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**On the Frontiers of Sacred Spaces: the Relations Between Jews and Orthodox
Christians in the Early Modern Ruthenian Lands on the Example of Religious
Proselytism and Apostasy**

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ABSTRACT

This dissertation, “On the Frontiers of Sacred Spaces: the Relations Between Jews and Orthodox Christians in the Early Modern Ruthenian Lands on the Example of Religious Proselytism and Apostasy”, addresses religious contention between Orthodox Christians and Jews through the examination of some of the most momentous instances of a radical alteration and reconfiguration of a person’s confessional identity that transpired amid the representatives of the two faiths during the 15th-17th centuries in the Eastern Ruthenian territories of Europe. The work draws on a variety of Jewish and Christian sources including polemical works, chronicles, private and official correspondence, legal texts, criminal cases, exempla and folklore. The questions of the motives of an individual or a religious faction to preach their dogma to the followers of a contending faith, the convictions and influences causing a person to abandon his religious domain in favor of another, and the approaches of the ecclesiastical and political hierarchies towards the proliferation of their faith amongst heathens, as well as in regards to the rejection thereof by their flock, are placed at the center of the analysis. Also considered is the problem of integration of neophytes in the new community, the mechanisms employed for the redefinition of their identity, and the peculiarities of their interaction with governmental bodies. In that respect, the scrutiny of a polysemantic social process such as the change of faith in a complex from a methodological point of view territory – the Polish-Russian borderlands, presents a unique approach to the study of this multicultural region.

Going beyond the boundaries of traditional historiography, which predominantly consigned Jews as victims of zealous proselytism and forced conversions imposed by the dominant Christian realm, within the framework of the presented dissertational research, the adherents of Judaism appear as ideologically motivated parties that were concurrently involved in the dissemination of their faith amongst the Orthodox faithful. On that account, an argument is put forward on the intolerance of Jews in Russian controlled territories during the Early Modern period being based not on racial chauvinism, but rather impelled by religious contention and the anxieties of ‘Judaizing’. This predisposition is demonstrated by the keenness of both the Russian State and the Church on welcoming the Jews who baptized into Orthodoxy within their geographical and spiritual domains as equals, and even granting generous privileges for their embracement of the Christian faith. Given the definitional and oppositional relationship between Christianity and Judaism, and by extension, between Christians and Jews, in light of the threat of Judaic proselytism, the apprehension of which is found across ecclesial polemics and legislative proclamations of the time, the act of Jewish conversion to Christianity came to symbolize the ideological triumph of the Church over the Synagogue. These issues, being at the forefront of the contemporary historiographical research on Early Modern Eastern European Jewry, suggest stimulating avenues of further research.

Thema der Dissertation “On the Frontiers of Sacred Spaces: the Relations Between Jews and Orthodox Christians in the Early Modern Ruthenian Lands on the

Example of Religious Proselytism and Apostasy” sind jene Auseinandersetzungen zwischen orthodoxem Christentum und Judentum zwischen dem 15. und 17. Jahrhundert, in denen die konfessionelle Identität zwischen beiden Gruppen radikal verändert und neu definiert wurde. Dies geschieht auf der Grundlage einer Vielzahl von Quellen: Polemiken, Chroniken, private und offizielle Briefe, Rechtstexte, Gerichtsakten, Exempla und volkskundliche Quellen wurden ausgewertet. Im Zentrum der Analyse stehen Fragen wie die nach den Motiven eines Einzelnen oder einer religiösen Gruppe, ihre Dogmen den Angehörigen einer anderen Glaubensrichtung zu predigen. Welche Motive hatte ein einzelner oder eine religiöse Gruppe, andere missionieren zu wollen? Welche Faktoren führten dazu, dass jemand seine religiösen Überzeugungen zu Gunsten eines anderen Glaubens aufgibt? Welche kirchlichen und politischen Machtverhältnisse waren dabei im Spiel? Ein weiteres Thema betrifft die Frage, wie die Konvertiten in ihre neue Gemeinschaft aufgenommen wurden, wie ihre Identität neu definiert wurde und wie die Aushandlungsprozesse mit den Behörden gestaltet waren. Indem der Glaubenswechsel als ein polysemantischer sozialer Prozess in einem – in methodischer Hinsicht komplexen Territorium - dem polnisch-russischen Grenzland – verstanden wird, wird es möglich, einen neuen Zugang zur Erforschung dieser multikulturelle Region zu finden.

Die Dissertation überwindet auf diese Weise die Sichtweisen der älteren Geschichtsschreibung, die Juden zumeist als Opfer von Proselytismus und Zwangskonversion in einer christlich dominierten Umwelt gefasst hat. Stattdessen erscheinen die Anhänger des Judentums ihrerseits als ideologisch motivierte Gruppen, die gleichermaßen bestrebt waren, ihren Glauben unter den orthodoxen Christen zu verbreiten. Auf dieser Grundlage wird argumentiert, dass die Intoleranz gegenüber den Juden in russisch kontrollierten Gebieten in der frühen Neuzeit nicht auf rassistischen Patriotismus, sondern auf den religiösen Konflikt und die Angst vor der „Judaisierung“ zurückzuführen ist. Beleg dafür ist die Bereitschaft des russischen Staates und der Kirche, konvertierte Juden in ihrem weltlichen und geistlichen Einflussbereich zu tolerieren und ihnen die Ausübung ihrer Religion zu gestatten. Angesichts der Beziehung zwischen Christentum und Judentum, die per se als oppositionell galt, und damit implizit auch zwischen Christen und Juden, und vor dem Hintergrund der Gefahr des jüdischen Proselytismus, die in kirchlichen Polemiken und juristischen Traktaten jener Zeit formuliert wurde, symbolisierte der Akt der Konversion vom Judentum zum Christentum den ideologischen Triumph der Kirche über die Synagoge. Solche Beobachtungen, die von zentralem Interesse für die aktuelle geschichtswissenschaftliche Forschung zum frühneuzeitlichen Judentum in Osteuropa sind, eröffnen vielversprechende Perspektiven für zukünftige Arbeiten.

Tato disertační práce “ On the Frontiers of Sacred Spaces: the Relations Between Jews and Orthodox Christians in the Early Modern Ruthenian Lands on the Example of Religious Proselytism and Apostasy” (Na hranicích posvátna – vztahy mezi judaismem a pravoslavím na území obývaném Rusíny v raném novověku na příkladu náboženské konverze a apostáze) se zabývá náboženskými konflikty mezi pravoslavím a judaismem. Na základě různorodých židovských a křesťanských pramenů – polemických spisů, kronik, soukromé a úřední korespondence, právnických textů, soudních případů,

exempel a folklórních zdrojů – práce zkoumá některé z nejzávažnějších případů radikálních změn a rekonfigurací konfesní identity, k nimž došlo mezi věřícími obou náboženství v 15. až 17. století. Středem zájmu je motivace jednotlivců nebo náboženských frakcí šířit svou víru mezi stoupenci nepřátelské církve, dále přesvědčení a vlivy způsobující změnu vyznání a rovněž přístup představitelů politických a náboženských hierarchií k šíření jejich víry i k odpadlictví. Kromě toho se práce zabývá otázkami integrace konvertitů do nového společenství, způsoby vymezování jejich nové identity a zvláštnostmi jejich interakce s vládními orgány. V tomto ohledu jde o metodologicky jedinečný přístup ke zkoumání komplexního společenského procesu, kterým je změna víry v mnohokulturním regionu na polsko-ruské hranici.

Na rozdíl od pohledu tradiční historiografie líčící židy většinou jako oběti fanatického proselytismu a konverzí vynucených dominantní křesťanskou mocí, ukazuje předložená disertace, že přívrženci judaismu představují spíše ideologicky motivované skupiny vyznačující se společnými snahami šířit svou víru mezi stoupenci pravoslaví. Z tohoto hlediska vychází argument, že základem nesnášenlivosti vůči Židům v raném novověku na územích pod ruskou nadvládou nebyl rasově motivovaný šovinismus, ale spíše náboženský konflikt a obavy z judaizace. Na tuto tendenci poukazuje zájem ruského státu i pravoslavné církve přistupovat na svém území a v oblastech pod jejím duchovním vlivem k pokřtěným židům jako k rovnoprávným s křesťany a dokonce jim za jejich konverzi udílet různé výsady. Vzhledem k protikladům mezi křesťanstvím a judaismem a křesťany a židy a se zřetelem na hrozbu židovského proselytismu, na níž reagují tehdejší náboženské polemiky a právní dokumenty, se obrácení stoupenců judaismu ke křesťanství stalo symbolem ideologického vítězství Církve nad Synagou. Tyto otázky, které jsou v popředí dnešního historického výzkumu židů v raně novověké východní Evropě, naznačují nové a podnětné směry jeho dalšího vývoje.

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Introduction

Since the introduction of monotheism in Eastern Europe and the Christianization of Slavs in the 9th- 10th centuries, biblical narratives and themes continuously made their way through various literary, iconographic and oral channels into the intellectual universe of Orthodox Christianity. From the time of its inception, therefore, the Russian Orthodox Church found itself in a precarious juxtaposition with the dogmas of Judaism. While the starting point of a tangible Jewish-Christian contiguity in the Ruthenian Lands is considered to be Medieval Kiev, by the Early Modern period, when the vast majority of these territories came under the control of the Polish-Lithuanian crown, Jewish communities of Ashkenazi origin settled throughout the urban centers in the region and entered the social, economic and cultural spheres as far as it was legally permitted. Despite the continuous attempts by the governmental and religious authorities of both communities to limit the interaction with the other group, the neighboring proximity of the Church and Synagogue in the urban spaces resulted in a persevering transference of ideologies and customs in both directions not only within the borders of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, but also into the spiritual realm of the adjacent Russian state. To test the boundaries of the Jewish – Christian Orthodox cross-cultural and inter-faith transmission during the Early Modern period, this study focuses on examining the instances of a radical alteration and reconfiguration of a confessional identity, both individual and collective, and presents an analysis of the phenomena through the framework of the practices and processes associated with the acts of religious proselytism on the one hand, and the paradigms of apostasy on the other. The following questions are placed at the center of the analysis: the motives of an individual or a religious faction to preach their dogmas to the followers of a contending faith, the convictions and influences causing a person to abandon his or her religious domain in favor of another, and the approaches of the ecclesiastical and political hierarchies towards the proliferation of their faith amongst heathens, as well as in regard to the rejection thereof by their flock.

With the Christianization of the last pagan nation in Europe - Lithuania - in the 14th century, Judaism unequivocally replaced paganism as the binary opposition to Christianity in Early Modern Eastern Europe. In that respect, while a baptism of a Jew came to represent the ideological triumph of the Church over the Synagogue, a conversion of a Christian to Judaism was construed to attest to the exact opposite. As far as the Orthodox Church was concerned, Jewish communities living side by side with Christians posed a tangible danger to Christendom, and the evidence presented in this study contends that while such anxieties were ominously embellished by polemical prejudice, the apostasy of Christians to Judaism had in fact taken place in the Ruthenian lands during the Early Modern period. Conversely, even though the Orthodox establishment did not conduct active missionary activities, the same era saw a drastic increase in the scale of conversions to Christianity from the region's Jewish communities. Yet, never before has the Jewish – Christian Orthodox religious contention in the Eastern Slavic lands as a whole been made the subject of inquiry; nor has there been an effort to collect cases and documents, such as the ones presented in this study, in order to produce a typology of motives that stimulated doctrinal dissemination and confessional re-affiliation, to assess the context of Judaic proselytism in the fervently Christian-Orthodox region, and to scrutinize the counter-measures applied by theocratic authorities in order to

prevent the tergiversation of their flock from the established religion. Likewise, the problems of the integration of neophytes in the new community, the mechanisms employed for the redefinition of their identity, and the peculiarities of their interaction with the governmental bodies in the region have not been made the subject of a systematic scholarly research.

In the Early Modern Russian state, the conveyance of a foreign faith amongst Christians, just as the apostasy from Orthodoxy, were acts legally regarded as crimes punishable by death. Notwithstanding the associated dangers, going against probability and normative patterns of intellectual history, amongst the Orthodox faithful of Ruthenia (including members of the high clergy) there were those who transgressed the bounds of the doctrinal limitations of Christianity, upon being introduced to the tenets of Judaism by the carriers of the faith. Naturally, secrecy was a crucial aspect of the deviation from Christian worship and by extension of the practice of and the conversion to another religion, and if the concealment succeeded, the fate of the proselyte would not have become known and therefore not depicted in writing. Accordingly, while the known instances of the embracement of the Jewish faith by Christians are few in number (moreover of a formal conversion to Judaism), the evidence of such cases has survived predominantly in denunciative averments and criminal investigations that prevalently resulted in the execution of the convicted apostates by the means of burning at the stake. Innately, these events worked to bolster anxieties amongst the Slavic-Orthodox spiritual leaders, the governmental authorities and the general population alike apropos the existential threat of proselytism, or ‘Judaizing’, originating from the observers of the Jewish law.

While Jewish settlement on the territories controlled by the Russian monarchy was restricted by law, as a result of a series of successful military campaigns against the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth in the first half of the 17th century, a substantial number of Jews entered the geographical domain of the Russian State as captives, and were subsequently permitted to remain in Muscovy based on the condition of their embracement of Christianity. The unprecedented mass conversion of these Jews to Orthodoxy motivated the Church and State authorities to supersede the policy of exclusion, based on ethnic belonging, by a policy of integration, based on religious allegiance, henceforth decreeing the act of baptism to signify the authorization of the admission of Jews into the fold of the Russian society, both spiritually and legally. An analogous policy was endorsed in the nascent Cossack Hetmanate, a Russian vassal state in Eastern Ukraine, whose leadership tolerated Jewish presence on these territories strictly based on the condition of their conversion to the Christian Orthodox faith. Given the definitional and oppositional relationship between Christianity and Judaism, and by extension, between Christians and Jews, it necessitated the belief that this conversion experience participated in the literal sense of the term, the sense of changing one thing into another, and in this instance, it’s opposite¹.

Relevance. Currently, scholars working in the sphere of Jewish studies increasingly express the need to expand the field of research to reference the problem of

¹ Morrison K. (1992): “*Understanding Conversion*”. University Press of Virginia,

the change of faith in the Jewish realm². For almost a century, the sensitivity of the subject matter of conversion from Judaism, and even more so, of Jewish proselytism, hampered the study of these phenomena in the context of the ever-increasing sentiment of assimilation in the USSR. The examination of archival materials and primary sources concerning the acts of Christian apostasy to Judaism and the baptism of Jews into Orthodoxy during the Early Modern period, therefore, presents an opportunity to scrutinize the roots of the issue of anti-Judaism and anti-Semitism from the perspective of religious contention. Moreover, research into these complex processes, involving the re-configuration of confessional adherence and cultural transfiguration, contributes to the study of the formation and functioning of the conventional models of perception of adherents to other faiths and ‘foreigners’ in the Slavic Orthodox society. In that sense, the reception of neophyte Jews in Muscovy exemplifies a particular paradigm, which allows to analyze the mechanisms of the development of tolerant and xenophobic attitudes towards new members of the Russian social stratum.

The inter-ethnic, inter-confessional and inter-cultural dialogue in the modern world constitutes a vexed issue that requires a constant search for solutions. In this regard, the research conducted in the given field represents particular significance. The study of the interfaith contention through the paradigm of proselytism on the one hand, and of the integration of migrant-converts into the Russian socio-cultural milieu on the other, promises to offer new perspectives on contemporary issues.

Key Concepts and Terminology. It is necessary to define the central concepts scrutinized in the context of the dissertational study. Due to its equivocal usage and understanding in divergent cultural settings and historical contexts, the terminology delineating the changes of a religious affiliation in particular requires meticulous demarcation.

The use of the concept of *Proselytism*, or *Proselytization*, in this study closely follows the definition designated in Webster’s dictionary, which depicts it to be an act of “inducing someone to convert to one’s faith”³. As specified by Medgyessy, this activity aims at reaching the individuals who are members of a particular confessional group, or which have already accepted a certain religious belief⁴. In the given context, the person conducting the proselytizing is strongly convinced that the existing religion of the targeted person is inferior to his own and therefore should be transgressed and replaced.

² Endelman T. (2001): *“Welcoming Ex-Jews into the Jewish Historiographical Fold // Broadening Jewish History Towards a Social History of Ordinary Jews”*. The Littman Library of Jewish Civilization, Portland. Pg. 82-92.

³ Merriam-Webster Dictionary <http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/proselytizing> Accessed February 24, 2015.

⁴ Medgyessy L. (2004): *“Mission or Proselytism? Temptations Tensions and Missiological Perspectives in Eastern European Christianity: A Case Study of Hungary”*. In *“Contextuality in Reformed Europe: The Mission of the Church in the Transformation of European Culture”*. Edited by Linemann-Perrin C., Vroom H., and Winrich M. Rodopi publishing, Amsterdam-New York. Pg. 99.

