstruction of religious buildings. Second, focusing on the provincial level is particularly critical in Russia, because republic legislatures and governors have implemented their own laws and decrees on religious expression. Third, by examining the provincial level of the local state, I will be able to tap into greater religious plurality

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[56] I was working in Changchun (Jilin Province) during the 1999 temporary closing of the Avon and Amway stores. Several of my students were "Avon-ladies" and discussed how their letter writing campaign helped persuade local officials that Avon was not a cult.

[57] Spiegal (1997); Seymour and Wehrli (1994).

while facilitating cross-regional comparison. Finally, both Russia and China are extraordinarily large states where the politics of culture in the capital is far removed from daily life.

In addition to the provincial level, I intend to further specify the local state at the municipal or city level. A city-municipalities approach is important, because political elites are further removed from the central state, and are therefore freer to pursue their own values and interests. Similarly, I expect the greater distance from the center forces local elites to focus on their localities, rather than on relations with the provincial government. At the city-level, local elites are both more familiar with the religious landscape and dependent on the locality for political support. Indeed, there is considerable literature that points to the importance of local politics for elites and publics in both Russia and China.[58] Just as local Russian officials depend upon their publics for votes and taxes, so in Chine elite political futures rest upon the ability of leaders to secure order and money. In this sense, religious groups are like other interest groups; their relationship with local elites rests on bargaining for money, power, and status.

It is also important to clarify what I mean by local support, tolerance, or suppression of religious groups. Local elite management of religion can take several forms – from the implementation of local laws on religious expression to energy subsidies for the heating of churches and temples. Given the complexity of local state-religious relations, I develop a three-point continuum to distinguish variation in my dependent variable, local regulation of different religious groups.

TABLE 1. LOCAL REGULATION OF RELIGIOUS GROUPS

SUPPORT	TOLERANCE	CONTAINMENT & CONTROL
- Local laws protecting religious freedoms - Subsidies for energy - Financial contributions for building (re)construction - Inviting local clergy to attend political functions - Symbolic speeches of support	- Registration of religious venues and groups - Ignore religious activities - Rename religious activities and groups as "culture" or "cultural"	- Local laws restricting religious freedoms - Control over clergy (local officials training clergy) - Restrict religious activities to state-approved cites - Forbidding distribution of religious materials - Impose strict controls on relations between religious organization and foreign groups - Denying accreditation of religious groups - Denouncing groups as "cults" or "illegal" - Symbolic speeches denouncing religious groups - Banning of religious group - Burning or destruction of places of worship

[58] Goodman (1995); Goodman and Segal (1994); Wang (1994); Solnik (1996); Shlapentokh et al (1997); Stoner-Weiss (1997, 1999); Gladney (1998); Shue (1988); Petro (1999); Treisman (1997, 1999); Wigen (1999); Kahn (2000); Li & Tang (2000); Oakes (2000); Ruble et al (2001); Ross (2002); Herd (2003); Stolarov (2003); Jia & Lin (1994).

Using the above continuum and the secondary literature as a guide, my project explores three types of explanations – political, economic and ideological – for understanding how the local state interacts with competing religious groups. I additionally explore why and how religious communities attempt to align themselves with the local state. Before turning to the sets of hypotheses, it is useful to suggest how regional demographics set the parameters for local elite strategies in the regulation of competing religious groups. The choice of local elites – to support one confession or to encourage religious pluralism or to liquidate religious group – is influenced by the religious and ethnic complexion of the region.

Following the logic of political competition, when the local state is religiously plural and no confession has a majority, local elites have powerful incentives to reach out to a diverse body of constituents in order to expand coalitions of support.[59] As the religious complexion in a region shifts from plural to homogeneous, and one confession has a clear majority, the incentives for local elites to build coalitions among religious communities dissipate. When religious communities control a monopoly of belief in the region, local elites turn to the majority religious community for political support.[60] In short, support for religious communities and the willingness of local elites to reach out to these diverse confessions depends on both degree of religious plurality in a region and size of confessions.

