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RELIGION AND REGIONAL IDENTITIES: THE CASE OF VIATKA AND
THE MIRACLE-WORKING ICON OF ST. NICHOLAS VELIKORETSKII

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The study of „Regionalism“ or „Regional Identity“ in Early Modern Russia offers a number of challenges. As with so many of the topics we might wish to examine for the period from the sixteenth to the early eighteenth centuries, we must begin by questioning the sources, and, when we discover they do not always contain many answers, see whether the source base might be expanded by the inclusion of material not previously studied. This paper is an effort to explore sources for the study of regional identity in Viatka and in particular focus on the place of religious belief and practice in the formation of regional identity. In part, it is a summary of research recently published (although by no means the last word on the subject), but the largest part of the paper consists of preliminary observations on a body of evidence which I have only begun to explore.¹ My presentation at the Vienna conference on regions involved primarily the work already finished; the new material is the result of research undertaken following the conference but confined to what I could obtain in a relatively brief trip to Russia.

This paper makes certain assumptions about identity and the study of identity and does not attempt to explore the theoretical literature. I am assuming that we can speak of the development in a region such as Viatka of some sense of common belonging and history, which is regional, not national in its focus. As I have argued elsewhere and maintain here, it is striking that this developing sense of regional identity is to be seen precisely at the time when, by traditional wisdom, we think that regional identities are being supplanted by national ones. The two can and do coexist, of course, since in any time and place, it is reasonable to expect that people have multiple identities, depending on the framework in which they would articulate any sense of self and community. Furthermore, it is important to emphasize the role of religious belief and practice in identity formation, since too often the application of theories of modernization has meant that religion is relegated to a secondary role on the assumption that a secular world view was becoming dominant.² I would argue, on the contrary, that we cannot

1 See Daniel' Uo [=Waugh], *Istoriiia odnoi knigi: Viatka i „ne-sovremennost‘, v russkoi kul'ture Petrovskogo vremeni* (St. Petersburg, 2003).

2 In addition to my book see my „We Have Never Been Modern: Approaches to the Study of Russia in the Age of Peter the Great,“ *Jahrbücher für Geschichte Osteuropas* 49 (2001), S. 321-345. Among a growing number of stimulating publications taking a fresh look at religious life in Russia, note especially Valerie A. Kivelson and Robert H. Greene, eds., *Orthodox Russia: Belief and Practice Under the Tsars* (University Park, Pa.: 2003).

understand change in „Early Modern“ Russia if we fail to appreciate how important religion continued to be, even for those who conventionally have been perceived of as the leaders in the country's „modernization.“

In studying the development of identities, in the first instance we would wish to find them articulated in written texts. However, given the fact that visual and oral culture were still so important in Russia for the mass of the population, we need to recognize that other kinds of evidence must be included. My concern in the first part of what follows is with the written record and in the second with what we can infer from it about practice and perception amongst those who did not do the writing and in most cases probably were not literate in the conventional sense. I do not attempt here to deal with the evidence from the arts except insofar as the veneration of icons is a central part of the material to be discussed.

The texts

My evidence concerns the specific example of Viatka, the region north of Kazan and approaching the western slopes of the Urals which traditionally (and probably wrongly) has been considered one of the backwaters of Russia. Viatka was forcibly incorporated into the Muscovite state in 1489. While naturally the Orthodox Church was active there, notably with the founding of the Monastery of the Dormition in the main town, Khlynov (later Viatka, now Kirov), in the late sixteenth century, Viatka had to wait until 1657 to receive its first bishop.³ As near as I can determine, Viatka indeed was slow to develop much of a „local“ literature.⁴ As in other regions, the bishopric was the catalyst in changing that picture. The first bishop, Aleksandr, was obviously well educated and energetic, as was his successor Iona, now elevated to the rank of Archbishop, who occupied the see during the last quarter of the seventeenth century. We can document some bare beginnings of Viatka historical writing under Aleksandr as well as an interest in recording tales of locally venerated relics (possibly even just before he arrived). Although it is difficult to determine his direct contributions, under Iona the process of developing a local literature and promoting local cults was if anything more actively pursued, carrying well beyond his death into the eighteenth century.

Two texts are of particular interest: The Tale of the Viatka Land (*Povest o strane Viatskoi*, here referred to by the abbreviation PSV) and the Tale about the Wonder-working Icon of St. Nicholas Velikoretskii (here referred to as the Icon Tale). The two are closely interconnected, since the second was one of the sources for the first. I shall

3 For the history of church administration in the region prior to the establishment of the bishopric, see V. V. Nizov, „Tserkovnoe upravlenie na Viatke v kontse XIV-nachale XVII vv.“ in *Sbornik „Slobodskoi i slobozhane“*. *Materialy IV nauchno-prakticheskoi konferentsii* (Slobodskoi, 2001), pp. 4-8.

4 See my *Istoriia odnoi knigi*, ch. 1; cf. a well-informed overview which I had failed to consult, V. V. Nizov, „Knigi i chitateli srednevekovoi Viatki,“ in *Entsiklopedia Zemli viatskoi* (hereafter *Entsiklopediia*), 10 vols. in 11 (Kirov, 1994-2002), vol. 9 (Kirov, 1999), pp.189-206.

discuss PSV first, since the Icon Tale will lead directly into a broader discussion of the cult of that icon.

I have argued elsewhere in detail that PSV is the work of one Semen Popov, a sacristan in the Bogoiavlenskii cathedral in Khlynov and one of the first elected *burmistry* in Khlynov in 1700 and again in 1704.⁵ He probably compiled PSV some time between 1704 and 1710 as a way of asserting local identity in the face of the increasingly distressing pressures of the demands of the central government, which threatened the well-being of Viatka and in particular its clerical establishment.

The theme of PSV is that Viatka draws upon a positive tradition of independence, which it inherited from its founding fathers, the Novgorodians who had colonized the region. Furthermore, Viatka is a Holy Land and Khlynov a Holy City, as evidenced by a miracle at the time of its founding and by the presence there of the chief local relic, the icon of St. Nicholas which had, according to tradition, been discovered on the River Velikaia, a tributary of the Viatka, and brought to the regional center.

In developing these themes, the author of PSV drew upon a variety of sources. Among them were Novgorod chronicles, a seventeenth-century Novgorodian piece of historical fiction known as „Nachalo Velikomu Slovensku“, other chronicle sources, including local ones whose compilation probably began under Bishop Alexander, the Icon Tale, and the Synaxarion (*Prolog*). At the core of PSV is a short tale whose date and authorship are still not certain (it probably was written no earlier than the middle of the seventeenth century) which provides a somewhat sarcastic account of why the Novgorodians first came to Viatka. Using his other materials and his vision of the Novgorodian connection as a positive thing, the author of PSV reworked this short account and emphasized the Novgorodian tradition of „samovlastie“. Citations from chronicle entries about Viatka's early encounters with outside aggression reinforced the message about the region's tradition of independence in the face of external threat. Among the threats faced by the Orthodox *viatchane* were those of the indigenous non-Christian population. Khlynov's importance in part lay in its being a Christian outpost in a largely still pagan land. Apart from political considerations then, affirmation of Khlynov's significance was provided by the presence there of the wonderworking icon of St. Nicholas, whose early history included confounding the pagan Cheremis.