Accordingly, the notion of proselytism can connote a pejorative, and at times a threatening meaning: Robeck has described it as “a kind of evangelistic malpractice involving improper activities”⁵, including economic enticement and coercion. A related term, *Mission*, in the given context refers to “a ministry commissioned by a religious organization to propagate its faith”⁶. Congruently, the case studies examined in the dissertation, for the purpose of the analysis of the phenomenon of proselytism, are replete with the patterns and processes that substantially correspond to the outlined classifications.

Although *Webster’s New Dictionary of Synonyms* states that *Convert*, *Proselyte* and *Neophyte* are synonyms⁷, since all three terms denote a person who has embraced another creed, opinion or doctrine than the one previously adhered to, the distinctions between the terms have been drawn on an ideological basis. The term *Neophyte* is an adjective used to describe “a person who has *recently* joined a religious group”⁸. According to Heideman, while *Convert* commonly implies a sincere and voluntary change of belief, *Proselyte* denotes merely a switch to another religion, suggesting less a sincere and voluntary embracing, than a yielding to the persuasions and urgings of another, be it an earnest missionary or zealot, or someone with less praiseworthy motives⁹. In a similar vein, the National Christian Council had identified the following distinction: “Conversion has been confused with proselytism, but there is a difference. The proselyte may have no inner change of life, hence he has no conversion. He is one who has passed from one religion to another, changing some external features of his life, manners, and customs. But these may not correspond to any spiritual illumination, reconciliation, and peace”¹⁰. Whereas from the perspective of anthropology of religion, *Conversion* has been regarded as a process of “rationality” (i.e. “the intellectual challenge of the encounter of the macrocosm”), and a passage of acculturation¹¹. Whatever the

⁵ Robeck C. (1996): “*Mission and the Issue of Proselytism*”. International Bulletin of Missionary Research, Vol. 20. No. 1. New Haven. Pg. 1.

⁶ Merriam-Webster Dictionary: <http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/mission>. Accessed February 24, 2015.

⁷ Gove P. (1973): “*Webster’s New Dictionary of Synonyms*”. A Dictionary of Discriminated Synonyms and Antonyms and Analogous and Contrasted Words. 4th ed. Merriam Publishing, Springfield. Pg. 189, 646.

⁸ Merriam-Webster Dictionary: <http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/neophyte>. Accessed February 24, 2015.

⁹ Heideman E. (1996): “*Proselytism, Mission and the Bible*”. International Bulletin of Missionary Research, Vol. 20. No. 1. New Haven. Pg. 10.

¹⁰ Sharma A. (2014): “*Hinduism and The Concept of A Missionary Religion*”. In “*The Oxford Handbook of Religious Conversion*”. Edited by Rambo L. and Farhadian C. Orthodox University Press, New York. Pg. 429.

¹¹ Dong Y. (2012): “*Understanding Religious Conversion: The Case of Saint Augustine*”. Pickwick Publications, Eugene. Pg. 58.

meaning, the conversion never takes place outside of a cultural context¹². Thus, given the circumstances in which a member of the Jewish community made the decision to baptize into Orthodoxy, paralleled by the stimuli that influenced a Slavic-Orthodox individual to renounce Christianity in favor of the tenets of Judaism, for the purpose of the analysis of the given paradigms, it is essential to take the prescribed delineations into consideration.

The term *Apostasy*, in turn, refers to the act of “the abandonment or renunciation of a religious faith”¹³. An apostate, from the viewpoint of a religion, church, or confessional group that is being abandoned, becomes a proselyte from the perspective of the corresponding religion, church, or confessional group that is being joined¹⁴. Perceptibly, how apostasy and an apostate are defined depends on the position of the respective church or religion, as well as on the ways or methods leading to the recognized conversion.

The Jewish religious law, the Halakhah, features a clearly defined terminology, which distinguishes between *Anusim* (“אנוסים”, lit. “coerced”) - Jews who were forced to abandon Judaism and convert to another religion against their will¹⁵, and *mumarim* (“מומרים”, lit. “the ones that were changed”) or *Meshumadim* (“משומדים”, lit. “the destroyed ones”) – Jews who willfully and deliberately abandoned the Jewish faith¹⁶. The Babylonian Talmud further distinguishes between the apostate out of convenience (“מומר לתיאבון”, lit. “the apostate out of appetite”), and the apostate out of conviction (“מומר להכעיס”, lit. “the apostate out of spite”)¹⁷.

On the acceptance of non-Jews into the fold of Judaism, the Halakhah specifies that the conversion must be implemented “for the sake of Heaven” (i.e. not for ulterior motives)¹⁸. The procedure of the conversion process is outlined in detail in the Babylonian Talmud, and consists of the verbal acceptance of the Torah, followed by the commandment of circumcision (for males), an immersion in a *mikve* (ritual bath) and a sacrifice (not applicable after the destruction of the Temple)¹⁹. Once the procedure is

¹² Rambo L. (1993): *Understanding Religious Conversion*. Yale University Press, New Haven. Pg. 20.

¹³ Merriam-Webster Dictionary: <http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/apostasy>. Accessed February 24, 2015.

¹⁴ Lemer N. (2012): *Religion, Secular Beliefs and Human Rights*. 2nd Rev. Ed. Martinus Nijhoff Publishers, Leiden and Boston. Pg. 136.

¹⁵ Babylonian Talmud: Tractate *Avodah Zarah* (“Foreign Worship”), 54a.

¹⁶ Ibid., Tractate *Hullin* (“Profane”), 41a.

¹⁷ Stern S. (1994): *Jewish Identity in Early Rabbinic Writings*. Brill Publishing, Leiden. Pg. 106. Referencing Babylonian Talmud: Tractate *Avodah Zarah* 26a.

¹⁸ Babylonian Talmud: *Seder Nezikin* (“The Order of Damages”), Tractate *Gerim* 1,7.

¹⁹ Ibid., Tractate *Yevamoth* (“Levirate Marriage”), 41a.

complete, the *ger* (“גַּר”, lit. “convert”), or *ger zedek* (“גַּר צַדִּיק”, “righteous convert”), becomes a new creature, “similar to a new born infant”; his previous, non-Jewish ties are completely severed²⁰. As a Jew, the convert is included in the category of Israel, and is treated as an “Israel in all respects”²¹.

Judaizing or Judaization, an imperative concept within the context of the given study, has been defined as “imbuing with Jewish principles”²², “conforming to or bringing into conformity with the spirit, character, principles, or practices of Judaism”²³, and “the adoption of the Jewish customs and beliefs”²⁴. In the Russian language, the term reads as “*жидовствовать*”, and had been defined to mean “being of that (Jewish) law” (“*быть закона этого*”)²⁵.

The doctrine of the Russian Orthodox Church also differentiates between forced and voluntary *Apostasy* by prescribing different degrees of penance: according to the canonical rules 73 and 81 of St. Basil the Great, the voluntary (conscious) apostasy from Christianity is to be punished by a lifelong repentance, while the apostasy committed out of fear of death or torture is to be punished by an eight-year long penitence²⁶. In contrast to *Heresy*, which embodies an “erroneous doctrine, distorting the fundamentals of the Christian faith”²⁷, apostasy is characterized by a complete negation of the Church’s teachings, and must be clearly expressed by an external action (i.e. an open proclamation of the break with Christianity, the adherence to the dogmas of other religions or cults,

²⁰ Stern S. (1994): “*Jewish Identity in Early Rabbinic Writings*”. Brill Publishing, Leiden. Pg. 106. Referencing Babylonian Talmud: Tractate *Yevamoth* 22a, 48b.

²¹ Babylonian Talmud: Tractate *Yevamoth* 47b.

²² Collins English Dictionary – Complete and Unabridged: <http://www.collinsdictionary.com/dictionary/english/judaize>. Accessed February 24, 2015.

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Random House Kernerman Webster's College Dictionary: <http://www.kdictionaries-online.com/DictionaryPage.aspx?ApplicationCode=18#&&DictionaryEntry=Judaize&SearchMode=Entry>. Accessed February 24, 2015.

²⁵ Dal V. (1880): “*The Explanatory Dictionary of the Living Great Russian Language*”. Typography of M. O. Wolf, Saint Petersburg. Vol. 2, Pg. 295.

²⁶ “*The Rules of St. Basil the Great*” In “*The Rules of the Holy Fathers of the Orthodox Church with the Interpretations of Bishop Nicodemus (Milos)*” (2004). The Holy Trinity Orthodox Mission. Pg. 52, 55.

²⁷ Protopop Cipin V. (2008): “*Heresy*”. In “*The Orthodox Encyclopedia*”. Edited by the Patriarch of Moscow and All Russia Kirill. Published by the Research Center of the Russian Orthodox Church, Moscow. Vol. 18, Pg. 598.

etc.)²⁸. The participation of a Christian in the rites of a foreign religion constitutes apostasy even if the participant does not share the teachings of that religion²⁹. Furthermore, only an individual who had undergone baptism, but later renounced the Christian faith, can be formally charged with the apostasy from Christianity. The terminology employed in the Russian language borrows from the Greek *ἀποστασία* (apostasía), whereby the terms *аностам* (lit. “apostate”) and *вероотступник* (lit. “digresser of faith”) connote betrayal and shame³⁰. By the stipulations of the Council Code of 1649, in Russia the apostasy from Christianity became legally regarded as an offence punishable by the means of burning at the stake³¹.

The process of the reception of Jews into the fold of the Russian Orthodox Church is outlined in the so-called ‘Trebnik’, literally “Book of Prayer”. The baptismal ceremony, upon which the individual emerged as a Christian and received a new name, was preceded by a verbal negation of Judaism and three days of confession and instruction on the fundamentals of the Orthodox faith³². Adjectives *выкрест* (lit. “christened”), *непекрест* (lit. “re-christened”), *новокрещенный* (lit. “newly christened”) often accompanied the individual for the rest of their lives³³.

It is also necessary to delineate the geographical and chronological frames of the study. The territorial boundaries of the research encompass the geographical exonym ‘Ruthenian lands’, a cross-border region of Eastern Europe. During the Early Modern period, this historical territory was divided between the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth and Muscovy (later The Tsardom of Russia and The Russian Empire), and corresponds to the modern day Ukraine, Belarus and western Russia³⁴. The term ‘Ruthenia’ is the Latin rendering of ‘Rus’’, which refers to the wider area occupied by the Medieval state of Kievan Rus’, and denotes an ethnic community and society, its territories, language, culture and ecclesiastical life (predominantly Orthodox Christianity) before the distinction between Ukrainian, Belorussian and Russian identities was fully

²⁸ Maksimovich K., Protopop Cipin V. (2001): “Apostasy”. In *“The Orthodox Encyclopedia”*. Edited by the Patriarch of Moscow and All Russia Aleksey II. Published by the Research Center of the Russian Orthodox Church, Moscow. Vol. 3, Pg. 94-95.

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ Markov N. (1902): “Apostasy” in *“The Orthodox Theological Encyclopedia”*. Petrograd Publishing, Saint Petersburg. Vol. 3, table 1153.

³¹ Abramovich G., Mankov A. (1987): *“The Council Code of 1649: Text, Commentaries”*. Institute of History of the USSR, Leningrad. Pg. 15.

³² *The Trebnik of Metropolitan Peter Mogila* (1646), Kiev. Reprint, 1996. Liturgical Literature, Kiev. Pg. 55.

³³ Dal V. (1880): *“The Explanatory Dictionary of the Living Great Russian Language”*. Typography of M. O. Folf, Saint Petersburg. Vol. 1, Pg. 295.

³⁴ Plokhii S. (2006): *“The Origins of the Slavic Nations: Pre-modern Identities in Russia, Ukraine, and Belarus”*. Cambridge University Press, New York. Pg. 10-15.

developed³⁵. The concept of the ‘Early Modern period’ is understood to span from the mid 15th to the mid 17th centuries³⁶.

Sources. The source base for the study of the phenomena of proselytism and apostasy in the Early Modern Ruthenian lands has a number of specific features, the most notable of which is the absolute minimum portion of texts authored by the apostates themselves. This is the case not only for Ruthenian realities, but also for the entire Eastern European region as opposed to, for example, German lands, where Jewish converts to Christianity often wrote autobiographies, diaries, etc.³⁷.

The sources utilized for the dissertational research are comprised of both published and archival materials, and can be divided into several groups. The first group relates to texts of a narrative character, which can be further distinguished as polemical, theological and liturgical writings of a religious nature; works of a historical genre – chronicles of Ruthenian (Russian, Ukrainian and Belorussian), Jewish, and Polish origins; as well as travel writings. The most significant works from the first group include abbot Joseph Volotsky’s “*The Enlightener*”³⁸, monk Savva’s “*The Epistle Against Jews and Heretics*”³⁹, the Kabbalistic work of Rabbi Moses of Kiev “*Lily of Secrets*”⁴⁰, and the “*Book of Prayer*” compiled by Metropolitan Peter Mogila of Kiev⁴¹. The chronicles examined include: “*The Complete Collection of Russian Chronicles*”⁴², the Khmelnytsky

³⁵ Berezhnaya L. (2008): “*Ruthenian Lands and the Early Modern Multiple Borderlands in Europe. Ethno-Confessional Aspect*” in “*Religion and the Conceptual Boundary in Central and Eastern Europe: Encounters of Faiths*”. Edited by Bremer T. Palgrave Macmillan Publishing, New York. Pg. 41.

³⁶ In the context of the history of Russia, the concept is analyzed in Kamensky A. (2000): “*Middle Ages*” and “*Modern Times*”: *the Boundaries of Concepts in the Context of Russian History*” // “*Historian in Time*”. Third Zimin Readings: Reports and Presentations of Scholarly Conferences. Moscow. URL: <http://annales.info/rus/zimin/zimin3.htm>

³⁷ Carlebach E. (1995): “*Converts and Their Narratives in Early Modern Germany. The Case of Friedrich Albrecht Christiani*.” Leo Baeck Institute Year Book, New York. No. 40. Pg. 65-83.

³⁸ Volotsky J. (1490-1504): “*The Enlightener*”. In “*The Enlightener, or the Condemnation of the Judaizers Heresy*”. Typography of the Imperial University. Kazan. 1903.

³⁹ Belokurov C. (1902): “*The Epistle of Monk Savva Against Jews and Heretics*.” Readings at the Society of Russian History and Ancient Studies at Moscow University. Vol. 3.

⁴⁰ Moshe ben Jacob of Kiev (1509): “*Lily of Secrets*”. Partial ed., Johan Anton Krieger, Koretz. 1788. (Reprint Jerusalem, 1995).

⁴¹ “*The Trebnik of Metropolitan Peter Mogila*” (1646). Liturgical Literature, Kiev. (Reprint Kiev, 1996).

⁴² Typography of Edward Prats (1846-present): “*The Complete Collection of Russian Chronicles*”. 43 Volumes. The Archaeographical Expedition of the Russian Academy of Sciences. Saint Petersburg.

Era Chronicles⁴³, *“The Chronicle of the Witness”*⁴⁴, Tatishchev’s⁴⁵ and Karamzin’s⁴⁶ historiographical works. The travel writings include the account of Paul of Aleppo of his travels in Ukraine and Muscovy in 1650’s⁴⁷, Samuel Collins’ account of his tenure in Moscow in 1660’s⁴⁸, and the memoirs of Johan Georg Korb, the Austrian ambassador to Russia at the end of the 17th century⁴⁹.

The second group is comprised of personal, governmental, Church and military correspondence, as well as of Rabbinical responsa, which contain information on the relations between Jews and Christians, specifically involving the cases of the change of faith during the given time period⁵⁰. Also considered are the governmental records of the Russian and Polish authorities, records of the Jewish self-governing bodies such as the Lithuanian Rabbinical Council (Vaad)⁵¹, and commercial contacts made between

⁴³ Rabbi Meir ben Shmuel of Shebreshin (1650): *“The Stress of the Times”*. The first edition (Krakow 1649/1650) was published by the Hebrew University, Department of the History of the Jewish people, Jerusalem, 1968.; Rabbi Shebbetai ben Meir Katz ha-Kohen (1651): *“The Scroll of Darkness”*. Amsterdam, A.M. 5411. Published in *“The Jewish Community of Poland”*. Youth Department of Zionist Organization, Jerusalem. Vol. 2. 1953; Rabbi Nathan Nata ben Moses Hanover (1652/53): *“The Deep Mire”*. Venice, A.M. 5413. Ed. and rev. Israel Halpern. The United Kibbutz, Tel-Aviv, 1966

⁴⁴ *“The Chronicle of the Witness”* (1670s). Prepared for publishing by Dzira Y. 1971. Scholarly Thought, Kiev.

⁴⁵ Tatishchev V. (1847): *“Russian History Dating Back to the Most Ancient Times”*. Imperial Moscow University, Moscow.

⁴⁶ Karamzin N. (1842): *“History of the Russian State”*. Saint Petersburg Academy of Sciences, St. Petersburg.