Ethnic composition may additionally play a crucial role in shaping the strategies of local elites. Local elites have powerful incentives to engage religious communities when religious and ethnic identities overlap. When an ethnic/religious community is the majority in a region, such as Muslim Tartars in Tatarstan, the local state will give preferential treatment to these groups because support provides cultural legitimacy for local elites and softens threats of separatism. In other words, when ethnic/religious groups are dominate in a region, local authorities are pushed toward a strategy of support. When ethnic/religious groups are the minority in a region, this creates incentives for local elites to ignore, tolerate, or even suppress the ethnic/religious group. The religious and ethnic complexion of a region suggests two hypotheses of local elite behavior toward religious groups:

> H_1 *Local elites who are accountable to citizens within their locale opt for a supportive strategy of religious pluralism when no confession has a religious monopoly. By contrast, local elites opt for a strategy of supporting the religious monopoly when one confession exercises dominance over the local religious market.*

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[59] See, especially, Horowitz (1991); Wilkinson (2004).

[60] A religious monopoly is a locale comprised of predominately one religious confession, such as Orthodoxy or Buddhism, where this confession exercises dominance over the local religious market.

H_2 Confessions that coincide with the dominant ethnic group in the region are supported by local elites over religious groups lacking a core ethnic base or ethnic/religious minorities.

POLITICAL EXPLANATIONS

Keeping the larger religious and ethnic complexion of a locale in mind, we can begin to assess how the political dynamics of the transitions, specifically how growing pressures of elites to be accountable to their locality, influences the relationship between the state and competing religious communities. I assume that local elites are rational decision-makers, who need local support to remain in power – whether because of voters or because "higher ups" in the administrative hierarchy value local stability. Early on in the transition process local elites choose between competing strategies: to support one religious confession or to encourage religious pluralism. These early decisions then shape the patterns of religious development in the region.

The choice of local elites to support, tolerate, or suppress religious confessions is influenced by local political competition, political accountability, and the commitment to democratization or reform. In areas where there is strong political competition and high accountability, local politicians have powerful incentives to reach out to a diverse body of constituents in order to expand coalitions of support; whereas in areas of low political competition and high corruption, local politicians have fewer incentives to reach out to a diverse body of constituents and may use their power to seek personal financial benefits from religious groups.

H_3 Regions with high political competition and accountability are more tolerant and supportive of religious diversity than regions that are insulated from electoral pressures.

H_4 Local support of religious pluralism and religious freedom will vary with commitments to democratic political processes and reform. As regime commitment to democratization/reform decreases, support for religious pluralism and religious freedom will decrease.

H_5 Where local elites are less constrained by political competition, they are more likely to use their power to seek economic benefits from religious groups for themselves; this privileges the influence of more wealthy religious groups.

ECONOMIC EXPLANATIONS

The forces driving elite strategies toward competing religious groups, however, must be placed within a context of economic reform. The transition from state-socialism has severely altered the political landscape "from one centrally organized, rigidly bounded, and hysterically concerned with impenetrable boundaries to one in which territorial, ideological, and issue boundaries are attenuated,

unclear and confusing."[61] While local and regional governments have gained greater autonomy from Moscow and Beijing, this independence is not without costs. Local governments are now financially responsible for providing the substantial public goods and services to their communities that citizens came to expect from years of living in a socialist state. However, given the limited taxing capacity of countries in transition, low levels of bureaucratic development at the local level, and high levels of corruption, the local state is severely constrained in its ability to provide these services.[62] Where religious groups are willing and able to fill in the gap, (for example, by repairing roads or providing tourist revenue), they are tolerated and even courted by local public officials. This leads to two hypotheses:

> H_6 *Religious groups are supported or tolerated by the local state when they provide public goods for the community and extra revenue for the local state.*
>
> H_7 *There is a direct relationship between the support for religious groups and the level of economic development in a region. In poorer areas, where the local state depends on religious organization to provide public goods, there is greater tolerance for religious groups than in areas where the local state is wealthy.*

IDEOLOGICAL EXPLANATIONS

I suspect, however, we must additionally consider the role of ideology as influencing the interactions between the local state and religious groups. There is some evidence that post-communist regimes, like their predecessors, are drawing on religious and cultural resources to help build a national identity that promotes social solidarity and regime legitimacy. This turn to religion is not surprising in a time of terrorist threats and other challenges to state borders, and in a context where earlier ideologies have lost support and regimes are seeking new ways to win legitimacy. Jeffrey R. Seul reminds us of the salience of religion in arguing that "no other repositories of cultural meaning have historically offered so much in response to the human need to develop a secure identity."[63] In Russia, these "realignments of belonging"[64] have translated into calls for the revival of "Holy Rus" or Moscow as the "Third Rome" to maintain national solidarity and state legitimacy. At the forefront of this movement is the ROC, which views the Church as an "empire-saving" institution of the Russian Federation.[65] In China, there is an increasing trend of central leaders