As with any of our early modern written sources, we confront a variety of challenges in analyzing PSV. There are other proposed datings, although probably all that are reasonable would place the writing of the tale no earlier than the late seventeenth century in the time of Archbishop Iona.⁶ Popov's authorship may be disputed. The text itself, in

5 *Istoriia odnoi knigi*, ch. 6. A somewhat different, earlier version of this material is D. K. Uo, „Novoe o 'Povesti o strane Viatskoi',“ in *Evropeiskii Sever v kul'turno-istoricheskom protsesse (K 625-letiiu goroda Kirova): Materialy Mezhdunarodnoi konferentsii* (Kirov, 1999), pp. 350-380.

6 V. V. Nizov, who is arguably the best informed scholar working today on the early history of Viatka, argues for a date prior to 1698. See his „Slobodskoi spisok 'Povesti o strane Viatskoi',“ in *Sbornik 'Slobodskoi i slobozhane': materialy III nauchno-prakticheskoi konferentsii* (Slobodskoi, 1998), pp.3-9. While I do not cite this article in my book, I respond there to Nizov's arguments presented another publication of his concerning the Slobodskoi copy of the

its century-old standard edition undoubtedly needs to be re-edited. So far, however, I have not seen any evidence to suggest we will be confronted with a need for fundamental reassessment of what the content of the tale provides for a study of perceptions in Viatka about the region's origins and importance. We are still left with the fact of the late development of any serious effort there to compile local history and invent historical traditions suited to the self-perceptions of the tale's author and his compatriots. We will always be left to hypothesize about readership in the period of particular interest here, since there are no manuscripts and no evidence of citation of PSV in other works prior to 1725.

By „late development,” I have in mind the following. We normally consider traditions of chronicle writing to have pretty much died out in the face of development of a more „modern” approach to writing history by the late seventeenth century in Muscovy. In fact though chronicles continued to be compiled in places such as Novgorod and Vologda well into the eighteenth century. Viatka clearly is not out of step with such areas, even if something of a newcomer. It is true, and Novgorod again is a prime example, that we see new developments in the creation of what we might call historical fictions (in particular with regard to origins) in the mid- and late seventeenth century.⁷ However, it would be foolish to suggest that such developments have much to do with any kind of „objective” or „source-critical” modernity in historical writing.

The second key text for us is the Icon Tale, which, like PSV, is so far available to us from a century-old edition, incomplete at that. While the local Viatka historian (who also published PSV), A. S. Vereshchagin, printed several variants of the Icon Tale from different manuscripts, he chose not to include in his edition the long list of miracles attributed to the icon.⁸ Vereshchagin published the accounts concerning the icon's discovery and initial miracle-working properties and about its reception when taken to

Tale. Cf. *Istoriia odnoi knigi*, pp. 215-217. In conversations with him in the summer of 2003, he remained unconvinced by my case.

- 7 On the development of „historical fiction” in the seventeenth century, see especially E. K. Romodanovskaia, *Russkaia literatura na poroge novogo vremeni. Puti formirovaniia russkoi belletistiki perekhodnogo perioda* (Novosibirsk, 1994). The Novgorod tale of particular interest is discussed by A. V. Lavrent'ev and A. A. Turilov, „Povest' o Slovene i Ruse' (Skazanie o Velikom Slovenske) o proiskhozhdenii i rannei istorii slavian i Rusi,” in *Slaviane i ikh sosedi. Mif i istoriia. Proiskhozhdenie i ranniia istoriia slavian v obshchestvennom soznanii pozdnego srednevekov'ia i rannego Novogo vremeni: Tezisy 15-oi konferentsii* (Moscow, 1996), pp. 19-25.
- 8 A. S. V[ereshchagin], *Povesti o Velikoretskoi ikone sviatitelia Nikolaia: Pamiatniki Viatskoi pis'mennosti XVII-XVIII veka* (Viatka, 1905) (also published in *Trudy Viatskoi uchenoi arkhivnoi komissii*, 1905, vyp. IV, otd. II, pp. 28-102). Another copy of the redaction of the tale which Vereshchagin attributed to Viatka archbishop Iona in the late seventeenth century (texts III and IV in his edition), has been published recently by Arkhimandrit Makarii (Veretennikov), „Vserossiiskii mitropolit Makarii – pochitatel' sviatitelia Nikolaia Mirlikiiskogo,” in *Pochitanie sviatykh na Rusi. Materialy IV Rossiiskoi nauchnoi konferentsii, posviashchennoi Pamiati Sviatitelia Makarii (5-7 iunია 1996 goda)* (= Makarievskie chteniia, vyp. IV, ch. 1) (Mozhaisk, 1996), pp. 68-76. This publication, like Vereshchagin's, does not include any of the appended miracles.

Moscow in the 1550s and again in the early seventeenth century. The earliest written texts about the icon are the passages in the mid-sixteenth century Nikon Chronicle dealing with its reception in Moscow in mid-1555.⁹

The earliest physical copy of a text dealing with the icon's origins is apparently a mid-seventeenth century Synodal Library manuscript, which includes a list of miracles up to 1647. It seems likely that the text in the Synodal manuscript is of Viatka origin, and that particular redaction is to be connected with the repainting (*ponovlenie*) of the icon perhaps in conjunction with the establishment of a special feast day for the saint in the local church calendar in Viatka in the middle of the seventeenth century.¹⁰ It is plausible to suggest that the *composition* of the Icon Tale dates to the same time in middle of the seventeenth-century, one additional compelling reason being the pressures being exerted by the Patriarchate concerning the need for verification of the authenticity of local cults.¹¹ The account in the Synodal manuscript is important for its claim that even though the date when the icon was brought to Khlynov was not known, it was honored (not specified by whom) by the commissioning of an *oklad* in 1521 in the time of Grand Prince Vasilii III Ivanovich and Metropolitan Varlaam. However, it was only with a new edition of the tale, apparently under the aegis of Archbishop Iona in the late 1690s, that the discovery of the icon was assigned a date, 1383. As Vereshchagin has convincingly argued, that date was borrowed from an account about the discovery of the

9 *Polnoe sobranie russkikh letopisei*, vol. 13 (Moscow, 1965; reprint of 1904 ed.), p. 254. For a detailed examination of the texts concerning the bringing of the icon to Moscow and its installation in the Pokrovskii sobor, see A. L. Batalov, „O rannei istorii Sobora Pokrova na Rvu i obretenii 'lishnego' prestola, „in A. L. Batalov and L. A. Beliaev, eds. *Skrul'naia topografiia srednevekovogo goroda* (= *Izvestiia Instituta khristianskoi kul'tury srednevekov'ia*, vol. 1) (Moscow, 1998), pp. 51-63. As Batalov shows, there are several later Moscow versions of the events. Clearly none of these texts has anything to do with the history of the icon while it was in Viatka. See also A. L. Batalov and L. S. Uspenskaia, *Sobor Pokrova na Rvu (Khram Vasiliia Blazhennogo)* (Moscow, 2002), pp. 8-13, where on p. 9 is a good color reproduction of a copy of the icon dated to the second half of the sixteenth century.

10 In the Viatka cathedral manuscripts' list of miracles just prior to the miracle of 1647 is the indication „Siia chiudesa ponovleniia sv. chudotv. obraza“ (Gosudarstvennyi arkhiv Kirovskoi oblasti (hereafter GAKO), f. 170, op. 1, d. 270, fol. 29). The Synodal manuscript ends after the next miracle (1647). When recording of the miracles was resumed in the later redaction, the next one is dated 1657. See also Stefan Kashmenskii, „O chudotvornoj Velikoretskoi ikone Sviatitelia i Chudotvortsia Nikolaia,“ in *Viatskie eparkhial'nye vedomosti* (hereafter *VEV*), 1875, no. 16, Otd. dukh.-lit., pp. 506-507.