⁴⁷ Paul of Alepo (1660s): *“The Travels of Macarius, Patriarch of Antioch to Russia in the Middle of XVII Century, Depicted by His Son Archimandrite Paul of Alepo”*. Edited by Murkos G. 1896-1900. Typography of the University, Moscow. Vol. 2.

⁴⁸ Collins S. (1671): *“The Present State of Russia: In a Letter to a Friend at London”*. Printed by “John Winter for Dorman Newman At the Kings Arms in the Poultry”, London. Chap. XXV. From the first edition at Houghton Library, Harvard University. Edited by Poe M. (2008), Department of History Publications, University of Iowa.

⁴⁹ Georg J. (1906): *“A Diary of a Journey to Muscovy”*. Publishing house of A. S. Suvorin, Saint Petersburg.

⁵⁰ For example, a volumous correspondence between a baptized Lithuanian Jewess Melanya and the Russian authorities has survived in various parts of the ‘Orders of the Clerical Table’ fund, stored at the Russian State Archive of Ancient Acts in Moscow.

⁵¹ Materials of Lithuanian Vaad were published in a journal entitled “Jewish Antiquity” (1909-1912). Published by Tipo-Lit, St. Petersburg.

Christian and Jews⁵², amongst others. Various documents, containing information on the migration to Russia and baptism of Jews from the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth in the 17th century, are stored at the Russian State Archive of Early Acts in Moscow. While the publications of the archival sources pertaining to the subject, such as those by D. Feldman⁵³, T. Oparina⁵⁴, M. Prokopenko⁵⁵, have been utilized in the dissertation, the original manuscripts contained in the archive have also been examined, wherever possible, and referenced accordingly.

Of a crucial importance is the publication of primary sources related to ‘the Heresy of the Judaizers’ by Lurie and Kazakova⁵⁶. Furthermore, a principal consideration is given to the “*Registry and Inscriptions*” series, published in St. Petersburg between 1899-1913, which encompasses an extensive compilation of varied documented material containing references to Jews of Russia and the neighboring territories dating back to the 16th century⁵⁷. Also of prime relevance is the “*Archive of South-Western Ruthenia*”, published in Kiev between 1852-1914 by the “Temporary Committee for the Analysis of Ancient Acts”. The collection is comprised of sources from various archives of Ukraine,

⁵² Records of the Supreme Privy Council with details depicting business operations of the Jews in Russia in early 18th century were published in “*The Collection of the Imperial Historical Society of Russia*” (1888), Saint Petersburg.

⁵³ Feldman D., Minkina O. (2007): “*The Fair Jewess*” in *Russia XVII-XIX Centuries: Images and Realities*. Ancient Archive, Moscow; Feldman D. (2005): ““Pleading for Mercy are Old-Law Orphans...” *The Case of the Petitions of Jews of Breslau for the Baptism into Orthodoxy*” // *Historic Archive*, Moscow. No. 1. Pg. 198-202; Feldman D. (2009): “*And in Kazan the Jews are to be Ordered to Baptize...*” *The Documents Relating to the Transfer of Captive Jews to the Volga Region in 1655*. *Bulletin of the Hebrew University*, Moscow. Pg. 207-238; Feldman D. (2012): “*A Note from the Musketeer Office on the Baptized Jew Yaakov of 1667*”. (Parallels, Moscow. Pg. 181-188; Feldman D. (1999): “*The Unknown Investigation of the Kazan Judaizer Sect*”. *Publications of the Hebrew University: History. Culture. Civilization*. No. 2 (20). Moscow. Pg. 296-323; Feldman D. (1999): “*The Last Inquisitional Fire in Russia: The Moscow Investigation of the Case of Alexander Voznitsyn and Boroch Leibov 1738-1740*” *Parallels* No. 6-7. Appendix, Pg. 1-82 Moscow.

⁵⁴ Oparina T. (2009): “*The Audience of the Tsar as a Reward for Conversion to Orthodoxy // Spatial and Temporal Crossroads of Cultures*”. Altai State University publishing, Barnaul

⁵⁵ Prokopenko M. (2001): “*The ‘Jewish Motives’ of the Case Against Patriarch Nikon: The Denunciation of a Baptized Jew M. Afanasev to Tsar Aleksey Mikhailovich in 1666*”. *Publication of the Hebrew University*, Moscow. №6 (24), Pg. 349-366.; Prokopenko M. (2003): “*Baptized Jews Versus Patriarch Nikon: The Materials of the Investigation on Patriarch Nikon in 1666*” // *Jewish Moscow: Collection of Articles and Materials*”. MEKPO Publishing, Moscow. Pg. 330-338.

⁵⁶ Lurie Y., Kazakova N. (1955): “*Anti-Feudal Heretical Movements in Ruthenia XIV – Beginning of XVI Centuries*”. *Sciences*, Moscow-Leningrad.

⁵⁷ Polyakov Y. (1899-1913): “*Registers and Inscriptions. The Collection of Materials for the History of Jews in Russia*” *Jewish Historic-Ethnographic Society*, St. Petersburg.

Belarus and Lithuania, as well as of documents submitted to the Committee by private individuals, monasteries and various agencies. The archive contains documents dating from the 14th to the 18th centuries, numbers 37 volumes, and is arranged by subject, which includes the history of the Orthodox Church and religious relations (Vol. 1, 1883), acts related to the Jewish population (Vol. 5, 1890), and acts related to the Cossacks and the Bogdan Khmel'nitsky epoch (Vol. 3, 1898), amongst others⁵⁸.

The third group of sources encompasses the proceedings of criminal investigations pertaining to the acts of apostasy from Christianity to the Jewish faith, as well as legislative and other normative-regulatory documents enacted by the governmental and religious authorities concerning Jews and Judaism. Of principal importance is the published corpus of materials (decrees, records of the investigation and interrogation reports) on "*The Case of the Burning at the Stake of Captain-Lieutenant Alexander Voznitsyn for Apostasy into the Jewish Faith and Boruch Leib for Enticement*"⁵⁹. Also considered is the collection of documents pertaining to the investigation of the 'Judaizing' sect in Kazan stored at the Russian State Archive of Early Acts⁶⁰. For the citation of the enacted legislature, utilized was the Complete Collection of Laws of the Russian Empire⁶¹, as well as the compendium of laws relating to Jews compiled by V. Levanda⁶².

Historiography. The history of the Jewish-Christian relations in Ruthenia during the Early Modern period was made the subject of research for the first time in the late 19th-early 20th century. For the most part, the works produced during this period are greatly ideologized and emotionally charged; this applies to publications of both Slavic and Jewish historians. Thus, while the works devoted to the same problem intrinsically generated opposite assessments, the ideological position and the ethnic origin of the authors must be taken into consideration for the analysis of this kind of material.

⁵⁸ The Temporary Commission for the Analysis of Ancient Acts (1852-1914): "*Archive of South-Western Ruthenia*". Kiev.

⁵⁹ Markon I. (1913): "*The Case of the Burning at the Stake of Captain-Lieutenant Alexander Voznitsyn for Apostasy into the Jewish Faith and Boruch Leib for Enticement*". In "*Re-lived: A Journal Dedicated to the Social and Cultural History of Jews in Russia*". Typography of Fleitman I., Saint Petersburg. Vol. 4. Appendix, Pg. 81-112.

⁶⁰ Feldman D. (1999): "*The Unknown Investigation of the Kazan Judaizer Sect*". Publications of the Hebrew University: History. Culture. Civilization. No. 2 (20). Moscow. Pg. 296-323; The Russian State Archive of Early Acts. Fund 248, Anagraph 113, Case 169: "*Of the Sect of Judaizers in Kazan*".

⁶¹ The Complete Collection of Laws of the Russian Empire, from 1649 (1830). First edition, Saint Petersburg. URL: http://www.nlr.ru/e-res/law_r/coll.php?part=l.

⁶² Levanda V. (1874): "*The Complete Chronological Collection of Laws and Regulations Relating to Jews, from the Legal Code of Tsar Aleksey Mikhailovich to the Present Time*". Typography of K. Trubnikov, Saint Petersburg.

The ideological and emotional engagement is particularly perceptible in the discussion of the problem of baptized Jews in the Russian state. The reasons for such a morbid sentiment in relation to the conversion from Judaism are likely rooted in the realities of the second half of the 19th-early 20th centuries. The threat of assimilation, and the open manifestation of anti-Semitism (in the intellectual sphere, as well as physically in the form of pogroms), gave rise to a vigorous opposition from the Jewish intelligentsia. A vivid example – a renowned historian and activist S. Dubnow, who asserted that baptism inevitably led to the loss of a Jewish identity, and thus evaluated the phenomenon stringently negatively⁶³. The Jewish historian E. Frenk held the same position, maintaining that: “the greatest scourge for the Jews were the renegades. Not to mention the feeling of resentment caused by the instances of leaving the community, who had to suffer so much for the adherence to the religion of their fathers, the apostates became a misfortune for their relatives”⁶⁴. This phrase, depicting the situation of the 18th century, is an obvious extrapolation of the author’s personal attitude towards the realities of his time. For the Jewish intellectuals, baptism symbolized “the national suicide of distinct individuals”⁶⁵. This explains the reluctance to refer to an in-depth study of the phenomenon of the change of faith in the Jewish sphere. The notable exceptions were the sporadic publications depicting the biographies of prominent individuals of a Jewish origin who were on service at the Russian court, such as doctors Danila fon Gaden⁶⁶ and Antonio Sanchez⁶⁷, advisor to Peter the Great Peter Shafirov⁶⁸, and Count Anton Devier⁶⁹.

Until the 2000s, the only comprehensive work entirely devoted to converts from Judaism in the Early Modern Ruthenian lands was S. Ginsburg’s book “*Meshumadim in Tsarishn Russland*” (“*Converts in Tsarist Russia*”). This work, however, like many other essays belonging to this period, encompasses primarily a descriptive narration, and references are not provided. The focus of Ginsburg’s analysis became the same

⁶³ Dubnow S. (1913): “*On the Departing*” (*Letter to the Editorial Office*). Voshod Journal, Saint Petersburg, No. 29, table 6-8.

⁶⁴ Frenk E. (1914): “*Relations Between Jews and Christians*” // “*History of the Jewish People*”. Peace publishing, Moscow. Vol. XI, Pg. 388.

⁶⁵ Zombart V. (1912): “*Baptism of the Jews*”. Foreword by S. Vermel. Stolyar publishing, Saint Petersburg, Pg. 3.

⁶⁶ Berhin I. (1888): “*Two Jewish Doctors at the Moscow Court*”. Voshod Journal, Saint Petersburg, No. 3, Pg. 114.

⁶⁷ Gruzenberg S. (1898): “*Doctor Sanchez*”. Voshod Journal, Saint Petersburg. Book VII, Pg. 22-38.

⁶⁸ Trubin S. (1872): “*Nestlings of Peter the Great. 1701-1725. Materials*”. Russian Antiquity, Saint Petersburg. Vol. 5, No.6, Pg. 903-951.

⁶⁹ Shubinsky C. (1892): “*The First General of the Saint Petersburg Police*”. Typography of Suvorin A., Saint Petersburg. Vol. 48, Pg. 426-448.

prominent courtiers with Jewish roots widely depicted in the Russian historiography, such as Shafirov and Devier.

Virtually all of the aforementioned works predominantly concentrated on the biographical details of personages of a Jewish origin, whereas the phenomenon of the change of faith was not made the principal focus of the analysis. While the scale of Jewish conversions in the Early Modern Ruthenia remained unclear throughout the 20th century, in recent years, the interest of researchers in the subject had markedly increased. D. Feldman, a senior archivist at the Russian State Archive of Early Acts in Moscow had made a number of publications of archival sources related to the baptismal records of Jews in Russia during the period in question⁷⁰. Correspondingly, a notable case study on the subject was produced by T. Oparina, which depicts the conversion of a Polish Jew to Orthodoxy in the early 17th century⁷¹. An attempt to systemize the phenomenon of the Jewish conversion to Christianity across Eastern Europe had been made by W. Moscovich⁷², however his section on the 'Russian territories' addresses well-known figures such as Shafirov and Devier.

The problem of coerced baptisms of Jews during the Cossack uprising in Ukraine (1648-1656) had been addressed in the writings of M. Mieses⁷³, M. Nadav⁷⁴, E. Fram⁷⁵, J.

⁷⁰ Feldman D., Minkina O. (2007): *"The Fair Jewess" in Russia XVII-XIX Centuries: Images and Realities*". Ancient Archive, Moscow; Feldman D. (2005): *"Pleading for Mercy are Old-Law Orphans..." The Case of the Petitions of Jews of Breslau for the Baptism into Orthodoxy* // Historic Archive, Moscow. No. 1. Pg. 198-202; Feldman D. (2009): *"And in Kazan the Jews are to be Ordered to Baptize..." The Documents Relating to the Transfer of Captive Jews to the Volga Region in 1655*". Bulletin of the Hebrew University, Moscow. Pg. 207-238; Feldman D. (2012): *"A Note from the Musketeer Office on the Baptized Jew Yaakov of 1667"*. (Parallels, Moscow. Pg. 181-188; Feldman D. (1999): *"The Unknown Investigation of the Kazan Judaizer Sect"*. Publications of the Hebrew University: History. Culture. Civilization. No. 2 (20). Moscow. Pg. 296-323; Feldman D. (1999): *"The Last Inquisitional Fire in Russia: The Moscow Investigation of the Case of Alexander Voznitsyn and Borocho Leibov 1738-1740"* Parallels No. 6-7. Appendix, Pg. 1-82 Moscow.

⁷¹ Oparina T. (2009): *"The Audience of the Tsar as a Reward for Conversion to Orthodoxy // Spatial and Temporal Crossroads of Cultures"*. Altai State University publishing, Barnaul.

⁷² Moscovich W. (2003): *"Attitudes Towards Baptized Jews in Eastern Europe in the 17-18th Centuries"// "Jewish-Polish and Jewish Russian Contacts"*. Israel Academy of Sciences and Humanities, Jerusalem, Gdansk. Jews and Slavs Vol. 11, Pg. 79-87.

⁷³ Mieses M. (1939): *"The Participation of Polish Jews in the Wars of Pre-Partition"*. Maor publishing, Warsaw.

⁷⁴ Nadav M. (1984): *"The Jewish Community of Nemyriv in 1648: Their Massacre and Loyalty Oath to the Cossacks"*. Harvard Ukrainian Research Institute, Cambridge. Harvard Ukrainian Studies, Vol. VIII. No3/4. Pg. 376-387.

⁷⁵ Fram E. (1996): *"Between 1096-1548 - New Analysis"*. The Historical Society of Israel, Jerusalem. Zion, Vol. 61, No. 2. Pg. 164.

Katz⁷⁶, S. Plokhii⁷⁷. These scholars had expressed divergent assessments of the genesis of the conversions. Pointing to the fact the Cossacks did not kill the Jews who accepted Orthodoxy, Mises argued that the animosity against the Jews was based on religious differences rather than on ethnic hatred or social inequality. Fram, however, maintained that for the rebels, the social, economic and political motives prevailed over the religious, and the Jews, being aware of the causes of the rebellion, accepted Orthodoxy “by their own free will”, thus saving their lives. Plokhii, in turn, contended that while the Catholics, not the Jews, were the main enemies of the rebels, the Cossack leadership endorsed the practice of forced baptisms of the Jews nonetheless. While Nadav demonstrated that Jewish conversions to Orthodoxy were accompanied by an oath of fidelity to the Cossacks, Katz asserted that the practice of martyrdom in the name of the faith (“*kiddush ha-shem*”) by the Jews depicts that the Cossacks offered the Jews a choice between conversion and death.

Considerable research has been conducted on the conversion of Jews to Christianity in the Early Modern Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth and other European territories. Particularly relevant are the works of M. Teter, who in her numerous publications had examined cases of Jewish conversions to Catholicism in Poland based on the analysis of primary materials. Teter’s research has depicted the accounts of both the proselytizing efforts of the Catholic Church directed at the Jewish communities⁷⁸, as well as the cases of voluntary conversions to Christianity based not only on ideological convictions, but also motivated by the desire to improve one’s social standing, and for financial gain⁷⁹. In his research on the subject, A. Kazmierczyk had addressed the question of whether the phenomenon was ever a realistic threat for the Jewish community, concluding that it was predominantly of a marginal character⁸⁰. E. Carlebach’s examination of the autobiographies produced by Jewish converts to Christianity in the Early Modern German lands revealed that while Christians generally did not consider their baptisms as ‘true conversions’, the elements of their Jewish

⁷⁶ Katz J. (1997): *“On the Events of 1096 and 1648”*. The Historical Society of Israel, Jerusalem. Zion, Vol. 62.

⁷⁷ Plokhii S. (2001): *“The Cossacks and Religion in Early Modern Ukraine”*. Oxford University press, Oxford.

⁷⁸ Teter M. (2003): *“Jewish Conversions to Catholicism in the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth of the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries”*. Springer publishing, New York. Jewish History. Vol. 17, No 3. Pg. 257-283.