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[61] Jowitt (1992: 307).
[62] There are many systematic discussions on the abuses of power, the spread of corruption, difficulties of tax collection, and the weakening of legitimacy in China and Russia. See, for example, Liu (1983); Oi (1989); Levy (1995); Perry (1999); Treisman (1999); Zheng (1999); Perry & Selden (2003).
[63] Seul (1999: 558).
[64] Schirmer (2004).
[65] Dunlop (1995).

paying homage to the Confucius Temple and the mythical Yellow Emperor to build domestic support.[66] In this sense, religion and other cultural symbols have become instruments of the central state for maximizing regime support and minimizing political challenges. I plan to determine whether this relationship is repeating itself on a local level; that is, are local states supportive of religious groups that are considered culturally authentic or integral parts of the state and are local religious groups leading the movement for realignment with the state?

H_8 Where local religious groups are diverse in both religious and national terms, ideological appeals to religiosity will depend on whether there is a clear religious majority.

H_9 The local state is more supportive of religious organizations that are considered as "culturally authentic" or "native religions" rather than "foreign religion."

H_{10} Culturally authentic or native religions attract greater state support in proportion to increases in internal and external threats to the state.

It is also important to consider the role of personal ideology as shaping the behavior of local elites. For instance, local elites who are active Protestants may be more supportive of Protestant house churches while simultaneously suppressing competing confessions. In other words, personal religious convictions may encourage local elites to join in what Patriarch Alesksii II calls the "war for souls" – the obligation of the Church and congregation to battle for people's souls by all legal means available.[67]

H_{11} When the local state elites openly practice one confession, the local state is supportive of that same confession, while tolerant or, depending on competition and religious demographics, constraining of other confessions.

RELIGIOUS COMPETITION

So far, our discussion of local state behavior toward religious groups has been predominately state-centric and little has been said about how religious groups influence the bargaining process. Religious communities are not passive actors in local politics; they seek to align themselves with the local state to pursue their interests. At first blush, it may seem counterintuitive for religious leaders to court the state, because religious groups answer to a higher calling and the state has a history of religious repression. However, within the context of the transition where religious freedoms are still in flux, religious groups act like interest groups and seek to align themselves with those with power

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[66] Christensen (1996) makes the point that since the CCP is no longer communist it must be even more culturally Chinese.

[67] Aleksii II, Patriarch of Moscow and All Russia, "Address of the Patriarch to the Councils of the Moscow Parishes at the Episcopal Gathering, 12 December 1996," *Tsekovno-obschestvennyi Vestnik* 6 (December 26, 1996): 7 (1).

and resources. By courting the local state, religious groups may secure various advantages, including insurance against changes in central religious policies, needed subsidies, or influence in local schools. In practice, a religious group may mobilize support for a local official among parishioners or publicly support a local state policy, with the understanding the state will respond by providing subsidies or political protection. At the extreme, this speaks to religious groups capturing the state, but, more commonly, this is expressed as a collaboration that generates a mutually beneficial relationship.

The central reforms on religious expression additionally foster a close relationship between the local church and state. For instance, the hierarchy of religious confessions created by Moscow and Beijing encourages religious groups to compete among themselves for a place in the local pecking order. At the same time religious groups are struggling to align themselves with the local state, they are also competing one another for followers and spiritual primacy. Thus, religious groups compete on both a vertical playing field with each other for state support, and a horizontal playing field with each other for "souls."

H_{12} *Local elites will suppress competing religious groups when they establish a collaborative relationship with the dominant confession in a region.*

H_{13} *Religious groups will seek to align themselves with the local state to secure protection, subsidies and primacy over religious groups.*

Research Strategy

The field research for this project will be carried out during a twenty-four month period, with the time divided between the Volga Federal District, Russia and Fujian and Jilin, China.[68] No single research strategy can sort out the many factors shaping Moscow's and Beijing's regulation of religion and the bargaining that goes on between local governments and religious communities. As a result, this project draws on several methods: in-depth interviews, content analysis, and survey research. To address the first component of my project on central religious reforms – that is, explaining how Beijing and Moscow have attempted to regulate religion and ritual – I intend to conduct interviews at the Ministry of Justice in Russia and at the Religious Affairs Bureau (RAB) and the United Front Work Department (UFWD) in China.[69] The purpose of these interviews is to examine the origins and implementation of religious regulations and to explore how agents of the state perceive the role of religious groups.