11 On the shift in church policy toward miracles, see Paul Bushkovitch, *Religion and Society in Russia: The Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries* (New York and Oxford, 1992), ch. 5. While the mid-seventeenth-century break in the recording of miracles associated with the icon of St. Nicolas Velikoretskii might be taken as confirmation, its continuation (and in fact a lot of other evidence) contradicts Bushkovitch's statement that „no longer did clerics carefully keep lists of the cures to append to the texts of ... the icon tales“ (p. 107). It is probably significant that the 1647 miracle account is the first one with a very explicit description of an investigation to prove the claim that a miracle had occurred.

Icon of the Tikhvin Mother of God.¹² Vereshchagin also cites somewhat more equivocal evidence in a charter of 1546 that suggests the icon was still in its original location on the River Velikaia, not in Khlynov, at that time.¹³ In fact, just as in the case of Viatka's origins, we have no even remotely contemporary witnesses to the supposedly fourteenth-century origin of the icon of St. Nicholas. Nonetheless, with the exception of Vereshchagin's work, all the literature about the icon to this day – and there is a substantial amount, since the procession of the cross with the icon is now enjoying a revival – places its origins and that of the famous procession of the cross taking it from Khlynov to Velikoretskoe and back in 1383 or soon thereafter.¹⁴ According to the Icon Tale itself, the beginning of the procession must antedate 1551, for in that year supposedly its omission brought on plague and other catastrophes, which ceased only when the procession was restored.

Apart from the narrative about the origin and history of the icon, the list of miracles itself has some special problems.¹⁵ The icon was taken to Moscow in 1555 supposedly in part because of its reputation but perhaps more importantly because it needed resto-

12 V[ereshchagi]n, *Povesti*, pp. 74-76.

13 The document in question was first published in *Akty, sobrannye...Arheograficheskoi ekspeditsiei*, vol. 1, pp. 199-200 and has been reprinted, most conveniently in a collection of documents on Viatka history, *Drevnie akty, otnosiashchiesia k istorii Viatskogo kraia. Prilozhenie k 2-mu tomu sbornika „Stoletie Viatskoi gubernii“* (Viatka, 1881), pp. 20-22. In it, Ivan IV cites a petition of the people of Shestakov in which they distinguish between going to Khlynov and going „k Nikole chudotvortsu k Velikoretskomu molitisia.“

14 Characteristically, among the older accounts, one finds a statement such as that by Protoierei Stefan Kashmenskii using as his reference point the mid-sixteenth century: „Let sto piat' desiat', ne mence, kazhdogodno sovershali krestnyi khod iz Khlynova na Velikiu-reku“ (Kashmenskii, „O chudotvornoi Velikoretskoi ikone,“ *VEV*, 1875, no. 10, Otd. dukh.-lit., p. 315).

15 Since I have not examined the Synodal manuscript, and the current location of the two other key manuscripts containing the extended list of the miracles is not known (if in fact they are still extant), for the following discussion I have relied on two sources to reconstruct the miracle accounts. One is a somewhat cryptic and very difficult to read hand-written numbered summary of each and every miracle compiled by Vereshchagin himself and based primarily on the information in the two now missing manuscripts which had been housed in the Trinity Cathedral in Viatka. Another hand has added notations to this list based, apparently, on the information in the Synodal manuscript. The additions in particular provide details about family connections of the individuals who experienced the miracles. This list of the miracles is in GAKO, f. 170, op. 1, no. 270, fols. 24-29v. I have collated Vereshchagin's listing of the miracles with Kashmenskii, „O chudotvornoi Velikoretskoi ikone,“ *VEV*, 1875, no. 9, Otd. dukh.-lit., pp. 286-294; no. 10, Otd. dukh.-lit., pp. 311-327; no. 11, Otd. dukh.-lit., pp. 359-371; no. 12, Otd. dukh.-lit., pp. 379-393; no. 16, Otd. dukh.-lit., pp. 495-510; no. 17, Otd. dukh.-lit., pp. 523-538; 1876, no. 9, Otd. dukh.-lit., pp. 256-262. Also relying on the two Viatka manuscripts, Kashmenskii summarizes, quotes, and/or apparently renders in full in a modern Russian translation a great many of the miracle accounts, especially for the seventeenth century. While obviously we need still to consult all the extant early manuscripts which contain the miracle lists, my sense is that the information I have compiled from Vereshchagin and Kashmenskii is quite complete for the categories of evidence being discussed here.

ration after a disastrous church fire in Khlynov which the icon had barely survived.¹⁶ The fire destroyed any records of the miracles pertaining to the icon (if such existed), and thus the list of dated miracles begins only on the icon's return from Moscow, the first entry apparently pertaining to 1557.¹⁷ The compilers of the account and miracle list in the seventeenth century are explicit about having had to rely on oral tradition for anything to do with the icon prior to the fire. Until we get well down into the seventeenth century, the entries in the miracle list are quite formulaic, although they do provide specific dates and names of those involved. It is plausible enough to assume some kind of running record of the miracles was being kept beginning when the icon returned to Khlynov in the 1550s and was drawn upon in the seventeenth century. However, we cannot exclude the possibility of a rather late invention even of specific names and dates in an effort to solidify the miracle-working credentials of the icon at a time when documenting such matters was being required by the Church. As the seventeenth century progressed, it is clear that considerable care began to be taken to verify the accounts about the miracles or at least assert that verification had been provided. The accounts begin to specify that the narratives had been told personally to a named archpriest, and in some instances the civil authorities – the local *voevoda* – were involved in interrogation of those who claimed miracles had occurred. The initial compilation of miracles (the last dated 1647) was brought up to date when the *Icon Tale* was re-edited and copied in the late 1690s. With the production of an additional copy in the 1750s, three final miracles were added, the last dated 1711. In all then, we have some 222 dated miracles connected with the icon. Most are healing miracles, with blindness constituting about two-thirds of the cases, and two-thirds of those who experienced the miracles were women.

For our analysis here, we are not going into the issue of whether or not the miracles actually occurred or whether or not the list in part at least might be pure invention. We will assume that some kind of running record of miracles was being kept in the Khlynov cathedral housing the icon beginning in the 1550s.

The veneration of the icon of St. Nicholas Velikoretskii

Using the evidence in the *Icon Tale* and additional materials on processions of the cross, let us examine what we know about the development of the cult of the icon in the Viatka region. I would argue that pilgrimage and icon processions are an important component in establishing a sense of regional identity. A number of studies pertaining

16 The account in the *Nikon Chronicle* suggests clearly that the initiative for bringing the icon to Moscow was that of the *viatchane*. The *Icon Tale* in the Synodal manuscript repeats essentially the same story. It is only with the revision of the tale under Iona that the claim is made the Tsar ordered that the icon be sent to Moscow because of its renown.