⁷⁹ Teter M., Fram E. (2006): *“Apostasy, Fraud, and the Beginnings of Hebrew Printing in Cracow”*. AJS Review Vol. 30:1. Cambridge University Press. Pg. 31-66.

⁸⁰ Kazmierczyk A. (2009): *“Conversion in the 17th–18th Centuries: a Serious Problem?” // Between Coexistence and Divorce: 25 Years of Research on the History and Culture of Polish Jewry and Polish–Jewish Relations*. International Conference. The Hebrew University of Jerusalem, March 17–19.

identities were never fully eradicated⁸¹. In a paper addressing Jewish conversions to Christianity in Medieval Europe, P. Tartakoff maintained that according to the Christian theology of the time, in order for Christianity to be true, Judaism had to be misguided⁸². While Jewish conversions to Christianity constituted a religious victory for the Christian authorities across Western Europe, for the Jews they represented a religious defeat – in the context of this theological jostling for preeminence, apostasy to Christianity involved surrendering to an age-old rival⁸³. Extensive research has been conducted on the conversion of Jews to Catholicism in the Iberian Peninsula during the period of the Inquisition, including notable publications by N. Roth⁸⁴, D. Graizbord⁸⁵, and J. Amelang⁸⁶. The findings have revealed that amongst the apostates there were those who persisted to adhere to the tenets of Judaism in secret, however that entailed a severe social stigma that the renegades bore by the virtue of being confessional ‘border crossers’.

The comparison with the later practice of Jewish baptisms in the Russian Empire was conducted on the basis of the dissertation of E. Schainker⁸⁷. Correspondingly, examined was the dissertation of C. Levin, which addresses Jewish conversion to Christianity in Medieval Northern Europe⁸⁸. The specifics of the formation of the conventional perceptions and stereotypes of the Jewish – Christian Orthodox relations are discussed in the publications of O. Belova and V. Petruhin⁸⁹. Referring to the historical-

⁸¹ Carlebach E. (2001): *“Divided Souls. Converts from Judaism in Germany 1500-1750”*. New Haven&London, Yale University Press.

⁸² Tartakoff P. (2015): *“Testing Boundaries: Jewish Conversion and Cultural Fluidity in Medieval Europe, c. 1200–1391”*. *Speculum* Vol. 90, Issue 03. The Medieval Academy of America, Cambridge. Pg. 736.

⁸³ Ibid., Pg. 737.

⁸⁴ Roth N. (2002): *“Conversos, Inquisition, and the Expulsion of the Jews from Spain”*. University of Wisconsin Press, Madison.

⁸⁵ Graizbord D. (2004): *“Souls in Dispute. Converso Identities in Iberia and the Jewish Diaspora”*. University of Pennsylvania Press, Philadelphia.

⁸⁶ Amelang J. (2013): *“Parallel Histories. Muslims and Jews in Inquisitorial Spain”*. Louisiana State University Press, Baton Rouge.

⁸⁷ Schainker E. (2010): *“Imperial Hybrids” Jewish Conversions in Russia in the Nineteenth Century*. A PhD dissertation, University of Pennsylvania.

⁸⁸ Levin C. (2006): *“Jewish Conversion to Christianity in Medieval Northern Europe. Encountered and Imagined, 1100-1300”*. New York University.

⁸⁹ Belova O., Petruhin V. (2007): *““The Jewish Myth” in Slavic Culture”*. Gesharim, Moscow; Belova O. (2006): *“The Religious Practices of the Jews Through the Eyes of Slavs”// “Religious Practices in Modern Russia”*. New Publishing, Moscow. Pg. 111-133.; Belova O. (2003): *“Ours or Foreign? Jews and Slavs Through the Eyes of Each Other. Collection of Essays”*. Sefer Publishing, Moscow.

cultural context and the analysis of the social origin of the Polish-Lithuanian Jewry, utilized was the research of M. Teter⁹⁰, G. Hundert⁹¹, G. Scholem⁹², S. Stampfer⁹³, J. Doktor⁹⁴, J. Kalik⁹⁵ to name a few. The problem of the integration of foreigners and the concept of ‘foreignism’ in Muscovy had been addressed in the publications of T. Oparina⁹⁶, V. Kovringina⁹⁷, and M. Khodarkovsky⁹⁸.

The question of Jewish proselytism in the Ruthenian lands correspondingly began to be addressed by scholars in the mid-19th century, albeit with diligent caution. Writing on the ‘Jewish question’, a Russian novelist N. Leskov maintained that “while the Jews, like all deeply religious people, are inherently predispositioned towards proselytizing their faith... the old Muscovite concern of the Jews encompassing a danger to the Orthodox faith is unsubstantiated”, and was accordingly critical of the existing governmental regulations addressing this matter⁹⁹. Making a reference to the infamous ‘Judaizer heresy’ of Novgorod and Moscow (c. 1471-1504) and “Skhariya the Jew”, who is “attributed with the implantation and spread of Judaic teachings in Russia”, Leskov

⁹⁰ Teter M. (2006): *Jews and Heretics in Catholic Poland: A Beleaguered Church in the Post-Reformation Era*. Cambridge University Press, New York.

⁹¹ Hundert G. (2004): *Jews in Poland-Lithuania in the Eighteenth Century: A Genealogy of Modernity*. University of California Press, Berkeley.

⁹² Scholem G. (1971): *Redemption Through Sin // The Messianic Idea in Judaism and Other Essays on Jewish Spirituality*. Schocken Books, New York. Pg. 78-141.

⁹³ Stampfer S. (2003): *What Actually Happened to the Jews of Ukraine in 1648*. Springer publishing, New York. Jewish History. Vol. 17, No 2. Pg. 207-227.

⁹⁴ Doktor J. (2004): *Conversions within Shabbatianism*. Institute of Jewish History, Warsaw. Jewish History Quarterly, No. 1 (209).

⁹⁵ Kalik J. (2003): *The Orthodox Church and the Jews in the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth*. Springer publishing, New York. Jewish History. Vol. 17, No 2. Pg. 229-237.

⁹⁶ Oparina T. (2007): *Foreigners in Russia XVI-XVII Centuries. Essays on Historical Biography and Genealogy*. Progress Tradition, Moscow.

⁹⁷ Kovringina V. (1998): *The German Quarter in Moscow and its Inhabitants at the end of XVII-First Quarter of XVIII centuries.* Archeographic Center, Moscow.

⁹⁸ Khodarkovsky M. (2001): *The Conversion of Non-Christians in Early Modern Russia // Of Religion and Empire: Missions, Conversion, and Tolerance in Tsarist Russia*. Cornell University Press, Ithaca and London. Pg. 115-143.

⁹⁹ Leskov N. (1883): *Jews in Russia: a Few Remarks on the Jewish Question*. Reprint 1919, Petrograd publishing, Saint Petersburg. Part 1, Pg. 4.

argued that Skhariya himself “detached from Orthodox Judaism” and accordingly “the Jewish people are not responsible before Christianity for his actions”¹⁰⁰.

The first historian who drew attention to the ‘Judaizer heresy’ as a historical phenomenon was Vasili Tatishchev¹⁰¹, although his account had been criticized for the distortion of sources¹⁰². The historians who contended that elements of Judaic doctrine were at the core of the heretical movement that beleaguered the Church for centuries to come included Kazansky¹⁰³, Berlin¹⁰⁴, and Speranski¹⁰⁵. Sobolevskii, in turn, composed a list of the ‘literature of the Judaizers’, which included works of a Jewish origin referenced in the writings of the principal opponent of the Judaizers archbishop Gennady Gonozov, such as Immanuel ben Jacob Bonfils’ “*Six Wings*” and Maimonides’ “*Logic*”¹⁰⁶. In the Soviet historiography, the term ‘Judaizers’ was used with great reservation, and the ‘Judaizer heresy’ was predominantly referred to as the ‘Novgorod-Moscow heresy’. In his analysis, one of most authoritative experts on the sources pertaining to the subject Y. Lurie had identified the heresy to have been an anti-feudal, reformative-humanitarian movement and categorically denied its association with Judaism¹⁰⁷. An attempt unique for the Soviet period to offer a new perspective on the origin of the heresy was undertaken by G. Prohorov, who contended that a decisive role in its origin was played not by Talmudic Jews, but rather by the Karaites, for whom the practice of proselytism was inherent¹⁰⁸.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid.

¹⁰¹ Tatishchev V. (1847): “*Russian History Dating Back to the Most Ancient Times*”. Imperial Moscow University. Book 5, No.4. Pg. 109-111.

¹⁰² Lurie Y. (1955) “*The Novgorod-Moscow Heresy of the end of XV-Beginning of XVI Centuries*”. In “*Anti-feudal Heretical Movements in Ruthenia XIV – Beginning of XVI Centuries*”. Sciences, Moscow-Leningrad. Pg. 76-77.

¹⁰³ Kazansky P. (1849): “*The Venerable Josef of Volokolamsk*”// “*Additions to the Works of the Holy Fathers in Russian Translations*”. Moscow, Pg. 224-270.

¹⁰⁴ Berlin I. (1910): “*The Judaizer Heresy*”// “*Jewish Encyclopedia*”. Brokgaus and Efron publishing, Saint Petersburg. Vol. 7, Table 577-582.

¹⁰⁵ Speranski M. (1907): “*The Psalter of the Judaizers in the Translation of Feodor the Jew*”. Readings at the Imperial Society of Russian History and Antiquity at Moscow University, Moscow. Vol. II, Pg. 13, 18, 38-39.

¹⁰⁶ Sobolevski A. (1903): “*Translated Literature of Moscow Ruthenia in XIV-XVII Centuries*”. Typography of the Imperial Academy of Sciences, Saint Petersburg. Pg. 396-428.

¹⁰⁷ Lurie Y. (1957): “*On the Question of the Ideology of Nil Sorkski*.” Works of the Department of Ancient Russian Literature, Leningrad. Vol. 13, Pg. 221, 222.

¹⁰⁸ Prohorov G. (1972): “*The Debate of Gregory Palamas with “Chione and Turks” and the Problem of “Judaizer Subtilize*”. Works of the Department of Ancient Russian Literature, Leningrad. Vol. 17, Pg. 339-369.

J. Bruckus¹⁰⁹, and subsequently M. Taube¹¹⁰, had put forward substantial evidence identifying Skhariya the heresiarch to be one with Zacharia ben Aaron ha-Kohen of Kiev, a Jewish copyist and annotator who in the second half of the 15th century translated and transcribed a number of astronomical, philosophical and metaphysical works in Hebrew. Furthermore, in a series of publications, M. Taube demonstrated the connection between the Judaizer movement and the Ruthenian translations of Hebrew texts made in Kiev by Jews in the second half of the 15th century¹¹¹. Based on the analysis of the contemporaneous Kabbalistic works of Rabbi Moses ben Jacob ha-Goleh (the Exile) of Kiev, M. Schneider¹¹² had proposed that the theological-eschatological convictions of the prominent Kievan Rabbi, which promulgated the importance of proselytes for the advent of the Messianic Age, serve as the missing link between the Ruthenian translations from Hebrew and the spread of these texts amongst the Orthodox faithful of Novgorod and Moscow.

M. Muslow and R. Popkin¹¹³ made an attempt at outlining most of the known cases of conversion from Christianity to Judaism across Europe from the 16th to the early 18th century. Their book includes a brief account of the apostasy to Judaism of the retired Russian navy captain Alexander Voznitsyn under the guidance of a Jewish tax farmer Boruch Leibov, and their eventual execution by burning at the stake. The scholars concluded that “while Jews generally converted to Christianity for social, economic, or political reasons, in the case of conversions to Judaism, it were usually powerful intellectual and personal reasons that motivated the convert to leave the dominant Christian world for the insecurity of the marginalized Jewish community”. Accordingly, in their research on the Jewish diaspora of Bosphorus, Kashaev and Kashkovskaya¹¹⁴

¹⁰⁹ Bruckus J. (1930): *“Judaisierende”*. Encyclopaedia Judaica 9. cols., Berlin. Pg. 520–522.

¹¹⁰ Taube M. (1995): *“The Kievan Jew Zacharia and the Astronomical Works of the Judaizers”*. Jews and Slavs Vol. 3, Jerusalem. Pg. 168-175.

¹¹¹ Taube M. (2005): *“The Fifteenth Century Ruthenian Translations from Hebrew and the Heresy of the Judaizers: Is There a Connection?”*// *“Speculum Slaviae Orientalis: Muscovy, Ruthenia and Lithuania in the Late Middle Ages”*. Ed. by V. Ivanov. OGI, Moscow. Pg. 185-208; Taube M. (1995): *“The “Poem on the Soul” in the Laodicean Epistle and the Literature of the Judaizers”*. Harvard Ukrainian Studies, Cambridge. Vol. XIX. P. 671 -685; Taube M. (2010): *“Transmission of Scientific Texts in 15th-Century Eastern Knaan”*. Aleph: Historical Studies in Science and Judaism, Vol. 10, issue 2. Indiana University Press. Pg. 315-353.

¹¹² Schneider M. (2014): *“The “Judaizers” of Muscovite Russia and Kabbalistic Eschatology”*. In *“The Knaanites: Jews in the Medieval Slavic World”*. Jews and Slavs, Vol. 24. Bridges of Culture publishing, Moscow. Pg. 244.

¹¹³ Muslow M., Popkin R. (2004): *“Secret Conversions to Judaism in Early Modern Europe”*. Brill, Leiden.

¹¹⁴ Kashaev S., Kashkovskaya N. (2009): *“Archeological Data on the Jewish Diaspora on Bosphorus//Archeologia Abrahamica: Research in the Area of Archeology and Traditions of*

revealed that a form of proselytism was practiced by the Jewish communities of the region up to the Modern period, thereby “setting the stage for changes in the ethnic composition of the communities for the future”.

In a similar vein, addressing the phenomenon of Christian apostasy to Judaism in the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, M. Teter published a thorough account of the legendary Ger Zedek (“righteous convert”) of Vilnius¹¹⁵. Teter has demonstrated that the renowned tale that glorifies the conversion to Judaism and the subsequent martyrdom of a Polish Duke Walentyn Potocki, is likely based on the case of Rafal Sentimani, a Croat man whom, in 1753, the Lithuanian Tribunal condemned to death by burning for the apostasy from Catholicism to Judaism. In that regard, based on the analysis of the writings of the contemporaneous Polish Rabbis, Teter noted that in contrast to the Christians, who viewed Jewish conversions to Christianity in triumphalist terms as proof of the verity of their faith, the Jewish religious leaders took a very ambiguous position towards converts to Judaism, only rarely expressing a sense of triumph in such cases. Exploiting various archival records, in the same publication Teter had presented an additional number of cases of Christian apostasy to Judaism that occurred in Polish controlled territories during the Early Modern Period, most of which ended in the martyrdom of the apostates.

On the question of Catholic apostasy to Judaism in the Early Modern Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth also notable is the publication of H. Węgrzynek¹¹⁶. Her research showed that in the aftermath of the reformation, the weakened Roman Catholic Church in Poland, ravished by the anxieties of Judaic proselytism, sought to prevent excessively close contacts between Catholics and Jews.

Novelty. The presented dissertational research offers a cross-dimensional perspective to the study of the change of faith in the Jewish sphere in the Polish-Russian borderlands, and Muscovy proper, during the Early Modern Period. Based on the examination of the primary sources and archival materials, scrutinized are the issues of the adaptation of Jewish apostates in the Christian Orthodox realm in the context of the anxieties related to Judaic proselytism and ‘Judaizing’, which were prevalent in the Ruthenian societies of the time. While considerable research had been conducted on the Jewish-Christian religious symbiosis in Western and Central Europe, this study directs its focus on the conjuncture of the proselytism and apostasy phenomena in the continent’s Eastern territories incorporated under the spiritual domain of the Christian Orthodox Church.

Judaism, Christianity and Islam”. Russian Academy of Sciences, Institute of Archeology, Moscow. Pg. 55-78.

¹¹⁵ Teter M. (2005): *“The Legend of Ger Zedek of Wilno as Polemic and Reassurance”*. AJS Review No. 29:2. Cambridge University Press. Pg. 237-263.

¹¹⁶ Węgrzynek H. (2005): *“Was the Catholic Church in Poland Afraid of Conversions to Judaism in the Early 16th Century?”*. Institute of Jewish History, Warsaw. Jewish History Quarterly, No. 1, Pg. 7-15.

The investigation into the processes of the alteration of a confessional adherence in Ruthenian lands requires the identification and demarcation of the ideological, symbolic, cultural and territorial-geographic frontiers, which separated the ethno-confessional communities of the region. Accordingly, the analysis of the premises, stimuli and proselytizing forces that caused an individual to renounce his or her faith in favor of a contending religious doctrine, divulges the foundations of the societal cohesion and stratification of the Early Modern Jewish and Christian-Orthodox communities. Thus, the particularities of the relations between former co-religionists serve as the indicators of Jewish self-identification¹¹⁷. The acquaintance with a foreign religion and culture, information on the social and/or spiritual benefits offered by the change of religious allegiance transpired through the interaction (intentional or accidental) with the representatives of the other confession. In this regard, the analysis of the interpersonal and intercultural relations compels to revise the conception of the isolation of the Jewish community from external contacts and influence.