A second strategy to gain leverage over the center's changing views on religion is to use content

[68] See Appendix I for a preliminary research calendar.
[69] These institutions are responsible for registering and monitoring religious groups at the local level.

analysis to examine the treatment of religion in secondary and higher education textbooks. Textbooks are illuminating, because they were both approved by the center and standardized across the country during the Soviet and Maoist era. More importantly, during the liberalization period in both countries, many of these textbooks were revised as state policy shifted from scientific atheism to a more liberal understanding of religion.

To help explain the behavior of the local state toward religious groups, I shall follow a similar strategy of interviews with local elites and religious leaders, as well as generate a database of local newspapers. To help test my hypotheses, interviews with local elites will serve as a key data-generating resource. Interviews are intended to uncover the difficulty of managing the diverse religious revival, explore how the local state views competing religious groups, and shed light on the intricacies of local registration of religious associations. In particular, I will be inquiring about religious groups that fail the local registration process, and religious groups that fall on the margins of acceptable religious behavior.

It is equally as important to examine the behavior of the local state toward competing religious groups, from the perspective of religious groups themselves. At this point I am uncertain how free I will be to interview religious groups, especially those currently involved in the registration process or religious groups that operate 'unofficially' without state sanction. Ideally, I would like to conduct interviews with local religious leaders and focused discussions with religious practitioners to explore how grassroots religious organizations perceive their role and goals, and examine how the local state shapes religious activities. To ensure standardization across interviews and cases I will ask a sequence of "standardized, open-ended" questions.[70]

With the help of local academic institutions I hope to conduct a formal survey of religious groups in the areas of inquiry in Russia and China. The goal of this survey is to assess which demographic groups are most active in the current religious revival, what function the spiritual beliefs of practitioners seem to play in daily life, and how they view their relationship with the state. In the event that I am unable to fund a survey or gain official approval, I can fall back on the World Values Survey (WVS),[71] which surveys cultural and political change in over 80 societies since 1981. While not ideal, the WVS' questions tap into issues of religious affiliation, trust in institutions, and civil society at the nation-state level.

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[70] See Patton (1990) on the "standardized, open-ended" approach to interviewing. On general tips for conducting interviews, see Briggs (1986); Gordon (1975); Kvale (1996), Lonner and Berry (1987).
[71] For more on the WVS, see http://www.worldvaluessurvey.org/.

To supplement the interviews with local elites and religious communities, local newspapers will also provide an important resource for identifying religious groups that have fallen under suspicion of the local state as well as religious groups that have established a mutually beneficial relationship. I will use the qualitative data-analysis program *NUD*IST* to help uncover systematically how competing religious groups are viewed by the local state and local media.[72]

Finally, I plan to gather data on the economic resources religious groups may provide to the local state, including data on tax revenues generated by religious groups and the subsidies given to religious organizations by the state, tourism packages, and ticket sales to religious sites.[73]

RESEARCH VENUES

I anticipate the field research for my dissertation to take a total of twenty-four months. I first plan to conduct nine months of field research in Russia.[74] While in Russia, Moscow will serve as a practical base for conducting interviews with central elites in both the Duma and the Ministry of Justice and for surveying Russian textbooks housed at the Lenin Library (*Biblioteka Im. Lenina*). Following my stay in Moscow, I will then relocate to Nizhny Novgorod in the Volga Federal District (VFD). The rationale for focusing on this macro-federal region is straightforward: it is a center of religious and ethnic diversity in Russia with more than 100 different ethnic groups and 4500 religious communities based on 58 confessions. It also features political diversity, including 15

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[72] Scolari QSR NUD*IST 4 (Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications Software, 1997). NUD*IST is a multi-functional software system for the development, support, and management of qualitative data analysis.