17 It is worth noting that there are some discrepancies and obvious errors in the dates in the Vereshchagin and Kashmenskii lists. Both consistently record September-December dates in the „September years“ calculated „from the Creation“ as being a year later than they are in the modern calendar. Vereshchagin gives what are apparently erroneous dates for the first two miracles (1554 and 1555 instead of 1557 and 1558).

both to Russia and to locations in Western Europe confirm the importance of locally venerated relics and images both for purely political purposes as well as for less easily defined conceptions of place.¹⁸ Whether in Khlynov or on the road, the icon of St. Nicholas served as a locus of devotion for believers and had the practical effect of bringing together individuals who might not otherwise come into contact and establishing Khlynov as a place of pilgrimage and, more abstractly, as a source of divinely dispensed aid. It is difficult to find texts which take us beyond the immediate personal concerns of those who venerated the icon; so what we are talking about here in the first instance is evidence of practice. In particular what I shall focus on is the issue of the geographic extent of the cult and how that may have changed over time. We have considerable evidence about the home location of people who came to pray before the icon, and we can also at least begin to reconstruct the history of the processions which took the icon outside Khlynov itself. To use Victor Turner's term applied to pilgrimages, what interests us is the „catchment area“ of worshippers whose focus was this particular icon.¹⁹

Let us examine first the information on where the worshippers who came to the icon lived. The miracle accounts frequently specify a home region, administrative subdivision (*stan*), town or even parish of the individual. There are, however, many instances where no home location is specified. For the sake of our statistics, I am going to assume that in such instances the individual lived locally that is in Khlynov or its *uezd* or in the location where the icon was at the time the person came to pray before it. Of course there is a reasonably good chance that some of those we assume are local in fact traveled some distance. My statistics then may be more „center-weighted“ than the realities. These qualifications in mind, the leading locations of the homes of those experiencing miracles are as follows:

- 18 See, for example, Patrick J. Geary, *Furta Sacra: Thefts of Relics in the Central Middle Ages* (Princeton, 1978); Philip M. Soergel, *Wondrous in his Saints: Counter-Reformation Propaganda in Bavaria* (Berkeley, etc., 1993); Jean-Claude Schmitt, *The Holy Greyhound: Guinefort, healer of children since the thirteenth century*, tr. Martin Thom (Cambridge etc., 1983). Of particular relevance here is the article by Vera Shevzov, „Miracle-Working Icons, Laity, and Authority in the Russian Orthodox Church, 1861-1917,“ *The Russian Review* 58 (1999), pp. 26-48. While her focus is on the period indicated in her title, she discusses a variety of evidence about the history of icon veneration and church policies toward its local manifestations going well back into the eighteenth century. One of the points she emphasizes is the role of locally venerated icons as „symbol(s) of local identity“ (p. 32) and „keepers of collective memories“ (p. 33). See also her „Icons, Miracles, and the Ecclesial Identity of Laity in Late Imperial Russia,“ *Church History* 69 (2000), pp. 610-631, and „Letting the People into Church: Reflections on Orthodoxy and Community in Late Imperial Russia,“ in Kivelson and Greene, eds., *Orthodox Russia*, pp. 59-77.
- 19 See Victor Turner, „Pilgrimages as Social Processes,“ in idem, *Dramas, Fields, and Metaphors: Symbolic Action in Human Society* (Ithaca and London, 1974), ch. 4; Victor Turner and Edith Turner, *Image and Pilgrimage in Christian Culture: Anthropological Perspectives* (New York, 1978).

Khlynov and Khlynov uezd	18
Kotel'nich	71
Kazan'	18
Slobodskoi	17
Shestakov	14
Velikaia Perm'	11
Orlov	9
Luza and its region	9
Verkhokam'ia	8

Among the other locations (this list is not exhaustive) represented by no more than four individuals are Ustiug, Urzhum, Velikoretskoe, Vokhma, Nizhnii Novgorod, Zavoloch'ie, and Cheboksary.

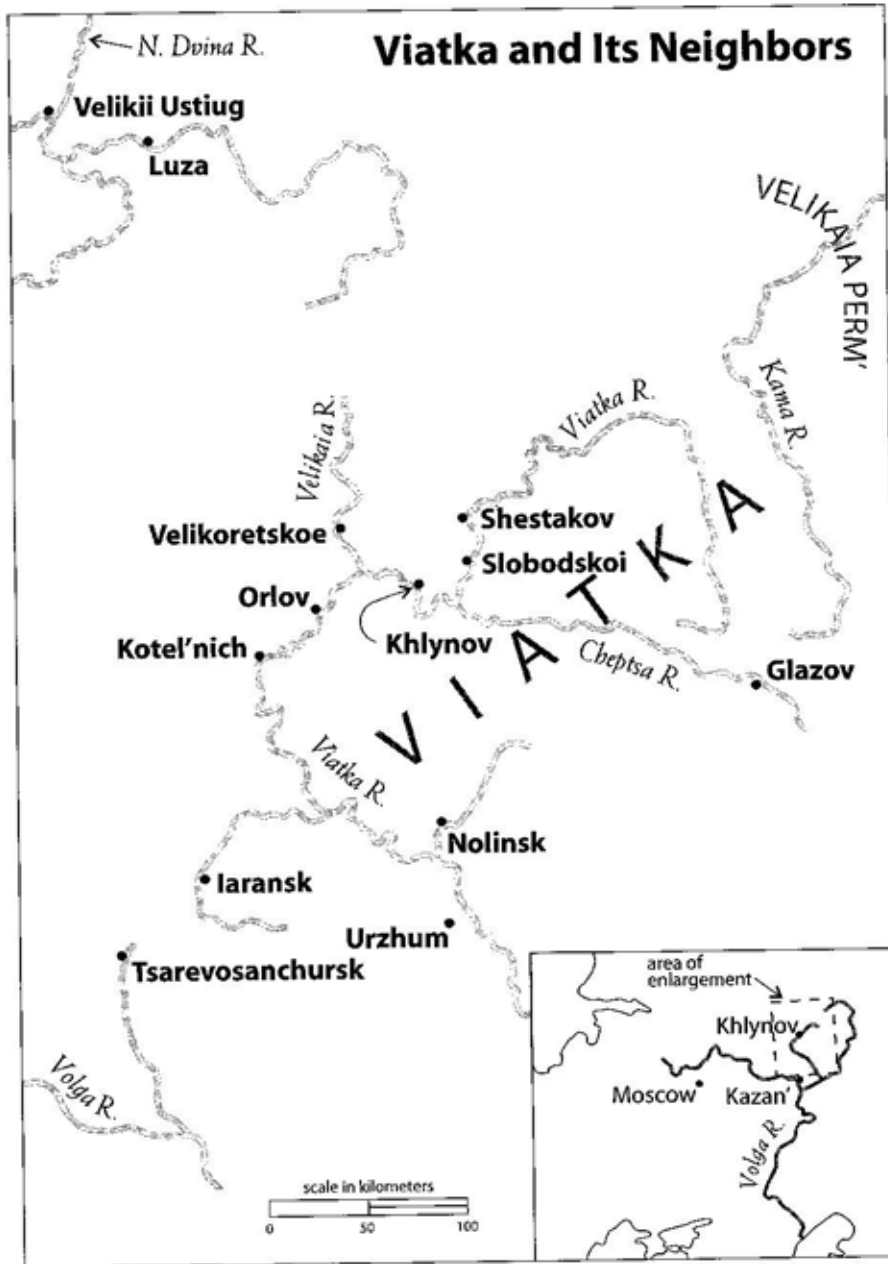
A second measure of geographic scope of the cult is the location where the miracle took place. Here our data are more reliable than the previous set:

Khlynov and its uezd	113
Kazan' and its uezd	18
Kotel'nich	14
Slobodskoi	13
Shestakov	11
Velikoretskoe	6
Orlov	4

and a few others with individual instances. The inclusion of Kazan' in both lists, we should note, is the result of the exceptional circumstance of the icon's having been taken through Kazan' on the way to and from Moscow on the one occasion in 1613-15.