In historiographical works, particularly of Jewish origins, the baptism of Jews was regarded as a marginal phenomenon, and the very act of conversion was interpreted as an involuntary demeanor, performed due to external pressure or out of despair. Thus, in a monograph on Jewish presence in Russia in the 17th-18th centuries, J. Kalik maintained that “most of the baptized Jews, if not the majority, considered themselves to have been *anusim* (forced converts), and returned to Judaism at the earliest opportunity to do so...In most cases Christened Jews reverted back to Judaism as soon as they were able to escape from the Russian territory”¹¹⁸. While the veracity of this depiction and actuality of such occurrences is undeniable, the sources examined in the presented dissertational study reveal that conscious conversions of Jews to Orthodox Christianity and their voluntary settlement in the Russian state had also transpired throughout the Early Modern period.

Traditional historiography generally depicted Jews as victims of zealous proselytism imposed by the dominant Christian realm. Within the framework of the presented dissertational research, the adherents of Judaism appear as ideologically motivated parties that were concurrently involved in the dissemination of their faith amongst the Orthodox faithful. Despite the pronouncements against the practice of proselytism and the acceptance of converts by prominent Rabbinical authorities (i.e. Rabbi Solomon Luria in 1565¹¹⁹) and regulating institutions (i.e. the Rabbinical Council of Lithuania repeatedly in 1644 and 1647¹²⁰), the evidence presented in this study

¹¹⁷ Magnus S. (2010): “*Good Bad Jews: Converts, Conversion, and Boundary Redrawing in Modern Russian Jewry: Notes Toward a New Category // Boundaries of Jewish Identity*”. Ed. by Glenn S. and Sokoloff N. University of Washington Press, Seattle. P. 132-160

¹¹⁸ Kalik J. (2010): “*Jewish Presence in Russia in XVI-XVIII Centuries*”. // “*History of the Jewish People in Russia. From the Ancient Times Until the Early Modern Period*”. Bridges of Culture, Moscow. Pg. 328.

¹¹⁹ Lurie S. (1565): “*The Sea of Solomon*”. Wahrman publishing, Jerusalem (1995). *Yevamoth* 4.49.

¹²⁰ Teter M. (2005): “*The Legend of Ger Zedek of Wilno as Polemic and Reassurance*”. AJS Review No. 29:2. Cambridge University Press. Pg. 244.

contends that Jews conducted proselytizing activity in the Early Modern Ruthenian lands nonetheless. Accordingly, the Christian perceptions of Judaism as a proselytizing religion, accompanied by the related anxieties and suspicions, were to a certain degree justified in rare instances.

Research Methods. The methodological basis of the dissertation is determined in accordance with the specificity of the source base and the objectives of the research, and manifests an interdisciplinary character. The systematization of the examined sources is implemented by applying the historical-comparative methods¹²¹, in order to place the historical relevance and cross-cultural variation at the center of the data collection and analysis. Textual analysis serves as the basis for the identification of recurring themes, narratives and images used in various polemical texts and chronicles, produced in the Early Modern Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth and Russia, pertaining to Jews and Judaism, and for the juxtaposition of their content with archival material, such as governmental and ecclesiastical records, personal and official correspondence, legislative documents, etc.

The dissertation comprises a junction between two types of narrations. The first is based on the micro-historical approach¹²², which entails research into the unique life experiences of individuals, functioning in the specific historical and cultural circumstances. While this approach is bound by our personal theoretical framework and a predetermined agenda, it encompasses the analysis of singular facts, or events – in this case, instances of religious alteration of individuals belonging to Jewish and Slavic-Orthodox ethno-confessional groups, with the objective of addressing the questions pertaining to the phenomena of proselytism and apostasy in the Early Modern Ruthenian lands. The second type relates to parallelism¹²³ - a more traditional typological approach, applied for the identification, comparison, explanation and essentially systemization of significant events, actors and social processes within the framework of an established paradigm. The aim of such a narration is to correlate the fragments of available sources with a broader contextual dimension – the relations between Jews and Orthodox Christians in the geographical area and time period in consideration. The synthesis of these approaches, conjoining the ‘individual’ and the ‘stereotypical’, acts to delimit the scope of the phenomenon, and to determine the spectrum of possibilities available to a person in a specific cultural and historical context.

While the analysis of the ideological exchange between Judaism and Christianity is conducted in the background of events that are separated by decades and, at times, by centuries, such as ‘the Judaizer heresy’, the investigation of Alexander Voznitsyn’s

¹²¹ Neuman L. (2006): *“Social Research Methods: Qualitative and Quantitative Approaches.”* 6th edition. Pearson, Boston.

¹²² Ginzburg C. (2012): *“Microhistory, Two or Three Things That I Know About It.”* In *“Threads and Traces”*, University of California Press, Berkeley. Chapter 14, Pg. 193-214.

¹²³ Wells M. (2002): *“Parallelism: A Handbook of Social Analysis. The Study of Revolution & Hegemonic War.”* Xlibris publishing, Bloomington.

apostasy to Judaism, the Cossack uprising and the Russo-Polish wars, the contextualization of the local realities with their immediate environments is given primary consideration. Although the work does not claim to be a complete systemization of the patterns of Jewish-Christian Orthodox relations and the degrees of influence on one another's beliefs, through the examination of distinctive varieties of proselytism and apostasy between the two faiths in the Early Modern Ruthenian lands, an attempt is made at providing an insight into the complex network of intellectual, social and religious correlations that existed between the two communities.

Structure of the Dissertation. The dissertation is composed of an introduction, four chapters, a conclusion and a bibliography. The order of the chapters is arranged in accordance with the succession of the cross-confessional confrontation between Jews and Orthodox Christians in the Ruthenian Lands during the Early Modern Period. The first chapter discusses the manifestation and consequences of Jewish proselytism in the Russian state through the examination of an event that left a significant mark in the history of the Russian Orthodox Church, and Jewish – Christian Orthodox relations, denoted in ecclesiastical and scholarly terminology as ‘the Heresy of the Judaizers’. The second chapter assesses the specificity of Jewish apostasy to Orthodoxy in the 17th century, relative to the perception of Judaism as a contending and threatening religion by the Russian Church, governmental authorities and general population alike. The third chapter analyses the phenomenon of forceful coercion of Jews into the Orthodox faith during the Cossack uprising and the implications of the transformation of the Jewish confessional identity for both Jews and Christians. Through the examination of the criminal investigations pertaining to the acts of Judaic proselytism and apostasy of Orthodox faithful in Imperial Russia, the fourth chapter evaluates the impact of religious contention on the enactment of state policies concerning Jews, Judaism and the eminence of baptism. The conclusion enunciates the extrapolations made in the context of the dissertational study.

Chapter 1: Judaic Proselytization in Medieval and Early Modern Ruthenian Lands: The Case of the Judaizer Heresy

After the fall of Constantinople and the forfeiture of independence by Bulgaria and Serbia, at the end of the 15th century Muscovy represented the sole remaining realm of Christian Orthodox ecumene, the might of which was constantly growing. According to the chronology of the time period, however, the year 7000 of the utilized Byzantine calendar (1492 from the birth of Christ) was associated with the end of the world and Final Judgment. While such anxieties predominantly remained the property of a narrow circle of monks, Moscow's political achievements demonstrated to its princes that they were favored by the heavens. Although the connotation of Moscow as the Third Rome did not emerge for another few decades, the semblance of Moscow with Jerusalem and Second Constantinople was already in use¹²⁴. Yet, at the court of Ivan III, who seemed to be destined to become the sole guardian and zealot of the Orthodox faith, as well as within the highest ranks of the Russian clergy, appeared individuals whom contemporaries accused of betraying the Orthodox dogmas and of the practice of Judaism. Such a course of events has naturally been perceived with an apparent dissonance, as a combination of the improbable; the acceptance of the possibility that these events are backed by tangible facts is prevented by an obvious incongruity.

The phenomenon of the "Judaizer Heresy" receives the greatest attention amidst the heretical movements in Medieval and Early Modern Russia. Rarely is this episode excluded from the works on the history of Russia of 15th-16th centuries. Correspondingly, the widest range of opinions amongst researchers can be observed on this subject. While in the Soviet historiography the heresy of the Judaizers was largely perceived in accordance with Marxist postulates as a mass anti-feudal movement¹²⁵, contemporary researchers tend to define the heresy predominantly as an ideological phenomenon¹²⁶. Some believe this movement to be genetically and typologically close to the spiritual

¹²⁴ The expression "New Jerusalem" is contained in one of the manuscripts of a preface to an Easter Computus, composed in 1492-1494 by Metropolitan Zosima. In another manuscript of the preface, Moscow is named the "New Constantinople". In Tikhonyuk I. (1986): *"Easter Computus of Metropolitan Zosima of Moscow // Research on the Sources of History of the USSR XIII – XVIII centuries"*. Sciences, Moscow. Pg. 54-55.

¹²⁵ Rybakov B. (1934): *"Militant Clerics of XVI Century"*. Anti-religion journal, Moscow. vol. 3, Pg. 31-34; Lurie Y., Kazakova N. (1955): *"Anti-feudal Heretical Movements in Ruthenia XIV – Beginning of XVI Centuries"*. Sciences, Moscow-Leningrad; Lurie Y. (1960): *"Russian Writing at the End of XV – Beginning of XVI Centuries"*. Sciences, Moscow-Leningrad; Klibanov A. (1960): *"Reformation Movements in Russia in the First Half of XVI Centuries"*. Sciences, Moscow.

¹²⁶ Turilov A., Chernenov A. (1989): *"On the Cultural-Historical Characteristics of the Heresy of the Judaizers // Hermeneutics of Ancient Russian Literature XI-XVI Centuries"*. Gorky Institute of World Literature, Moscow. Pg. 409; Korenevsky A. (2001): *"New Israel and Holy Russia: Ethno-Confessional and Socio-Cultural Aspects of Medieval Russian Judaizer Heresy"*. Ab Imperio, Moscow. No. 3, Pg. 134-137.

movements of the Renaissance¹²⁷, whilst others find it appropriate to compare the Judaizers with the Hussites and the Waldensians¹²⁸. For some, the Judaizer movement is a symbol of a spiritual peregrination and freedom of thought¹²⁹, for others – a group of devious schemers, who employed the technique of conspiracy in order to manipulate factions at the royal court¹³⁰.

Differently assessed is the role of the Jewish factor in the genesis of the heresy: from its recognition as primary¹³¹, to its total negation¹³². All of the diverse perspectives on the essence of the heresy can be reduced to two fundamental conceptions. According to the conception of proselytism, the Judaizer heresy constitutes one of the most successful attempts of the conversion of Orthodox Christians to Judaism, or at least to the adherence and practice of certain Judaic rituals, in the history of Jewish-Christian Orthodox relations in Eastern Europe. The other conception contends that the heretics constituted the first rationalist sect in the history of Russia, which rejected the Christian dogmas such as the Holy Trinity, the Incarnation and the Resurrection. In this case, the phenomenon of ‘Judaizing’ is considered within the context of the anti-Trinitarian movements, which emerged across various European countries during the threshold of the transition from the Middle Ages to the Early Modern period. According to Seebohm’s conception, however, the Judaizer heresy was an original Russian phenomenon, which emerged due to a conflict between the hierarchy of the dominant Orthodox establishment and the members of the White Clergy, backed by a circle of educated noblemen at the Moscow court, who strived to reform the Church based on the principles of rationalism¹³³. The appeal of the heretics to the texts of the Old Testament, as well as to

¹²⁷ Lilienfeld F. (1976): *“John Trithemius and Fedor Kuritsyn (On Some Features Of the Early Renaissance in Ruthenia and Germany)” // “Cultural Heritage of Ancient Ruthenia”*. Sciences, Moscow. Pg. 116-123.

¹²⁸ Begunov Y. (1996): *“Yan Gus and Eastern Slavs”*. Words of the Division of Ancient Russian Literature. Pushkin House, Saint Petersburg. Vol. 49.

¹²⁹ Konchev H. (1992): *“More on the Issue of the Essence of the Heresy of Judaizers in the Balkans and Russia in IX – XV Centuries // Russian-Balkan Cultural Links in the Middle Ages”*. BAN publishing, Sofia. Pg. 75-78.

¹³⁰ Froyanov I. (2007): *“The Drama Of Russian History: On the Road to Oprichnina”*. Parad publishing, Moscow. Pg. 45.

¹³¹ Ettinger S. (1995): *“Influence of Jews on the Judaizer Heresy in Muscovy”*. The Hebrew University, Jerusalem. Jews & Slavs, Vol. 4.

¹³² Howlett Y. (1993): *“The Testimony of Archbishop Gennady on the Heresy of “Novgorod Heretics Judaizer Philosophizers””*. Words of the Division of Ancient Russian Literature. Pushkin House, Saint Petersburg. Vol. 46. Pg. 53-61.

¹³³ Seebohm T. (1977): *“Ratio und Charisma: Ansätze und Ausbildung Eines Philosophischen und Wissenschaftlichen Weltverständnisses im Moskauer Russland”*. Mainzer philosophische Forschungen, Bd. 17. Bouvier publishing, Bohn. Pg. 194-201.

other texts of a Jewish origin, gave their opponents grounds to accuse them of being Judaizing apostates¹³⁴.

The question of the scale of Jewish proselytism during the Middle Ages and the Early Modern period remains a matter of dispute¹³⁵. Whilst Judaism is predominantly regarded as a non-proselytizing religion, in a sense that its tenets do not require active engagement in seeking proselytes, the Jewish faith does nonetheless accept converts into its fold, and possesses a sense of a mission: to shed light unto the nations¹³⁶. Accordingly, is it possible that in the background of the persecution of Jewish communities across Europe during the 14th-15th centuries, a certain Jewish faction (of Kiev) made an attempt to acquire new prospects in barbaric Muscovy, within the territory of which a Jewish population did not exist? Is it conceivable that in a country where baptism took place five hundred years prior, and where the Orthodox faith had germinated deep and robust roots, high-ranking members of the clergy were amongst the first to deviate from Christianity and embrace the heretical teachings? Finally, is it plausible that while these very priests became the rectors of Kremlin cathedrals, their followers felt at ease at the court of the Grand Duke and heir to the throne, Prince Dmitry Ivanovich, who became the first regent in Russian history to be crowned according to the Byzantine rite? If, however, these accounts are fictional, then what were the motives behind their creation and dissemination?

The primary material on the Judaizer Heresy is contained in the writings of the Novgorod archbishop Gennady Gonozov, as well as of the abbot of the Volokolamsk monastery Josef Sanin (Volotsky). While Gennady's epistles are firmly dated to have been written between 1487-1490, the chronology of Volotsky's essays and the time of the writing of his principal work "*The Book on Heretics*", which according to a later tradition became known as "*The Enlightener*", is not as clear and has been a matter of dispute. Thus, Panov had suggested that the first 4 parts of Volotsky's treatise were written around 1488, and the rest of the work – not earlier than 1493 and around 1500¹³⁷. Metropolitan Macarius Bulgakov maintained that Volotsky gradually produced the work

¹³⁴ Ibid., Pg. 117.

¹³⁵ Golb N. (1987): "*Jewish Proselytism: A Phenomenon in the Religious History of Early Medieval Europe*". University of Cincinnati, Ohio; Berger D. (2008): "*Reflections on Conversion and Proselytizing in Judaism and Christianity*". Center for Christian-Jewish Learning at Boston College, Boston. Studies in Christian-Jewish relations Vol. 3; Muslow M., Popkin R. (2004): "*Secret Conversions to Judaism in Early Modern Europe*". Brill, Boston.

¹³⁶ Broyde M. (1999): "*Proselytism and Jewish Law: Inreach, Outreach, and the Jewish Tradition*". In "*Sharing the Book: Religious Perspectives on the Rights and Wrongs of Proselytism*". Edited by Witte J. and Martin R. Orbis books, New York. Pg. 45-60.

¹³⁷ Panov I. (1877): "*The Judaizer Heresy*". Journal of the Ministry of National Enlightenment. February. Typography of the Imperial Academy of Sciences, Saint Petersburg. Pg. 267, footnote 1.

between 1493-1515¹³⁸. Of a different opinion was Lurie, who asserted that Volotsky drafted the initial edition of the work in 1502-1504¹³⁹, and completed the treatise no earlier than 1511¹⁴⁰.

Having been produced within the atmosphere of a polemical dissent, which engulfed the intellectual echelon of Muscovy at the end of the 15th – beginning of 16th century, “*The Enlightener*” had representatively been acknowledged as the first Russian theological treatise. Thus, Metropolitan Macarius Bulgakov, one of the most renowned historians of the Russian Church, asserted that “*The Enlightener*” can be considered as “our first attempt at a scholarly theological work”, and had no doubt that the tractate is an “original composition in a theological sense”¹⁴¹. Archbishop Georgi Florovski, on the other hand, contended against its originality: “His entire “*The Enlightener*” is based on selective samples and testimonies”¹⁴². Podskalski, in turn, characterized “*The Enlightener*” as “a first attempt at a systematic presentation of the Church teachings”¹⁴³. Symbolically, the first theological treatise of the Russian Church features a comprehensive repudiation of the various tenets of Judaism, which, according to Volotsky, were professed by the Judaizers of Novgorod and Moscow.