[73] Revenues generated by religious organization can take unique forms. In 1987, when Taibei announced that mainlanders would be able to travel to Taiwan and visit relatives not seen since 1949, the state-run China Travel Service (CTS) began to prepare its own version of tour packages for Taiwanese compatriots. By 1992, the Fujian provincial government developed its own packages, stressing the local flavor of the province. Of the 10 Fujian tour packages offered, two have distinct popular religious overtones: The "Ancient Temple Tour," which offers a glimpse into "pre-Cultural Revolution Fujian," highlighting the Mazu temples in Fuzhou, Putian, Quanzhou, and Xiamen; and a second tour, "The Mazu Pilgrimage Tour," designed to appeal directly to Taiwanese Mazu pilgrims wanting to pay homage to the Mazu mother temple on Meizhou Island. The prices of these tours generally range from $2,400-5,000 (USD) for an eight-day trip. While there are few reliable data confirming how many tour packages are sold each year, tourism remains one of the leading industries in Fujian. Destinations on the "Ancient Temple Tours" like Quanzhou, Fuzhou, and Putian report yearly tourist earnings of $500,000, $328, 000, and $100,000 (USD) respectively (*Fujian tongji nianji*, *Fujian Statistical Yearbook* (2003: 356). When considering that over half of the counties in Fujian report GDP, per capita at below 7,000 (RMB), tourism looms large in the local economies and is something that local officials actively promote. The tourist potential of the Mazu cult has not been lost on Fujianese officials (Lyons 2000). In 1997 the provincial government announced plans to invest over six billion RMB into Meizhou Island, the home of the Mazu mother temple, to build a holiday resort. Meizhou was chosen not only for its scenic location, but also because the island had been host to over eight million tourists since 1988. Among these tourists, 900,000 indicated on their registration cards that the reason for their tour was to worship Mazu in her original temple. The plans for this holiday resort focus heavily around Mazu; including designs for a Taiwanese-funded Mazu Pilgrimage Center, a Mazu Relics Museum, A Mazu Tablet Forest, and a miniature Mazu Folklore-Culture Village, see for example, Chu and Yeung (2000) Yeung (2000).

[74] Professor Alexander Sergunin from the International Relations and Political Science Department at Nizhny Novgorod Linguistic University has offered institute affiliation, logistical support, and limited resources in the implementation of the project across the Volga region.

different federal members operating at very different levels of political competition. The region, in short, is ideal for comparative study.[75]

Upon completion of my nine months in Russia, I will return to Cornell University for one semester to synthesize my research notes and reinvigorate my Chinese language skills. In the spring 2007, I will begin my field research in China, dividing my time between Fujian and Jilin and investigating the same core questions that I addressed in Russia.

The diversity of Fujian makes it an ideal case for exploring central religious policy and its local implementation. Administratively, Fujian consists of nine administrative prefectures and municipalities; it is home to over 48 ethnic groups, and it is historically known as a center of religious pluralism in China.[76] Religious practices in Fujian draw from all five major religions, and there are also flourishing cultural and folk traditions, such as the *Mazu* cult. Each spring, *Mazu* attracts tens of thousands of pilgrims to celebrate her birth at the state-sponsored Mazu Culture Tourist Festival. I plan on attending the cultural festival as a participant observer. Moreover, Fujian has been at the leading edge of economic reforms in China; it has been designated a special economic zone, and contains as well technological development zones and open coastal zones. Its openness has translated into the influx of oversees Chinese. All of these characteristics make this area a place of unusual political variation.[77]

Nestled in the northeast of China, Jilin offers a second important comparison. Jilin is home to 44 ethnic groups, has experienced an equally diverse religious revival, and provides an important economic contrast with Fujian (with its more gradual approach to economic development). After my undergraduate studies, I spent two years teaching English in Changchun, Jilin. Thus, I am familiar with the region and am confident that I could conduct my research in a timely manner.[78]

IMPLICATIONS OF RESEARCH PROJECT

My dissertation places religion and culture in the context of political change and begins to address the impact of religion on the political future of regimes in transition. This shift from a purely political understanding of regime change to one that recognizes the cultural dimensions of

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[75] See Appendix II for a map of the VFD and a list of 15 federal members. Maps of Fujian and Jilin are also included in Appendix II.

[76] See, for example, Watson (1985); Boltz (1986); Sangren (1988; 1993); Pas (1989); Dean (1993); Rubinstein (1995).

[77] I plan to conduct my research through the affiliation of Xiamen University, which is a sister institution to Cornell University.

[78] Professor Wang Caibo from Jilin University, Department of Political Science, has kindly agreed to provide institutional affiliation, support, and introductions to the academic community in Changchun.

this process is important for two reasons. First, scholarship on the transition from state-socialism tends to focus on the political-economic dynamics of the transition, thereby ignoring cultural dimensions. In this sense, the literature on transitions has remained secular. By ignoring the intersection of culture and politics during this period of political flux, we leave ourselves ill-prepared to explain how religious groups are influenced by the course of political change and how, in turn, such groups shape the course of politics. This is critical, not just because liberalization and religiosity have moved in tandem, but also because the separation of Church and State has been widely understood to be central to the success of the democratic project.