Apart from the gross statistics of location, we need to note the chronology of change in location over time. Possibly significant is the fact that we have no record of a miracle occurring anywhere but in Khlynov before January 1569. In mid-January 1569 and again in late December-early January 1571-72, the icon was in Kotel'nich, and in mid-June 1572 in Slobodskoi. The first time that the miracle list includes Velikoretskoe is 1595. We shall have to examine in greater detail the implications of this information for the traditional dating of what eventually became regular processions with the icon that included the named towns.

With the exception of the journey which took the icon through Kazan' to Moscow in 1613-15, most of the miracles occurred in a few key towns of Viatka in a core territory around Khlynov. While one might wish to quantify a progression in the presumably expanding geographical scope of the icon's veneration, the miracle lists are of little help. Even in the early years of the late 1550s, individuals from a range of locations – Kotel'nich, Shestakov, Orlov, Slobodskoi, Velikaia Perm', Verkhokam'ia – were coming to Khlynov. In fact, well over half of the recorded miracles in the first two decades for



which we have evidence involve individuals not from Khlynov itself. In one regard though, in the late seventeenth century, the territorial reach of the icon apparently expands, in conjunction with the fact that it seems unnecessary for people to be venerating it directly at the time a miracle occurs. Such instances may well have occurred earlier, but the record does not state as much. Simply vowing to go to pray before the icon may be enough for one to be healed or saved on the spot. Thus we have a few cases occurring in the Luza River region well north of Khlynov, somewhere on the road through to western Siberia or in the icy waters of the Arctic Ocean.²⁰ Even in those instances though, the accounts stress the importance of actually venerating the icon directly. One may be cured or saved in some distant location, but only if one then fulfills a promise to come to the icon, which in most cases means coming to Khlynov, the town which the accounts regularly refer to as „bogospasaemyi“.

It is of some interest to consider how the reputation of the icon spread. If we believe the tale of its origins, as we might well expect initially oral reports drew attention to it. Even as late as the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, as attested by the miracle accounts, some individuals specify that they prayed to the icon because someone had told them about it. In one instance, a witness reported knowing about it because he and his family were „rodom...viatchane.“ Yet in contrasting testimony, another witness emphasized the miraculous nature of a vision she had had of St. Nicholas by indicating that she had not in fact heard of the icon previously.²¹ It seems likely that for many the first knowledge of the icon was when it „went on tour“ in the regularly scheduled processions of the cross.

As Vereshchagin has emphasized, the event that seems to have had a major impact on the icon's fame was its being taken to Moscow in 1555-56 and recognized by the Tsar and church leadership.²² It is well documented that one chapel in the new Church of the Intercession on the Moat (St. Basil's) was dedicated to the image and a copy of it placed there. The restored original, repainted in part by Metropolitan Makarii himself, was sent back to Khlynov, and in several locations, presumably on account of the journey or some communication by the central authorities, churches or chapels were dedicated to it.²³ It was only upon the return of the icon from Moscow that a cathedral dedi-

20 See Kashmenskii, „O chudotvornoi Velikoretskoi ikone,“ *VEV*, 1875, no. 16, Otd. dukh.-lit., pp. 504-505; no. 17, Otd. dukh.-lit., pp. 525-528, 533-537.

21 Ibid., *VEV*, 1875, no. 16, Otd. dukh.-lit., pp. 509-10; no. 17, Otd. dukh.-lit., pp. 527, 533.

22 A. S. V[ereshchagi]n, *Pochitanie Nikoly Mozhaiskago na Viatke v XVII veke* (Viatka, 1902), pp. 3-5.

23 There is one copy of the icon on which a dated inscription indicates it was painted May 28, 1558, by Andrei Vasil'ev, apparently for one of the churches in Sol'vychevodsk. See S. P. Belov, „Ikona 'Nikola Velikoretskii' 1558 g. iz Sol'vychevodska,“ *Pamiatniki kul'tury. Novye otkrytiia. Pis'mennost'. Iskusstvo. Arkheologiya. Ezhegodnik 1987* (Moscow, 1988), pp. 202-206. Belov dates (to my mind, quite speculatively) another early copy of the icon to 1556, when it is possible the icon came through Vologda on its way back to Viatka. See S. P. Belov, „Ikona 'Nikola Velikoretskii' serediny XVI veka iz sobraniia Vologodskogo gosudarstvennogo istoriko-arkhitekturnogo i khudozhestvennogo muzeia-zapovednika,“ in *Vologda. Istoriko-kraevedcheskii al'manakh*, vyp. 1 (Vologda, 1994), pp. 261-269. On a third

cated specifically to it was built in Khlynov (prior to the fire it had been housed in a chapel of a church dedicated to St. Prokopii of Ustiug). Given the absence of hard documentation before these events of the 1550s, might we not even venture the possibility that the local (i.e., Viatka and specifically Khlynov) cult of the icon did not exist much before 1550? Just as the decision to honor it in Staritsa, Vologda and Tot'ma seems to have been a direct consequence of its having been honored in Moscow, so also might the construction of the cult of St. Nicholas Velikoretskii in Khlynov itself have been the result of the icon's having been recognized in Moscow as particularly important. We need to consider the possibility that local cults (and more generally local identity) may have developed at least in part as direct responses to actions in the center. There is, after all, a large body of opinion that sees the creation of markers of identity as a reactive process.

The processions of the cross

Viatka is a region known for a particularly large number of processions of the cross.²⁴ Some came into being to celebrate quite specific events (e.g., the end of a visitation of the plague), but the reasons for the establishment of others can only be inferred.²⁵ In the 18th and 19th centuries, when the Church questioned whether or not to permit some of them or whether to make changes in how, when or where they occurred, often the

sixteenth-century copy of the icon and its iconographic prototypes, see M. A. Makhan'ko, „Ikona sv. Nikoly Velikoretskogo v Kollekcii Ambroziano Veneto i pochitanie chudotvornogo obraza v XVI v. „Pamiatniki kul'tury. Novye otkrytiia. Pis'mennost'". *Iskusstvo. Arheologiya*. Ezhгодnik 1997 (Moscow, 1998), pp. 240-251. Clearly a thorough study of all the copies of the icon will help us to learn more about the spread of its cult. The Sol'vychevodsk and Vologda copies would seem to support the idea that the fame of the icon began to spread widely almost immediately upon its recognition in Moscow.

- 24 For an extensive descriptive listing from the late 19th century, see „Krestnye khody v Viatkoi gubernii," *Kalendar' Viatkoi gubernii na 1889 g.* (Viatka, 1888), pp. 15-32. Shevzov distinguishes between „processions of the cross“ and „icon visitations“: in the former the „focus of the activity was on the act of processing itself. In icon visitations, the focus was on the particular icon that was being carried“ („Miracle-Working Icons," p. 34, n. 48). The term „procession of the cross“ is used for the Viatka occurrences under discussion, but most of them are clearly focussed on the bearing of a particular icon or icons, thus presumably qualifying them as „icon visitations.“ It is only with rare exceptions though that the icon of St. Nicholas was brought to private homes. She further notes that „the laity initiated most visitations“ (p. 36). Whether that was the case for the early modern period is difficult to determine. In connection with this question, note the emphasis in several of the essays in Kivelson and Greene, *Orthodox Russia*, on the role of „popular initiative“ and also on the fact that in many instances we may be wrong to posit a dichotomy between what the „official“ church and the ordinary believers wanted.
- 25 S. N. Amosova has noted the difficulties of writing the history of the processions and is beginning to work seriously on filling the void in scholarship on the subject. See her „Krestnye khody i prazdniki v gorode Orlove i Orlovskom uезде," forthcoming in *Gertsenka: Viatkie zapiski*, vyp. 4. I am grateful to her for sharing this yet unpublished article.

weight of popular tradition was cited as the reason for not changing anything. While we cannot always explain origins, we can often say something about changes in dates, routes or the inclusion of particular relics. However, the bare evidence of the documents does not reveal much about perceptions. We must infer that pilgrimage and procession involve expanding one's geographical and human horizons by virtue of experiencing both new locations and human interactions with others, in whom one may discover communalities (or, of course, differences).