This chapter presents an in-depth study of the primary sources, the literature and the individuals associated with a poignant episode of Russian history, which became known in Church terminology, and subsequently in modern historiography, as the ‘Heresy of the Judaizers’. The objectives of the examination include the identification and analysis of the factors pertaining to the genesis of the Judaizer heresy and its consequent proliferation, the inquiry into the reaction of Russian Orthodox intellectuals to the purported manifestation of Jewish proselytism and the resulting apostasy of the high-ranking members of the clergy and nobility, as well as the consideration of the extent and significance of the incidence on the relations between Christians and Jews in the immediate geographical region.

¹³⁸ Metropolitan Macarius (Bulgakov) (1996): “*The History of the Russian Church*”. Publishing of Spaso-Preobrazhensk Valaamsk monastery, Moscow. Book 4, Chapter 1, Pg. 306.

¹³⁹ Lurie Y. (1960): “*The Ideological Battle in Russian Writing at the End of XV – Beginning of XVI Centuries*”. Sciences, Moscow-Leningrad. Pg. 105.

¹⁴⁰ Ibid., Pg. 464.

¹⁴¹ Metropolitan Macarius (Bulgakov) (1996): “*The History of the Russian Church*”. Publishing of Spaso-Preobrazhensk Valaamsk monastery, Moscow. Book 4, Chapter 1, Pg. 325.

¹⁴² Florovski G. (1937): “*The Ways of Russian Theology*”. YMCA Press, Paris. Pg. 19.

¹⁴³ Podskalski G. (1996): “*Christianity and Theological Literature in Kievan Rus (988-1237)*”. Byzantinorossica publishing, Saint Petersburg. Pg. 433.

The Perception of Jews and Judaism in Early Ruthenian Literature

The roots of the ancient Ruthenian book-learning, and culture in general, are characterized by a long marked paradox: despite the nearly complete absence of Jewish communities in the Medieval Ruthenian lands (with the exception of a documented community in Kiev¹⁴⁴), a characteristic topos of the early Russian literature is a comprehensive anti-Judaic polemic. This includes its first and fundamental works – “*The Words of Law and Grace*” written by Ilarion sometime in 1030s, as well as the oldest surviving collection of Russian chronicles, the “*Primary Chronicle*”, dating to the 12th century¹⁴⁵.

The most likely explanation of this enigma is not so much the role of a small Jewish community of Medieval Kiev, but rather a historical situation arising from the era of the Khazar regional domination during the 8th to the 10th centuries: according to various written and archeological evidence, segments of the Khazar royalty and nobility converted to Judaism during this period¹⁴⁶. As the Khazar Khaganate controlled a greater majority of the Ruthenian lands up to the end of the 9th century, forcing the Kiev princes to pay royalties¹⁴⁷, the anxiety of the imposition of Judaism by the Khazars endured as a common theme in the subsequent Russian literature. Thus, the Primary Chronicle describes that in 986, the Khazars made an attempt at converting Kievan Ruthenia to Judaism by sending missionaries to the court of Prince Vladimir¹⁴⁸. Along with the Jewish missionaries from Khazaria, however, Vladimir received preachers from three other monotheistic Churches, the authority of which was provided by the associated political organizations, as is highlighted in the text. These were Muslims from the Islamic Bulgar state, Catholics (referred to as “Germans from Rome”¹⁴⁹), and Orthodox emissaries from Byzantium¹⁵⁰. In the discourse that occurred between the delegates and

¹⁴⁴ Kulik A. (2004): “*The Earliest Evidence of the Jewish Presence in Western Rus*”. Harvard Ukrainian Research Institute, Cambridge. Harvard Ukrainian Studies Vol. 27, No. 1/4. Pg. 13-24; Golb N., Pritsak O. (1984): “*Khazarian Hebrew Documents of the Tenth Century*”. Cornell University Press, Ithaca, New York.

¹⁴⁵ Pereswetoff-Morath A. (2002): “*A Grin without a Cat. Adversus Judaeos Texts in the Literature of Medieval Russia*”. Slavonic Monographs, 4. Lund University, Lund. P. 83.

¹⁴⁶ Dunlop, M. (1967): “*The History of the Jewish Khazars*”. Schocken Books, New York; Olsson J. (2013): “*Coup d'état, Coronation and Conversion: Some Reflections on the Adoption of Judaism by the Khazar Khaganate*”. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge. Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society, Vol. 23, Pg. 495-526.

¹⁴⁷ The Primary Chronicle (1999). Edited by Likhachev D. Sciences, Saint Petersburg. Pg. 6.

¹⁴⁸ Ibid., Pg. 25-26.

¹⁴⁹ In Russia at the time, all Western Europeans were referred to as “Germans”, or ‘Nemtsi’ (‘Немцы’), with the root of the word being “немой”, meaning “mute”.

¹⁵⁰ Ibid., P. 26.

the Kievan Prince, the Khazar's sermon encompassed a polemic against Christianity: "they worship him, whom the Jews crucified, while the Jews worship the one true God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob"¹⁵¹. After inquiring on the essence of the Jewish laws and ritual practices, Vladimir baffled the Khazars with a provocative question: "Where is your land?". The Jewish emissaries replied that their land was in Jerusalem, but then were forced to admit their exile: "our fathers, having angered God, were banished and scattered amongst different countries, while our land was given to the Christians"¹⁵². At the conclusion of the discourse, Vladimir issued a final deprecation to the Khazars: "by preaching the law renounced by God, do the Jews intend to devastate every land where their law would be accepted?"¹⁵³. While it is evident that the Khazar assertions described in the Chronicle were presented in a Christian (Byzantine) redaction, this depiction of a confrontation between Vladimir and the Khazars, regardless of whether it actually took place, not only justified Kiev's decision to baptize into Orthodoxy in 988, but also came to symbolize the theological supremacy of the Orthodox Church over Judaism, Islam and Catholicism alike.

Another example of a Christian-Jewish polemic is found in "*The Life of Cyril Constantine*", traces of which appear in the "*Primary Chronicle*"¹⁵⁴. According to the text, in 861 the much revered 'apostle to the Slavs' Saint Cyril the Philosopher participated in a dispute on the matters of faith with Rabbis in the capital of the Khazar Khaganate. The central issues of the debate included the following: does the Old Testament contain references to the Trinity? Can God fit into the womb of a woman? Can God change his Testament? Is there a difference between the concepts of Law and Testament? Christ or the Anointed One? Is there a difference between the notions of icons and idols?¹⁵⁵ Josef Volotsky addressed essentially all of these questions in his polemical works on the Judaizers at the turn of the 15th-16th centuries.

The anti-Judaic polemic further translated into practical dealings, as evidenced by a recently discovered 11th century rulings of Metropolitan Georgiy of Kiev, in which he prohibited to "accept bread from a Jew if he baked it himself, as well as brewed honey and beer"¹⁵⁶. Furthermore, "*The Church Charter of Yaroslav*", a 12th century legal act regulating social relations falling within the ecclesiastical jurisdiction, issued a fine to any bishop who would conduct a wedding ceremony between a "Slavic Orthodox" and a

¹⁵¹ Ibid.

¹⁵² Ibid.

¹⁵³ Ibid., Pg. 41.

¹⁵⁴ Turilov A., Moshkova L. (1999): "*The Life of Cyril Constantine*", in "*The Library of the Literature of Ancient Ruthenia*". Sciences, Saint Petersburg. Vol. 2, Pg. 15 (<http://lib.pushkinskijdom.ru/Default.aspx?tabid=2163>).

¹⁵⁵ Ibid.

¹⁵⁶ Turilov A. (2004): "*The Answers of Georgiy, Metropolitan of Kiev, to the Questions of Abbot German*". In "*The Slavic World Between Rome and Constantinople*". Vol. 11, Moscow.

Jew or a Muslim, meanwhile stipulating imprisonment for an Orthodox woman coming into such a union, and a fine or banishment for an Orthodox man¹⁵⁷. Accordingly, these texts evidence the existence of a Jewish community in Kiev, with which the Church authorities attempted to limit any sort of relations for their parishioners, quite possibly due to fears of proselytization.

In the Early Modern Russian state, the anti-Judaic disposition of the foundational Russian laws was often regarded as archetypal and worthy of replication. Vasili Tatishchev, a 17th-18th century nobleman and the author of the first full-scale sketch of Russian history¹⁵⁸, explained the first anti-Jewish pogrom to occur in the Ruthenian lands, which broke out in Kiev after the death of Prince Sviatopolk II in 1113, by a supposition that under Sviatopolk, the Jews deprived the Christians of trade and livelihood “because of their deceitful nature”¹⁵⁹. Tatishchev went on to write that when Vladimir II Monomakh succeeded Sviatopolk II as the Grand Duke of Kievan Ruthenia, his first command was to “banish the Jews from all of the Russian lands” and from that point on to not let them enter back in: “and if they were to enter in secret, it was permissible to rob and kill them. From that time, there aren’t any Jews in Ruthenia, and when they arrive, the people rob and kill them”¹⁶⁰.

In “*The History of the Russian State*” (1824), a highly authoritative work on the history of Russia, Nikolay Karamzin generally agreed with Tatishchev on that Monomakh banished the Jews from the Ruthenian lands in 1113¹⁶¹. However, in his narration of the ancient Russian chronicles, Karamzin reported that in 1124, “the Jews were also burned” in a great fire in Kiev¹⁶². Tikhomirov, who was generally critical of both Tatishchev’s and Karamzin’s sources, first noted the discrepancy, writing that “the Jews were the bankers of Medieval Ruthenia and had large sums of money pass through their hands”. Due to Kiev being a major trade outpost between Europe and Asia, Tikhomirov concluded: “although a ban on the Jewish presence in Kiev might have in fact officially been issued in 1113, it did not materialize in practice due to the influence of the Jews on the city’s commerce”¹⁶³. Israel Berlin proposed that Tatishchev’s account on the banishment of the Jews from Kiev was obtained from a later, possibly 17th century source, written by a chronographer who wished to express to his contemporaries how

¹⁵⁷ Schapov Y. (1976): “*The Status of the Ancient Russian Princes in XI-XV centuries*”. Science. Institute of History of the USSR. Moscow.

¹⁵⁸ Tatishchev V. (1768): “*Russian History Dating Back to the Most Ancient Times*”. Imperial Moscow University. 5 Volumes.

¹⁵⁹ Ibid., V. 2. Pg. 128.

¹⁶⁰ Ibid., Pg. 129.

¹⁶¹ Karamzin N. (1842): “*History of the Russian State*”. Saint Petersburg Academy of Sciences. St. Petersburg. Pg. 87.

¹⁶² Ibid., Pg. 89.

¹⁶³ Tikhomirov M. (1975): “*Ancient Ruthenia*”. Sciences. Moscow. Pg. 136-137

“Monomakh, the greatest of the Medieval Ruthenian princes, dealt with “sneaky Jews”, and how they should be treated henceforth¹⁶⁴.

It is important to note that the anxieties and suspicions of the Russian Orthodox Church regarding the proselytization of the customs and beliefs by foreigners are rooted in the times of Medieval Ruthenia. Whilst the Early Modern Muscovy state saw itself as the factual descendant and custodian of the religion, traditions and culture of the Kievan Ruthenia, the governmental and the ecclesiastical authorities made every attempt to limit the contact between the Orthodox faithful and the individuals of other confessions. Not only were virtually all foreigners rendered as heretics and cultivators of ungodly practices, but also the merchant class regarded the interlopers as unwanted competitors. Nonetheless, in the interests of trade, the government allowed for foreign merchants to enter the state but on rather strict terms – often they were allowed to go no further than border towns, their stay in the country was limited to specified terms, and, especially in the case of Moscow, the foreigners were forced to live in segregated parts of town or at times outside the capital all together¹⁶⁵. Moreover, visiting the homes of foreigners, as well as the consumption of their food and drink, was forbidden for the local population¹⁶⁶.

The difference in the fate of the Jewish Diasporas in Russia and the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth is greatly tied to the difference of the states’ social and economic arrangements: the Russian system did not encompass the niche that allowed for the Jews of Western Europe and Western Slavic states to function as treasury ushers, tax collectors, money lenders and hold other official posts. The organization of the social class in Russia was poorly developed, whereby the monarchic authorities controlled virtually the entire economy and taxation. At the same time, the system greatly relied on the nobility class, or the boyars, which while comprising different ethnicities, was interlaced by the Orthodox faith. The characteristic trait of the ancient Russian culture, with its irreconcilable, rigorist sentiment of both the Church and State towards the persons of other confessions continued well into the Early Modern Period. Such convictions were well articulated in the “*Golden Chain*”, a late 14th century collection of the Russian Orthodox Church dogmas and ecclesiastical rulings: “The epitome of God’s enemies are the Jews, heretics, those holding a devious faith, and the apostates from Orthodoxy”¹⁶⁷. The outbreak of the Judaizer heresy at the end of the 15th century inevitably bolstered these sentiments to the paramount.

¹⁶⁴ Berlin I. (1919): “*The Historic Fate of the Jewish Nation on the Territory of the Russian State*”. Publishing house of the Jewish Historic Library. Saint Petersburg. Pg. 165-166.

¹⁶⁵ Milyukin A. (1909): “*The Visits of Foreigners to the Moscow State*”. Saint Petersburg. Pg. 59.

¹⁶⁶ Ibid., Pg. 62.

¹⁶⁷ Ponomarev L. (1916): “*On the Literary History of Ancient Russian Collections of the “Golden Chain”*”. Scholarly Notes of Kazan University. Book 8, Pg. 21.

On the Inception of the Judaizer Heresy

At the end of 1470, the independent Republic of Novgorod requested Kazimir IV of Poland to send Prince Mikhailo Olelkovich, the brother of the Kievan Prince Simon Olelkovic, to become its ruler, in an attempt to breakaway from the influence of the ambitious Ivan III of Moscow¹⁶⁸. Shortly after his arrival, however, Novgorod fell under Moscow's control following the Battle of Shelon in 1471, and Mikhailo withdrew from Novgorod. Although this episode is essentially unconnected with any religious motives, Mikhailo's brief stay in Novgorod, according to the various sources, led to the spread of the Judaizer heresy in Novgorod, and in Moscow thereafter.

The testimony of the Novgorod archbishop Gennady Gonofov holds that the entourage of Mikhailo Olelkovich included a Jewish individual, who subsequently had spread his religious beliefs amongst the Christians in Novgorod¹⁶⁹. Monk Savva's *"The Epistle Against Jews and Heretics"* contains the first mention of the name of the heresiarch - "Zacharia Skara"¹⁷⁰. In the *"Narrative of the Newly-Appeared Heresy"*, Josef Volotsky named the Jew from Kiev as "Skhariya", and pronounced him to have been a prominent astrologist and practitioner of black magic¹⁷¹. Soon after Skhariya's appearance in Novgorod, a group of other Jews arrived from the Grand Duchy of Lithuania, namely: "Joseph, Shlomo, Skaryavei, Moses and Hanush"¹⁷². Skhariya's "secret" knowledge attracted a number of high-ranking members of the clergy, who may have been interested in the questions pertaining to the end of the world, which certain echelons within the Church associated with year 1492¹⁷³. According to Volotsky, Novgorod priests named Aleksey and Denis often "conversed with the Jews" and were so enthralled by Skhariya's teachings, that they expressed the will to convert to Judaism and "undergo circumcision", but were prevented from doing so by their mentors in order to ensure the secrecy of their teachings¹⁷⁴. While Aleksey nonetheless took the Jewish name

¹⁶⁸ Typography of Edward Prats (1841): *"The Complete Collection of Russian Chronicles"*. Vol. 4. Chronicles of Novgorod and Pskov. The Archaeographical Expedition of the Russian Academy of Sciences, Saint Petersburg. Pg. 189.

¹⁶⁹ Lurie Y., Kazakova N. (1955): *"The Letter of Archbishop Gennady to Metropolitan Zosima"* In *"Anti-Feudal Heretical Movements in Ruthenia XIV – Beginning of XVI Centuries"*. Sciences, Moscow-Leningrad. Pg. 377.

¹⁷⁰ Belokurov C. (1902): *"The Epistle of Monk Savva Against the Jews and Heretics."* Readings at the Society of Russian History and Ancient Studies at Moscow University. Vol. 3. Pg. 1.

¹⁷¹ Volotsky J. (1490-1504): *"The Enlightener"*. In *"The Enlightener, or the Condemnation of the Judaizers Heresy"*. Typography of the Imperial University. Kazan. 1903. Pg. 4.

¹⁷² Ibid.