The study of religion and culture can finally have a direct bearing on questions of major importance for comparative social sciences and area studies. It is an open question whether this phenomenon is a re-awakening of long suppressed religious traditions from the pre-communist era; whether these rituals are modern "inventions;"[79] or whether they are a blending of pre-communist folk traditions, communist practices and modern popular culture. It is further unclear whether religious communities are providing competing centers of authority to the current regimes; or whether they are providing resources for the moral reconstruction of the regime. Finally, questions such as, to what degree have religious groups adapted to, resisted or rebelled against the regulations of the state remain largely ignored in post-communist comparative context.[80]

Without the benefit of field research, it is difficult to speculate on answers to these important questions; nevertheless, the fruits of this research project will position us to not only better understand how different regimes in transition are dealing with growing religiosity within their borders, but also to shed light on the origins of this revival and address how religious groups are shaping politics in a period of fundamental change.

[79] Hobsbawn & Ranger (1990).
[80] Some scholars have addressed similar questions, including Aminzade and Perry (2001).

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APPENDIX I

TABLE 2. RESEARCH CALENDAR.

DATES	LOCATION	RESEARCH PLAN	CULTURAL EVENT
Sept 15 – Oct 15, 2005	Moscow	Textbook research Begin conducting interviews at Ministry of Justice	
Oct 16 – Jan 20, 2006	Volga Federal District *Affiliation: Nizhny Novgorod Linguistic University*	Distribute surveys Interviews with local elites Share initial research finding with host institution	Russian Orthodox Christmas, January 7th
Jan 21 – Feb 10, 2006	Cornell University Ithaca, NY	Present initial research findings at Cornell Post-communist Working Group	
Feb 11 – April 20, 2006	Volga Federal District	Continue interviews of local elites and religious groups	
April 21 – May 30	Moscow	Follow-up Interviews with Central elites	
June-August 2006	Middlebury College Middlebury, VT	Summer Language Training -- Chinese	
Sept 01 – Dec 2006	Cornell University	Re-orient project toward China; synthesize research notes; APSA	
Jan 01 – May 01, 2007	Xiamen, Fujian *Affiliation: Xiamen University*	Share initial findings of Russian revival with host institution. Distribute surveys Interviews with local elites	Mazu Culture Tourist Festival, April 25th
May 02 – Aug 30, 2007	Changchun, Jilin *Affiliation: Jilin University*	Continue interviews with local elites Distribute Surveys Share research findings with host institution	
September 2007	Cornell University Ithaca, NY	Dissertation Write-up/ Job market	

APPENDIX II

The Volga Federal District (VFD)

Center: **Nizhny Novgorod**

Population: 31 158 200 (21.5%)

Area: 1 070 900 sq. km (7.3%)

Regions	Population	Area (sq.km)	Status	Capital
1. **Bashkortostan**	4 102 900	143 600	Republic	Ufa
2. **Tatarstan**	3 779 800	68 000	Republic	Kazan
3. **Nizhegorod**	3 524 000	76 900	Oblast/ region	Nizhny Novgorod
4. **Samara**	3 239 800	53 600	Oblast/ region	Samara
5. **Perm**	2 824 400	160 600	Oblast/ region	Perm
6. **Saratov**	2 669 300	100 200	Oblast/ region	Saratov
7. **Orenburg**	2 177 500	124 000	Oblast/ region	Orenburg
8. **Udmurtia**	1 570 500	42 100	Republic	Izhevsk
9. **Kirov**	1 503 600	120 800	Oblast/ region	Kirov
10. **Penza**	1 453 400	43 200	Oblast/ region	Penza
11. **Ulyanovsk**	1 382 300	37 300	Oblast/ region	Ulyanovsk
12. **Chuvashia**	1 313 900	18 300	Republic	Cheboksary
13. **Mordovia**	888 700	26 200	Republic	Saransk
14. **Mariy El**	728 000	23 200	Republic	Yoshkar-Ola
15. **Komi-Permyak District**	135 900	32 900	Autonomous District	Kudymkar

Fujian

Jilin

Region	Population	Area (sq.km)	Capital
Fujian	34.71 million	121 400	Fuzhou City
Jilin	27.28 million	187 400	Changchun