The most important of the processions with the icon of St. Nicholas is the eponymous „Velikoretskii khod," whose schedule has now been fixed (by the old calendar) as May 21-28, taking the icon from Khlynov (Viatka, Kirov) to the village of Velikoretskoe and back and thus including May 24, the day on which the icon was supposed to have been discovered.²⁶ Tradition has it that the Velikoretskii khod was established as a result of the icon's having been removed from its original location to Khlynov. Both the icon itself (and the local population of Velikoretskoe) protested; as a compromise, an agreement was reached on the annual journey of the icon back to its place of origin. When that occurred though is a good question. As suggested above, we have reason to believe the icon was still in Velikoretskoe as late as 1546, which does not mean, however, that there was as yet no procession (perhaps from Velikoretskoe to Khlynov and back, not vice versa?). The Icon Tale insists though that a procession starting in Khlynov was in place by 1551, and there can be no question about the location of the icon there (procession or not) on its return from Moscow a few years later.

The first time the list of miracles includes one in Velikoretskoe (or on the route between it and Khlynov) is May 25, 1595. There are subsequent entries for miracles there for seven years between 1613 and 1667, on dates ranging from May 12 to May 25, in other words close to or overlapping with what later came to be the standard calendar for the procession.

While silence concerning earlier concretely dated miracles in Velikoretskoe of itself is not necessarily persuasive, it seems to me that there may be serious reason to question

26 An overview of the history of the procession which is valuable primarily for its use of the 18th and 19th century archival documents is A. I. [?], *Velikoretskii krestnyi khod*, (Viatka, n.d.) (reprinted from *VEV*, 1869, no. 18). The anonymously authored brochure (24 pp.), *O Velikoretskoi Chudotvornoj Ikone Sviatitelia Nikolaia, Arkhiepiskopa Mirlikiiskago, nakhodiashcheisia v Kafedral'nom sobore v g. Viatke* (Viatka, 1909), is a unique example of a work that uses the miracle lists for a discussion of the various processions involving the icon of St. Nicholas. For an illustrated evocation of the procession focussing on its revival in the post-Soviet period, see A. G. Balyberdin et al., *Velikoretskii krestnyi khod* (Kirov, 2000). For a nineteenth-century description of a somewhat skeptical participant in the procession, see S. V. Kurbanovskii, „Na 'Velikoi reke' (Vpechatleniia bogomol'tsa). (Bytovoi ocherk),“ *Kalendar' Viatskoi gubernii na 1893 god* (Viatka, 1892), pp. 255-271. I thank Aleksei Musikhin for bringing to my attention some short reminiscences about the procession recorded in the 1990s and published in *Viatskii fol'klor. Predaniia i legendy* (Kotel'nich, 1998), pp. 15-17. Recent impressions by a rare American participant in the procession are in Lerri E. Kholms [=Holmes], *Rossii: Strannaiia zemlia i ee zagadochnye liudi. Zapiski amerikantsa, pozhivshego v Viatke i drugikh gorodakh rossiiskikh* (Kirov, 2003), pp. 117-125.

the generally accepted traditions as to when the Velikoretskii khod was established. Might we not in fact need to re-write the early history of the icon as follows? Indeed an icon of St. Nicholas came to be venerated locally in Velikoretskoe prior to 1546 but not necessarily prior to the sixteenth century. It *may* have been in existence as early as 1521, when covered with an *oklad*, but we cannot be sure of that date, where that event occurred, or in fact the accuracy of that report. Some time around 1550 the icon was taken off to Khlynov, where perhaps its reputation was enhanced by the recording of miracles. When the church authorities commandeered the icon to Khlynov, they simply left a copy of it in Velikoretskoe, and at the time saw no need to establish an annual procession to take the original there. When the original icon nearly burned up soon thereafter, and in the wake of Ivan IV's conquest of Kazan, the local elite decided to take it to Moscow to have it repaired and perhaps use it to solicit the Tsar's favor (for what privileges, one cannot be certain). Having persuaded the authorities in Moscow of the icon's importance in a circumstance where in fact they may not have needed much persuasion, the good viatchane returned home and used the recognition the icon had achieved to promote vigorously the local cult. Part of the process was to build a new church dedicated specifically to the icon. The number of recorded miracles then piled up quickly over the next decade or so, all of them occurring in Khlynov itself, although they involved individuals coming to Khlynov even from territories that were beyond its formal administrative reach. While there is some evidence for a procession of the cross having been undertaken to Kotelnich as early as 1569 and repeated a couple of years later and to Slobodskoi in 1572, regular processions of the cross to outlying towns were established for the icon only some time around 1590.²⁷ While the procession to Velikoretskoe *should* have been the earliest of these to have been observed on an annual schedule, we cannot be certain that such was the case. It is likely that all these first processions involving the icon developed in the same period, although we can only guess why then as opposed to some earlier time.

Using our dated miracle list as evidence, we see that a route for the period between July 2 and July 10 starting in Khlynov and going up river to Slobodskoi and Shestakov seems to be developing only by the early 1590s. While there is some rather shaky evidence that Slobodskoi, some 25 km. from Khlynov, existed as early as the late fourteenth century, it was probably not until the middle of the sixteenth century that it achieved any prominence as an economic or administrative center.²⁸ Only much later

27 The brochure, *O Velikoretskoi Chudotvornoi Ikone*, pp. 18-19, cites this evidence from the miracle lists to draw the conclusion that regular processions down the Viatka River to Kotelnich (the „Nizovskii khod“) and up river to Slobodskoi probably did not begin before the late sixteenth or early seventeenth centuries. However, presumably because of the requirement that this discussion of the icon not question the traditional views about the origins and date of the Velikoretskii khod, the brochure ignores the obvious corollary conclusion from the miracle list which should force reconsideration of the date for the establishment of that procession.

28 V. V. Nizov does the best one can to trace Slobodskoi's history back to the late 14th century. See his „Drevneishie izvestiia o Viatskom gorode Slobodskom,“ in *Sobrník materialov nauchno-prakticheskoi konferentsii, posviashchennoi 490-letiiu pervogo upominaniia o*

would it become a regional manufacturing center of some importance. Shestakov was even slower to develop and likely down to the middle of the sixteenth century marked just about the boundary beyond which Khlynov's influence did not extend.²⁹ Given the history of these towns, there seems to have been no particular reason for the icon to have been sent to them before the last third of the sixteenth century. Individuals from Slobodskoi at least could (and did) travel to Khlynov in a day or two to worship the icon there, but eventually having the icon appear at least once annually in the main cathedral of Slobodskoi became important. The icon is documented as having been in Slobodskoi six times between 1592 and 1662 in early July and five times in Shestakov between 1597 and 1624; the evidence is thus sufficient to suggest a regular schedule of visits had been established. Since both towns are on the Viatka River, the procession would have been on boats and rafts.