¹⁷³ Romanova A. (2002): *"The Ancient Russian Calendar-Chronological Sources of XV-XVII Centuries"*. Bulanin publishing. Saint Petersburg. Pg. 113.

¹⁷⁴ Volotsky J. (1490-1504): *"The Enlightener"*. In *"The Enlightener, or the Condemnation of the Judaizers Heresy"*. Typography of the Imperial University. Kazan. 1903. Pg. 4.

of Abraham, and his wife was re-named to Sarah, he also inveigled into the heresy other members of his family, fellow clergymen and parishioners¹⁷⁵. Priest Denis, in turn, enticed such high-ranking clergymen into the heretical practice as the archpriest of St. Sophia Cathedral Gabriel, the deacon of the Church of Boris and Gleb Gridya, as well as various other members of the upper stratum of the Novgorod clergy¹⁷⁶.

When in 1478, yet another Novgorodian revolt against Moscow's rule was crushed, the Novgorod Church lost its autonomy and Grand Duke Ivan III personally came to the northern republic to attend to the details of Church reforms¹⁷⁷. During his visit, Ivan III must have been introduced to the Judaizer priests Aleksey and Denis, who managed to establish themselves in front of the Grand Duke in such a way, that he subsequently brought them to Moscow. Aleksey was appointed as the archpriest of the Cathedral of the Assumption, a leading position among the Moscow clergy, while Denis became the priest of the Cathedral of the Archangel Michael at the Kremlin¹⁷⁸. Although there is no direct evidence suggesting the Grand Duke's awareness of the priests' involvement in "Judaizing" at the time, nor having interest in their heterodox practices, what might have captivated Ivan III was the Novgorod priests' proficiency in the "sacred knowledge" of mysticism and astronomy. This hypothesis is somewhat confirmed by Volotsky's narrative about the beginning of Aleksey's and Denis's tenure in Moscow: "In Moscow...they are pretending, and show themselves to be righteous and humble...but they are spreading their retched seed in secrecy... archpriest Aleksey and Feodor Kuritsyn only dare to tell the Grand Duke of the laws of the stars, and many tales, and of astrology, and of sorcery, and of black magic, as no one else knows"¹⁷⁹.

The manifestation of astrology and the interest in mysticism at the court of the Early Modern Russian monarchy is further confirmed by the appeals to astrologers and soothsayers by Vasili III¹⁸⁰, Ivan IV¹⁸¹ and Boris Godunov¹⁸². Further indirect evidence

¹⁷⁵ Ibid., Pg. 4-5.

¹⁷⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷⁷ Vernadsky G. (1933): *"The Heresy of the Judaizers and the Policies of Ivan III of Moscow"*. Speculum, Vol. 8, No. 4. Medieval Academy of America. Cambridge.

¹⁷⁸ Volotsky J. (1490-1504): *"The Enlightener"*. In *"The Enlightener, or the Condemnation of the Judaizers Heresy"*. Typography of the Imperial University. Kazan. 1903. Pg. 8.

¹⁷⁹ Volotsky J. (1504-1505): *"The Word on Cunning Treachery"*. In Lurie Y., Kazakova N. (1955): *"Anti-feudal Heretical Movements in Ruthenia XIV – Beginning of XVI Centuries"*. Sciences, Moscow-Leningrad. Pg. 471.

¹⁸⁰ Grek M. (1551): *"The Essays of Saint Maksim Grek"*. Part 2. Spiritual Academy of Kazan. 1860. Pg. 225-239.

¹⁸¹ Skrinnikov R. (1992): *"The Tsardom of Terror"*. Sciences, Saint Petersburg. Pg. 439-440.

¹⁸² Skrinnikov R. (1988): *"Russia in the Beginning of XVII century: The Times of Trouble"*. Thought publishing, Moscow. Pg. 182-183.

related to the practice of mysticism at the court of the Grand Duke is found in letters of monk Maksim Grek to Feodor Karpov, a high-ranking diplomat of Vasilli III, in which the monk accused Karpov of believing in “the laws of the stars”¹⁸³. The high appreciation of astronomical knowledge by the Russian rulers followed the pan-European tendency in the Early Modern and Renaissance periods, when the comprehension of the stars was considered an important part of political forecasting¹⁸⁴.

The Historical Portrait of Zacharia Skhariya, the Proselytizing Jew

It is most likely that Skhariya and his Jewish companions fled the Russian state together with Prince Mikhialo Olelkovich in 1471, after his failed attempt to seize power in Novgorod. Although according to Tatishchev, Skhariya and his associates were executed at some point in Novgorod by the orders of Ivan III¹⁸⁵, this assertion is refuted by the content of “*The Epistle Against Jews and Heretics*”, compiled by monk Savva between 1488-1496¹⁸⁶. In the preface to the epistle, which in it itself comprises a compilation of various anti-Judaic polemics, Savva addressed the ambassador of the Grand Duke in Crimea in 1487-1488, Dmitry Shein with the following message: “If a person is kind and is decorated with everything virtuous but is contaminated with something Jewish, then all of his existence is obscene before God and men, and God will not endure him but rebuke him, like the Novgorod priests who accepted the Jewish teachings... And you, Lord Dmitry, were the ambassador and conversed with the Jew Zacharia Skhara. And I, Lord Dmitry, pray on to thee, that if you have heard from him the words of clemency or depravity, then please lord, put them out of your head and your lips, as it is an abomination, for they believe in the Father but not in the Son, and therefore God is not with them”¹⁸⁷.

As follows from the text, monk Savva was aware of one Zacharia Skhara, who attempted to entice the Moscow ambassador to Judaism when he was in Crimea. This narrative suggests that Shein could have written to Savva first, asking for spiritual guidance. Savva’s reference to the apostasy of the Novgorod priests, furthermore, directly connects the persona of Zacharia Skhariya the Jew, whom Shein reportedly met in

¹⁸³ Grek M. (1551): “*The Essays of Saint Maksim Grek*”. Part 2. Spiritual Academy of Kazan. 1860. Pg. 206.

¹⁸⁴ Campion N. (1999): “*Political Cosmology in the Renaissance*”. Paper delivered to the Inspiration of Astronomical Phenomena (INSAP II) conference. Malta.

¹⁸⁵ Tatishchev V. (1847): “*Russian History Dating Back to the Most Ancient Times*”. Imperial Moscow University. Book 5, No.4. Pg. 109-111.

¹⁸⁶ Belokurov C. (1902): “*The Epistle of Monk Savva Against Jews and Heretics*.” Readings at the Society of Russian History and Ancient Studies at Moscow University. Vol. 3. Pg. 1-94.

¹⁸⁷ Ibid., Pg. 4.

Crimea in 1488, with Zacharia the heresiarch, whom archpriest Gennady¹⁸⁸ and abbot Joseph Volotsky¹⁸⁹ held responsible for the spread of the Judaizer heresy in the Russian state.

Pertaining to Volotsky's contention of Zacharia Skharia, who arrived from Kiev to Novgorod with Prince Mikhailo, being "a prominent astrologist and master of black magic"¹⁹⁰, Bruckus¹⁹¹ and subsequently Taube¹⁹², identified the referenced individual to have been Zacharia ben Aharon ha-Kohen of Kiev, a copyist and annotator who in the second half of the 15th century translated and transcribed a number of astronomical, philosophical and metaphysical works in Hebrew. Zacharia ben Aharon likely belonged to the circle of a renowned scholar and Kabbalist Rabbi Moses ben Jacob ha-Gole of Kiev, best known for his kabbalistic work "*Lily of Secrets*" and commentary to Immanuel ben Jacob Bonfil's astronomical user's manual "*Six Wings*"¹⁹³. A collection of manuscripts contained at the Vienna Imperial library, with the ownership marked as "belonging to Moshe ben-Jacob"¹⁹⁴, includes a Hebrew translation of Al-Farghani's "*Elements of Astronomy* – an Arabic compendium of Ptolemy's "*Almagest*", the copy of which, as the colophon on folio 40r testifies, was made in "Kiev on the 20th of Shvat 5228" (January 16, 1468) and bears the mark of authorship of "Zacharia, the son of Aharon the Kohen of blessed memory"¹⁹⁵.

Other manuscripts that bear the mark of being copied and annotated by Zacharia ben Aharon ha-Kohen include: Johannes De Sacrobosco's "*De Sphaera*", "*Mesharet Moshe*" (Moses' Servant) – the commentary on Moses Maimonides "*Guide of the Perplexed*" attributed to Qalonymos of Provence, Zerariah ha-Levi Anatoli's "*Spirit of Grace*" – the explanation of the philosophical terminology used in the "*Guide to the Perplexed*" by Maimonides, and a fragment of Solomon Ben Joseph Ibn Ayyub's

¹⁸⁸ Lurie Y., Kazakova N. (1955): "*The Letter of Archbishop Gennady to Metropolitan Zosima*" In "*Anti-feudal Heretical Movements in Ruthenia XIV – Beginning of XVI Centuries*". Sciences, Moscow-Leningrad. Pg. 377.

¹⁸⁹ Volotsky J. (1490-1504): "*The Enlightener*". In "*The Enlightener, or the Condemnation of the Judaizers Heresy*". Typography of the Imperial University, Kazan. 1903. Pg. 4.

¹⁹⁰ Ibid., Pg. 2.

¹⁹¹ Bruckus J. (1930): "*Judaisierende*". Encyclopaedia Judaica 9. cols., Berlin. Pg. 520–522.

¹⁹² Taube M. (1995): "*The Kievan Jew Zacharia and the Astronomical Works of the Judaizers*". Jews and Slavs Vol. 3. Jerusalem. Pg. 168-175.

¹⁹³ Taube M. (2010): "*Transmission of Scientific Texts in 15th-Century Eastern Knaan*". Aleph: Historical Studies in Science and Judaism, Vol. 10, issue 2. Indiana University Press. Pg. 325-326.

¹⁹⁴ Ibid., Vienna, Imperial Library. Codex 183 in Schwarz's 1925 Catalogue. Table IX, item m.

¹⁹⁵ Taube M. (1995): "*The Kievan Jew Zacharia and the Astronomical Works of the Judaizers*". Jews and Slavs Vol. 3. Jerusalem. Pg. 172.

Hebrew translation of Averroes' *"De Substantia Orbis"*¹⁹⁶. Further evidence linking Zacharia to the translation of Maimonides' *"Logika"* into Slavic comes from a preface to a 16th century Ruthenian Psalter contained at the library of the Kiev Theological Academy. The folium of the manuscript contains a list of authors and the terminology that they used for different sciences, with one of the mentioned authors being "Skhariya" (Cxapia)¹⁹⁷. The terms ascribed to Skhariya – arithmetic, geometry, music, astronomy, politics, physics, theology – are depicted as the "seven wisdoms" in the afterword of the Slavic version of *"Logika"* in the same order and nearly identical spelling¹⁹⁸.

Notably, the Slavonic spelling of the name "Skhariya" (Схарія) in the manuscript at Kiev's Theological Academy not only coincides with "Skhariya" of *"The Enlightener"*, but is also of close resemblance to "Zacharia Skhara" the proselyte of monk Savva's address to Dmitri Shein¹⁹⁹.

The collection of Zacharia ben Aharon's works can identify the range of the annotator's preferred literature and ideological dispositions: all of the texts are associated with the Medieval Jewish Rabbi, Moses Maimonides from Cordoba, also known as the Rambam, one of the most influential Torah sages and philosophers in Jewish scholarship. Nearly all of the literary works annotated or copied by Zacharia, therefore, encompass either transcriptions or translations of Rambam's writings, or the works of authors which the Spanish Rabbi-philosopher highly valued. Zacharia's in-depth knowledge of the Sephardic and Provençal scholarly traditions – the adherence to the rationalist philosophy of Maimonides and the astronomical tables of Immanuel ben Jacob Bonfil of Provence - suggest the scribe's association with the Jewish community of Byzantium, where Sephardic and Provençal Jews migrated in the 14th century. As follows, Zacharia's proselytization amongst the Russian Orthodox clergy and nobility in Novgorod and elsewhere would have been based primarily on the rationalist and astronomical traditions of the Sephardic and Provençal schools.

All of the texts transcribed by Zacharia are dated, often with an indication of the place of writing. These inscriptions ascertain that Zacharia lived in Kiev at least from 1454 to 1468. An inscription on the Hebrew manuscript of Averroes' *"De Substantia Orbis"* contained in the Firkovich collection at the Russian National Library in Saint

¹⁹⁶ Taube M. (2010): *"Transmission of Scientific Texts in 15th-Century Eastern Knaan"*. Aleph: Historical Studies in Science and Judaism, Vol. 10, issue 2. Indiana University Press. Pg. 326-328.

¹⁹⁷ Taube, M. (2005): *"The 15th c. Ruthenian Translations from Hebrew and the Heresy of the Judaizers: Is there a Connection?"*. In *"Speculum Slaviae Orientalis: Muscovy, Ruthenia and Lithuania in the Late Middle Ages"*. OGI, Moscow. Pg. 197-198.

¹⁹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹⁹ Belokurov C. (1902): *"The Epistle of Monk Savva Against Jews and Heretics."* Readings at the Society of Russian History and Ancient Studies at Moscow University. Vol. 3. Pg. 4.

Petersburg²⁰⁰, states that it was copied in “Damascus on the 13th of Sivan 5245 (May 28, 1485) by Zacharia, Man of Jerusalem, son of Aharon the Kohen of blessed memory²⁰¹. The title of the “Man of Jerusalem” signifies that Zacharia made a pilgrimage to the Holy Land at some point before 1485²⁰². According to Rabbi Moses ben-Jacob’s own detailed testimony recorded in his work “*Basis of Intercalation*”²⁰³, when Kiev was sacked by the Tatars in 1482, he was exiled from the city and headed south towards Crimea, along with other Kievan Jews²⁰⁴. It is therefore likely that Zacharia migrated to Crimea with Rabbi Moses and subsequently journeyed to Palestine from there. After his pilgrimage to the Holy Land, Zacharia would have returned to Crimea where the Kievan Jewish community had settled. Thus, it is possible that his meeting with Moscow ambassador Shein took place in Crimea in 1488.

On the Question of Ivan III’s Correspondence with Zacharia of Crimea

The Documents of the Crimean Horde²⁰⁵ reveal that precisely from the time of Zacharia ben Aharon ha-Kohen’s likely migration to Crimea in 1483, and until 1500, Grand Duke Ivan III conducted negotiations on joining his service in Moscow with a resident of Crimea, named in the corresponded as “Zacharia Evreyanin” (“Захарие Евреянину”) ²⁰⁶ – the root of the adjective ‘Evreyanin’ (Евреянин) being ‘Evrey’ (Еврей), which in Russian means ‘Hebrew’. Notably, in ambassadorial records, Ivan’s

²⁰⁰ Taube M. (1995): “*The Kievan Jew Zacharia and the Astronomical Works of the Judaizers*”. Jews and Slavs 3. Jerusalem. Pg. 173.; Evr. 436 of the Firkovich collection of manuscripts at the Russian National Library in Saint Petersburg.

²⁰¹ Taube M. (1995): “*The Kievan Jew Zacharia and the Astronomical Works of the Judaizers*”. Jews and Slavs 3. Jerusalem. Pg. 173.

²⁰² Ibid., Bet-Arie M. (1979): “*Hebrew Manuscripts Copied in Jerusalem before the Ottoman Conquest*” in Kedar B.: “*Jerusalem in the Middle Ages*”. Jerusalem. p. 277. Another 15th century ‘Man of Jerusalem’, Samuel Bonfus of Marseille, signs the same title after his voyage to Palestine in the 1430’s.

²⁰³ Ibid., MS Saint Petersburg, Institute of Oriental Studies of the Russian Academy. C 97, f. 214r.

²⁰⁴ Taube M. (1995): “*The Kievan Jew Zacharia and the Astronomical Works of the Judaizers*”. Jews and Slavs 3. Jerusalem. Pg. 173-174.

²⁰⁵ “*The Monuments of Diplomatic Relations of Muscovy with Asian Peoples: Crimean Horde, Kazan, Nogaics and Turkey*” (1884). Collection of the Russian Imperial Historical Society Vol. 41. Saint Petersburg. Pg. 40-41, 71—73, 114, 309.

²⁰⁶ “*The Letter of Ivan III to Zakhariah Skariya the Jew dated 1482*” and “*Ivan III to Zakhariah Skariya the Jew dated 1484*”. In “*The Collection of the Russian Imperial Historical Society*” (1884). Vol. 41: Monuments of Diplomatic Relations between Russia and Crimean Horde and Turkey. Saint Petersburg. Pg. 40-41.

1484 letter to this individual was entitled as having been sent “to Zacharia, to Skariya, to the Jew” (“к Захарье, к Скарье, к жидовину”). In this case, not only does the Slavic spelling of the name “Skhariya” (к Скарье) correspond to “Skhariya” the Kievan-Jewish heresiarch of Volotsky’s *“The Enlightener”*, and the proselytizing Jew “Zacharia Skhara” vilified in monk Savva’s epistle, but also to “Skhariya” the scholar cited in the aforementioned 16th century Kievan Psalter. The Russian adjective ‘жидовин’, in turn, can be translated to English only as meaning *Jewish*.