In similar fashion, our miracle list is suggestive about the beginnings of the so-called „Nizovskii“ route, going downriver from Khlynov and encompassing Orlov and Kotel'nich, the two towns that are mentioned with Khlynov as being core settlements of the Viatka region from early times. Eventually the regular dates for this procession (whose compass would expand considerably) begin on September 1 and end in December. The first record of the icon's having been in Orlov within this range of dates is for October 1588, and in Kotel'nich, September 1599. On two other occasions (1613, 1617) it was in Orlov in September. Eventually Kukarka, further down the river from Kotel'nich, would be included in this procession route; the only instance in the miracle list of the icon's being there is for September 1659. We probably should be extremely cautious in reading back too far into the Muscovite period from the eighteenth- and nineteenth-century evidence about there having been a far-flung and complicated Nizovskii khod, and there certainly seems no reason to believe the „tradition“ cited as evidence for its having come into being in 1555, when the icon was off in Moscow.³⁰

Although we cannot attempt here to write the whole later history of these processions of the cross, looking at some of the evidence for the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries is instructive, since it reinforces the impression of the gradual development and extension of the procession routes and also raises interesting questions about the rationale for the changes.

As several recent books have emphasized, the Orthodox Church authorities in the seventeenth century began to take an increasingly tough stand on local cults of all

gorode Slobodskom v aktovykh istochnikakh (Slobodskoi, 1995), pp. 3-16. See also A. V. Reva, „Slobodskoi,“ in *Entsiklopediia*, vol. 1 (Kirov, 1994), pp. 109-133.

29 For an overview of Shestakov's history, see P. N. Luppov, „Shestakov,“ in *Entsiklopediia*, vol. 1, pp. 160-170.

30 Cf. „Krestnye khody,“ p. 18, for the undocumented assertion about the date 1555, and the map „Religioznoe vozrozhdenie“ in [I. Iu. Trushkova et al., eds.], *Istoriko-etnograficheski atlas Kirovskoi oblasti* (Moscow, 1998), p. 38, showing the route as it may have existed only in the late 19th century and indicating that the initial date of the procession along it with the icon of St. Nicholas was 1552. It is possible that the date 1555 is cited because of the likelihood the icon passed through Orlov and Kotel'nich on its way downriver when being taken to Moscow in that year.

kinds.³¹ The sanctity of locally venerated individuals and icons was questioned; in many cases the supporters of the cults were forced to abandon them or risk severe penalties. Even well back in the nineteenth century, those who tried to date the Tale about the Viatka Land (PSV) and who concurrently wrote about our Icon Tale suggested that the promotion of the local cult of St. Nicholas by Archbishop Iona may have been a response to pressures from the center that the by then well established Velikoretskii procession of the cross be abandoned.³² We do know that Iona was unsuccessful in having the locally venerated *Prepodobnyi* Trifon (founder of the Monastery of the Dormition in Khlynov) elevated to the ranks of the saints. The pressure from the central Church authorities became even greater with the establishment of the Synod, whose leaders, backed by the government, were determined to stamp out what they regarded as superstition.³³ Under the pretext of needing instructions from the Synod, the Ukrainian Archbishop of Viatka Lavrentii Gor'ka in fact did suspend the Velikoretskii khod for three years in the 1730s.³⁴ On his death, a vigorous local protest from Viatka persuaded Empress Anna to restore it in a decree of 1737. From that time, she decreed, the procession was never again to be suspended.

In the documentation regarding this decree and in later papers connected with the processions involving the icon of St. Nicholas, one issue which comes to the fore is simply a matter of cost. By the middle of the eighteenth century, when it undertook to combine or otherwise alter such processions, the Church may have been concerned less with issues pertaining to potentially uncontrollable local expressions of piety and more with issues of balancing the budget. Such considerations seem to have been in the forefront when the Synod decided in 1777 that the processions (at least in Viatka) no longer would travel primarily by water up and down the rivers but would instead move mainly overland, where there was no need to incur the cost of rafts and boats, stocking of substantial provisions and the like. Likewise, instead of having overlapping processions involving different icons, why not combine some of them and have them occur simultaneously?³⁵

31 Bushkovitch, *Religion and Society*; Georg B. Michels, *At War with the Church: Religious Dissent in Seventeenth-Century Russia* (Stanford, 1999); A. S. Lavrov, *Koldovstvo i religiiia v Rossii 1700-1740 gg.* (Moscow, 2000).

32 E.g., A. [A.] Spitsyn, „Pervyi trud po istorii Viatskogo kraia,“ *Viatskie gubernskie vedomosti*, 1888, no. 83, p. 6.

33 On the Synod's policies, see Shevzov, „Miracle-Working Icons,“ pp. 38-40. For parallel examples of how the process of verification of saints' cults developed between the sixteenth and eighteenth centuries, see Eve Levin, „From Corpse to Cult in Early Modern Russia,“ in Kivelson and Greene, eds., *Orthodox Russia*, pp. 81-103. Levin reminds us that at least initially the purpose of such investigations was not to debunk the cults but rather to verify their veracity.

34 See A. I., *Velikoretskii*, pp. 2-3.

35 *Ibid.*, pp. 5-7; for another example of where financial considerations were involved, GAKO, f. 237, op. 133, d. 686, esp. fols. 4-4v., dealing with a question of combining processions. In 1780, the decision was made to have an icon of the Tikhvin Mother of God accompany that of St. Nicholas, the possible reason being the belief that both icons had made their miraculous appearance in the same year, 1383 (*O Velikoretskoi Chudotvornoj Ikone*, p. 21).

An important consequence of the decision about land travel was the opening up of possibilities for the routes of the processions to include additional stopping places that previously had been too far out of the way. While there may also be precise documentation for earlier dates, so far I have lists of the places the Nizovskii khod visited as of 1765, 1798 and 1830.³⁶ The first of these dates is prior to the decision that the processions should proceed by land, not by river. In 1765 the only major town on the route beyond Kukarka was Nolinsk, at which point the route headed north-east by north and then back to Khlynov. By 1798, a loop to the southwest had been added, encompassing Iaransk, and by 1830, it had been extended further to the southwest corner of the province at Tsarevosanchursk. By that time Urzhum, south of Nolinsk, had also been added.³⁷ In looking at these lists from the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, one's first impression is of somewhat aimless wanderings through the rural landscape, stopping in most cases at obscure villages. Part of the rationale though seems quite clear: in any given region, the goal was to visit as many villages which had churches or chapels as possible. At least the local religious centers would be included, where in most of them we are talking about the existence of stone churches of some size and substance which would have drawn believers in from neighboring villages that perhaps could not afford to have a priest and a church.³⁸ It is likely that the choice of towns visited may in part too have reflected the desires of the local population to have a visit by the icon, although in some cases perhaps purely practical considerations of connecting the dots to include most parishes within striking distance of the route was the more important consideration that would explain why many of the otherwise obscure villages ended up on the route.³⁹

Whatever the reasons for the choices of routes and changes in them, it is reasonable to posit that the processions would reinforce the presence and authority of the Church. This could have been a consideration of equal importance for local as well as for Syno-

36 These are drawn respectively from GAKO, f. 243, op. 1, d. 2, misdated 1705 in the opis', „Delo o krestnom khode do g. Orlova, Kotel'nicha," fols. 1v-2; f. 237, op. 1, d. 8, „Delo o khozhdenii s ikonami iz Viatskago devich'ego monastyria v goroda Orlova, Kotel'nicha, Iaranska, Nolinska," fols. 2-2v; f. 237, op. 133, d. 686, fols. 8-8v. „Rospisanie. Otravlenie sviatykh ikon imeet byt; iz onago Spasskago sobora sentiabria 1 dnia.“

37 Eventually (late 19th century?), there was a reconfiguration in some of the processions, with an upriver loop leading to Slobodskoi, up the Cheptsa River to Glazov and then way off to Sarapul in Perm' (*O Velikoretskoi Chudotvornoi Ikone*, p. 24). The map in [Trushkova et al.], *Istoriko-Etnograficheskii atlas*, p. 38, suggests that the loop to Glazov was part of the Nizovskii khod, perhaps because there is partial overlap in the dates on the upriver and downriver routes. However, it seems that the route encompassing Glazov and Sarapul was a separate procession. The brochure of 1909 lists it as such.

38 So far the only map I have seen which is sufficiently detailed to include most of the locations visited by the procession is *Karta Viatskoi gubernii sostavlena General'nym shtabom v 1873 godu v 10 verst diuim*. That map specifies every location with a church or chapel.

39 According to the evidence presented in *O Velikoretskoi Chudotvornoi Ikone*, p. 23, the establishment in 1742 of a procession going from Khlynov through Orlov to Kurino and back for the month of July and involving the St. Nicholas icon and two others was a response to popular demand.

dal hierarchs. One cannot but be impressed by the amount of bureaucratic paper involved in the decisions affirming a procession's route. Lists were drawn up in the provincial consistory; once affirmed by the higher authorities, they were communicated to the parishes along the route. Administration of the processions (which, however, presumably did not receive much financial support) was an important part of keeping the parishes connected purely from an administrative/hierarchical standpoint.

Synodal intervention in the management of at least the Velikoretskii khod raises another important issue – the possible connections of it with pre- or non-Christian traditions. In 1839 and 1840, a substantial amount of bureaucratic paper was generated when one of Nicholas I's minions, the Viatka governor I. P. Khomutov, brought to the Synod's attention various improprieties which he considered were taking place in Velikoretskoe at the time the icon was there.⁴⁰ While he was bothered by things such as commercialization of what was supposed to be a deeply religious experience, at the core of the governor's concerns was the practice of preparing free meals for the pilgrims by public slaughter of sheep. Clearly this must have had overtones of some kind of pagan ritual. One could not ban the feeding, but as a consequence of the discussions, the slaughtering was moved indoors out of sight and under controlled conditions, so that at very least it did not resemble public spectacle.

Whether or not the governor's concerns were justified in the given instance, one can find any number of other examples suggesting that the establishment of Christian shrines and Orthodox religious processions and pilgrimage, especially in a region such as Viatka, were important in the effort of the Christian community to stake out and defend its territory in an area that would long continue to be occupied by peoples who had not converted.⁴¹ An important thematic thread in our Muscovite sources such as PSV and the Icon Tale is the battle of Christianity, its saints and its holy icons against the „pagans.“ This was part of the tradition about the very beginnings of the cult of St. Nicholas Velikoretskii. One can at least posit that the region along the River Velikaia was a bastion of resistance to Christianization. It seems reasonable to suppose that the Velikoretskii khod and all the other processions to outlying regions were a way of strengthening the position of local parishes by providing a public reminder of the power of Orthodoxy to bring together significant numbers of believers willing to undertake sacrifices in the name of the faith. The importance of the newly converted non-Russians

40 See A. I., *Velikoretskii*, pp. 8-15. The documents are in GAKO, f. 582, k. 129, no. 178, „Ob obriadakh pri prazdnestve vo vremia khoda s iavlennogo ikonoiu Sv. Nikolaia v Viatskoi gubernii.“ The sensitivity of the issue was such that some of the documents were marked „Secret.“ There certainly is a plausible connection between some aspects of rituals in icon processions and pre-Christian beliefs, especially, it seems, where non-Slavic converts are involved. See V. A. Korshunkov, „Obriad na Nizhnem Potoke i Velikoretskii krestnyi khod: Pochitanie vodnykh istochnikov v Viatskom krae,“ in *VIII Gertsenovskie chteniia (Materialy nauchnoi konferentsii)* (Kirov, 2002), pp. 77-83.

41 See my *Istoriia odnoi knigi*, esp. pp. 240-248, with references to some of the literature about the marking out of Christian boundaries. What I say there about the icon processions was based on very incomplete information and has been substantially expanded and corrected in the current piece.

was not lost on those who kept the records about miracles. In a few instances, those who experienced the power of the icon seem to have been non-Russian converts, and in one of the last entries in the list, the Saint's power was enacted through the agency of a good Chereemis (against the new embodiment of the pagan threat, the Kalmyks).⁴²

Conclusion

In the circumstances of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, when a person in Muscovy might be identified in the first instance by his faith and place of residence, the most likely basis for establishing or asserting an identity beyond the confines of one's immediate home would be religion. However, our local written sources for Viatka do not articulate such a religion-based sense of identity before the late seventeenth or early eighteenth centuries, even though the basis for developing such an identity had been laid earlier, most prominently in the establishment of the cult of the icon of St. Nicholas Velikoretskii. Beginning with the 1550s, it was this icon which best might draw individuals to travel long and often difficult routes from the periphery of the Viatka lands to the regional capital Khlynov. As the fame of the icon spread, so also were the local efforts enhanced to make it available to individuals beyond the immediate surroundings of Khlynov. Thus a regular schedule of processions with the icon along several different routes connecting the major towns of the Viatka heartland was established. At their inception, such processions probably touched the lives primarily of those who lived along the route. It was only over time that they would draw larger numbers of individuals willing to travel long distances to participate. The cult of the icon thus helped to strengthen the ties among the people at the center of the Viatka land and gradually drew into its orbit those from far-flung territories that might never become subject to the Viatka administration. By the time of Archbishop Iona and the sacristan Semen Popov in the late seventeenth century, the cult of the icon and its processions were an established part of local tradition and could be used in the invention of written traditions about what constituted the essence of Viatka and its capital Khlynov. What had developed through practice thus became enshrined in writing, although there is no particular reason to think that the texts had much of an impact on the way ordinary viatchane, largely illiterate, thought about themselves. Nonetheless the expressions of faith by those ordinary viatchane were an important component of the development of a documentable sense of regional identity during the Petrine era.

Obviously many points in the foregoing summary beg for further elucidation and proof. There is more that can be done to search out and analyze local literary traditions, and there certainly is much more to be done to bring together what I think will prove to be a mass of evidence about local cults and the processions of the cross. I have ventured here what will undoubtedly be denounced as heretical suggestions concerning the widely accepted chronology of the cult of the Velikoretskii icon and its processions. It seems to me that the burden of proof for an early date ultimately is on the shoulders of

42 Kashmenskii, „O chudotvornoi Velikoretskoi ikone,“ *VEV*, 1875, no. 17, Otd. dukh.-lit., p. 528.

those who would rely on late texts that arguably were composed as *ex post facto* defenses for claims concerning the importance of the icon for Khlynov and Viatka. We certainly should not continue to take the story back to the fourteenth century, and should we agree to redate it to the sixteenth, we may be able to provide a rather coherent and persuasive case about the way in which the elements which might constitute the basis for proclaiming a regional identity come together. It seems certain that this example repeats what we can observe in other areas of the Russian north. Whether it can be generalized yet further geographically remains to be seen. The work on our subject, in a sense, has just begun.