The record of the correspondence indicates that Ivan III repeatedly gave his approval for the said individual to come into the Russian service. In a 1487 response, written in Latin, the author named himself as “Zacharia Guil Gursis, Prince of Taman”, and informed the Grand Duke that he made an attempt to travel to Moscow but was robbed during the journey²⁰⁷. Accordingly, the ‘Prince of Taman’ asked for a safe passage to be arranged for him. Ivan III replied positively, and simultaneously requested for ambassador Dmitry Shein, whom monk Savva fervently urged to discard the Judaic teachings he apparently received from Zacharia Skhariya whilst in Crimea²⁰⁸, “to send his best men” to accompany Zacharia on his journey to Moscow²⁰⁹.

According to Bruckus, the Prince of the Taman Peninsula in Crimea at that time could only have been Zacharia De Ghisolfi, a Genoese noble whose family resided in the region from the beginning of 13th century²¹⁰. Zacharia’s ancestor Biscareli de Ghisolfi is mentioned in the 1289-1290 letters of the Pope and King of England, as an envoy of Georgia in Europe and is referred to as “civis Januensis”²¹¹. Bruckus also suggested that the adjective “Evreyanin” (Евреянин), by which Ivan III addressed the recipient of his letter, was a mistake in the spelling of “Iberian” (Иверианин) – Iberia being the name of the kingdom centered in the present day Georgia. Evidently, the Kievan scholar Zacharia ben Aharon ha-Kohen, aka Zacharia Skhariya, and the Catholic Genoese noble Zacharia De Ghisolfi could not have been one and the same person, albeit having the same name.

Notwithstanding the identity of Ivan III’s Crimean correspondent, the fact that the invitation to Moscow was initially offered to an individual whom the Grand Duke and his ambassadorial clerks considered being Jewish attests to the rather tolerant attitude of the Russian authorities towards Jews in the 15th century, in contrast to the fervent persecution

²⁰⁷ *“The Letter of Zacharia Guil Gursis, the Prince of Taman, to Grand Duke Ivan III of Moscow dated 1487”*. In *“The Collection of the Russian Imperial Historical Society”* (1884). Vol. 41: Monuments of Diplomatic Relations between Russia and Crimean Horde and Turkey. Saint Petersburg. Pg. 72.

²⁰⁸ Belokurov C. (1902): *“The Epistle of Monk Savva Against Jews and Heretics.”* Readings at the Society of Russian History and Ancient Studies at Moscow University. Vol. 3. Pg. 4.

²⁰⁹ In *“The Collection of the Russian Imperial Historical Society”* (1884). Vol. 41: Monuments of Diplomatic Relations between Russia and Crimean Horde and Turkey. Saint Petersburg. Pg. 73.

²¹⁰ Bruckus J. (1918): *“Zacharia, the Prince of Taman”*. Jewish antiquity No 10, St. Petersburg. Pg. 135.

²¹¹ Ibid. Pg. 135.

of the Early Modern period – which was triggered primarily by the scandalous association of the high-ranking Orthodox clerics and state officials with the Judaizers. The anxieties that monk Savva expressed in regard to the proselytization of Judaism underline the influence of the Judaizer heresy on the Russian Orthodox clergy.

On the Dissemination of the Judaizer Heresy in Russia

As the heterodox priests Aleksey and Denis established themselves in Moscow, the Judaizer heresy reportedly continued to spread within both the ecclesiastical and the nobility circles of the capital. In the fall of 1485, Grand Clerk Feodor Kuritsyn returned to Moscow from his embassy in Moldova and Hungary²¹². According to one of the most instrumental opponents of the heresy archbishop Gennady of Novgorod, upon his return to Moscow, Kuritsyn entered the circle of the Judaizers and became the movement's principal patron²¹³. The figure of Kuritsyn is rather important, as his high influence on the Grand Duke is described in Volotsky's "*The Enlightener*": "To him the Grand Duke listens on all matters"²¹⁴.

Although the Judaizing sect grew in numbers right in the heart of the state's administrative and spiritual capital, the authorities were either unaware, or turned a blind eye to the activities of the group. It was archbishop Gennady of Novgorod who exposed the heresy in 1487, but discovered the group's existence, apparently, by a complete accident. Gennady witnessed how in a drunken state, the heretics began to argue amongst themselves about the date of the coming of the Messiah, blasphemed against Christ and the Virgin Mary, and desecrated holy icons²¹⁵. Details of the beliefs and rituals of the Judaizers became known to Gennady by priest Naum, a repentant heretic, from whom Gennady received "a notebook, according to which they prayed like Jews", and a translation of "*Six Wings*"²¹⁶.

Exposing the Judaizers was made difficult by their tactical behavior: before the learned clergy they pretended to be Orthodox, while common people "they were ready to

²¹² Lurie Y. (1985): "*Russian Contemporaries of the Renaissance*". Leningrad Academy of Sciences of the USSR. Leningrad. Pg. 92.

²¹³ Lurie Y., Kazakova N. (1955): "*The Letter of Archbishop Gennady to Metropolitan Zosima*" In "*Anti-feudal Heretical Movements in Ruthenia XIV – Beginning of XVI Centuries*". Sciences, Moscow-Leningrad. Pg. 377.

²¹⁴ Volotsky J. (1490-1504): "*The Enlightener*". In "*The Enlightener, or the Condemnation of the Judaizers Heresy*". Typography of the Imperial University. Kazan. 1903. Pg. 11.

²¹⁵ Lurie Y., Kazakova N. (1955): "*The Letter of Archbishop Gennady to Bishop Prokhor Sarsky*". In "*Anti-feudal Heretical Movements in Ruthenia XIV – Beginning of XVI Centuries*". Sciences, Moscow-Leningrad. Pg. 310.

²¹⁶ Ibid., Pg. 310, 317.

catch like fish”²¹⁷. According to Gennady, those who were accused of belonging to the heresy willingly cursed their wrongful ways and “swore on everything divine without fear”²¹⁸. The Novgorod archbishop claimed that the influence the Judaizers had on the appointment of the clergy greatly contributed to the spread of the heresy. The clergy, being obliged to their patrons, easily forgave the sins of their parishioners and incited them too into the heresy²¹⁹. The canonical basis for the accusation of the heresy prompted a number of rules of the holy apostles, including: “celebration of holidays with Jews”, “blasphemy in sacred places”, as well as the 6th rule of the 4th Ecumenical Council: “wrongful appointment and corruption of the clergy”²²⁰.

Archbishop Gennady organized an investigation of the heresy, during the course of which he obtained testimonies from several witnesses, thereby exposing a number of leading Novgorod clergymen as Judaizers. The collected evidence was sent to Grand Duke Ivan III and the Metropolitan of Moscow Gerontius in 1488²²¹. In their responses, the Duke and the Metropolitan accepted the validity of the accusations against most, but not all of the persons indicted of the heresy: the allegation against priest Gridi Klutch, for instance, was not accepted as valid²²². Nonetheless, at the 1488 council in Moscow, attended by the Grand Duke and the Metropolitan, the majority of the accused Judaizers were officially found guilty of “blasphemy against Christ and the Virgin Mary”, “desecration of holy icons”, and “proselytization of the Jewish faith and blasphemy against the Orthodox Christian faith”²²³. For committing such heresies, the accused were subjected to a “city execution”, whereby they were thrown into the river but rescued before drowning. Afterwards, they were sent to Novgorod “for repentance”²²⁴. Gennady was ordered to continue to search out the heresy along with the emissaries of the Grand

²¹⁷ Lurie Y., Kazakova N. (1955): *“The Letter of Archbishop Gennady to Bishop Prokhor Sarsky”*. In *“Anti-feudal Heretical Movements in Ruthenia XIV – Beginning of XVI Centuries”*. Sciences, Moscow-Leningrad. Pg. 317.

²¹⁸ Ibid.

²¹⁹ Tsvetkov M. (2003): *“The Letter of Archbishop Gennady to Bishop Prokhor Sarsky in the Context of Novgorod Heresy at the End of XV – Beginning of XVI centuries”*. Historical Collection of Novgorod. Saint Petersburg. Pg. 189.

²²⁰ Pikhoya R. (1990): *“Korchmaya of Perm” (Пермская кормчая) // “Public Consciousness, Book Keeping and Literature in the Epoch of Feudalism”*. Department of Sciences of Siberia. Novosibirsk. Pg. 173-174.

²²¹ Lurie Y., Kazakova N. (1955): *“The Letters of the Grand Duke Ivan III and Metropolitan Geronty to Gennady of Novgorod”*. In *“Anti-feudal Heretical Movements in Ruthenia XIV – Beginning of XVI Centuries”*. Sciences, Moscow-Leningrad. Pg. 314-315.

²²² Ibid., Pg. 314-315.

²²³ Ibid., Pg. 315.

²²⁴ Ibid.

Duke in Novgorod, and at a Church council later that year the archbishop successfully exposed another group of heretics, who were “beaten with a whip at the market square”²²⁵.

Notwithstanding the repressions, the Judaizers continued their ministry. Evidently, the ever-growing eschatological expectations of the upcoming end of the world in 1492 prompted the continued success of the heretical propaganda, as demonstrated by the request of archbishop Gennady to Joseph, former archbishop of Rostov, to send Church elders Paisey and Nil to Novgorod to advise on the possibility of the end of the world²²⁶. With a similar request Gennady wrote to the Greek scholars in service at the Moscow court, brothers Dmitry and Yuri Trakhaniot²²⁷. In the appeal to archbishop Joseph, Gennady quoted the conviction of the Judaizers, which he personally heard expressed by the heterodox archpriest Aleksey: “Three summers will pass, and the end will come in the seventh thousand...and we, the activists, will then be needed”²²⁸.

Around 1489, a Novgorod scribe Timofei Venyaminov made a marginal note in a manuscript, in which he described the unsettling atmosphere of the time: a large number of the priests and deacons were “enticing common people into the cursed Jewish faith”²²⁹. In the aforementioned letter written to archbishop Joseph of Rostov, Gennady complained about Moscow’s apathy on the matter: “it is unbearable to think, that this case will lead to nothing, as Novgorod and Moscow are not one in Orthodoxy; they are not worried about it at all”²³⁰. The impression was that both the spiritual and the secular authorities were not interested in the persecution of Judaizers. Joseph Volotsky later explained the passivity of the Moscow Metropolitan, by noting that Metropolitan Gerontius “lacked harshness and determination” and was “afraid of the Grand Duke”²³¹.

²²⁵ Kistereva S., Timoshina L. (2001): *“The Complete Collection of Russian Chronicles”*. Vol. 6. Second edition. *“Sofia Chronicles”*. Languages of Slavic Cultures. Moscow. Pg. 186.

²²⁶ Lurie Y., Kazakova N. (1955): *“The Letter of Archbishop Gennady of Novgorod to Joseph, Former Archbishop of Rostov”*. In *“Anti-feudal Heretical Movements in Ruthenia XIV – Beginning of XVI Centuries”*. Sciences, Moscow-Leningrad. Pg. 318.

²²⁷ Pliguzov A., Tikhonyuk I. (1988): *“The Letter of Dmitry Trakhaniot to Novgorod Archbishop Gennady on the Symmetry of the Count of Years”*. Natural Scientific Understanding of Ancient Ruthenia. Moscow. Pg. 57.

²²⁸ Lurie Y., Kazakova N. (1955): *“The Letter of Archbishop Gennady of Novgorod to Joseph, Former Archbishop of Rostov”*. In *“Anti-feudal Heretical Movements in Ruthenia XIV – Beginning of XVI Centuries”*. Sciences, Moscow-Leningrad. Pg. 318.

²²⁹ Fonkich B. (1977): *“Greek-Russian Cultural Ties in XV-XVII Centuries”*. Sciences. Moscow. Pg. 31.

²³⁰ Lurie Y., Kazakova N. (1955): *“The Letter of Archbishop Gennady of Novgorod to Joseph, Former Archbishop of Rostov”*. In *“Anti-feudal Heretical Movements in Ruthenia XIV – Beginning of XVI Centuries”*. Sciences, Moscow-Leningrad. Pg. 317.

²³¹ Volotsky J. (1490-1504): *“The Enlightener”*. In *“The Enlightener, or the Condemnation of the Judaizers Heresy”*. Typography of the Imperial University. Kazan. 1903. Pg. 9.

Correspondingly, the heresy continued to be spread in the capital. According to “*The Enlightener*”, between 1488-1490 the membership in the Judaizer circle was extended to such highly influential individuals as the archimandrite of the Simonov monastery Zosima, grand clerics Istoma and Sverchok, and an affluent merchant Simon Klenov²³². Meanwhile, archbishop Gennady reported that in 1489, during the course of his investigation against the Judaizers in Novgorod, a number of high-ranking priests and deacons escaped to Moscow²³³. The Novgorod archbishop also maintained that the meetings of the Moscow circle of the Judaizers were held in the homes of Feodor Kuritsyn, archpriest Aleksey, as well as in the Simonov Monastery, when Zosima was its rector (1485-1490)²³⁴. Furthermore, according to Volotsky, at those meetings, the heretics “ate Jewish food, celebrated the Jewish Passover and other Jewish holidays”²³⁵.

Soon after the death of Metropolitan Gerontius in 1489, archimandrite Zosima, whom Volotsky accused to be the protégé of the head Judaizer archpriest Aleksey²³⁶, was appointed to become the new Metropolitan of the Russian Orthodox Church, with the Grand Clerk Fedor Kuritsyn likely playing a role in the appointment²³⁷. Consequently after Zosima’s rise to ecclesiastical power, archbishop Gennady found himself under a hail of allegations for violating the canonical rules and the norms of legal proceedings: not only was it demanded of him to confess his faith, which was especially offensive to Gennady, but he was also accused of the unlawful use of torture towards the heretics²³⁸. From Gennady’s letter to the Council of Bishops, written in 1490, it becomes known that a number of repentant heretics fled from Novgorod to Moscow, including monk Zakhar, who was sending out defamatory letters directed against Gennady²³⁹. Furthermore, the Novgorod archbishop was charged with maintaining illegal ties with Lithuanian nobility

²³² Ibid., Pg. 11.

²³³ Lurie Y., Kazakova N. (1955): “*The Letter of Archbishop Gennady of Novgorod to Joseph, Former Archbishop of Rostov*”. In “*Anti-feudal Heretical Movements in Ruthenia XIV – Beginning of XVI Centuries*”. Sciences, Moscow-Leningrad. Pg. 317.

²³⁴ Ibid., Pg. 317.

²³⁵ Volotsky J. (1490-1504): “*The Enlightener*”. In “*The Enlightener, or the Condemnation of the Judaizers Heresy*”. Typography of the Imperial University. Kazan. 1903. Pg. 32.

²³⁶ Ibid., Pg. 10.

²³⁷ Tikhonyuk I. (1992): “*The Mystery of Archimandrite Evfimij: the Origins of the Conflict Between Joseph Volotsky and Metropolitan Zosima*”. In “*Problems of National History and Culture of the Period of Feudalism*”. Readings in memory of V. Kobrin. Moscow. Pg. 176.

²³⁸ Lurie Y., Kazakova N. (1955): “*The Letter of Archbishop Gennady of Novgorod to the Council of Bishops*”. In “*Anti-feudal Heretical Movements in Ruthenia XIV – Beginning of XVI Centuries*”. Sciences, Moscow-Leningrad. Pg. 380.

²³⁹ Ibid., Pg. 378.

and having Catholic-Lithuanian priests serving in his diocese²⁴⁰. Not only was the accusation of an ecclesiastical nature, but also of a political character, as at the time, Muscovy was in a state of war with the Grand Duchy of Lithuania.

In October 1490, archbishop Gennady sent another letter to Moscow, addressed directly to Zosima, in which he attested against the accusations put forward against him, as well as demanded for the Church to allow him to come to Moscow, and to condemn the Judaizers exposed by him. He denied any ecclesiastical or political associations with Lithuania, but used the opportunity to state that with the Lithuanian Prince Mikhailo Olelkovich “to the Novgorod land came the cursed Jewish heretic from whom the heresy had spread”²⁴¹, clearly referring to Zacharia Skhariya of Kiev. Furthermore, Gennady directly accused Grand Clerk Fedor Kuritsyn of patronizing the heretics, and condemned the actions of Ivan III, who moved “old sacred churches and monasteries” out of Moscow – an act by which Gennady perceived a particular “impurity” of the Grand Duke. According to a newly baptized Jew from Kiev named Danilo, whom Gennady had taken under his patronage in Novgorod, Kievan Jews met the news of the “desecration” of the Orthodox altars and the movement of the ancient relics out of Moscow with “delight”²⁴². The anti-Judaic tone of the letter is further accentuated by the citation of the example of the Spanish king, who “cleansed his land of the Judaic heresy”²⁴³. In that regard, Gennady also noted that he sent a report of the inquisition to the Metropolitan, which was recorded from the words of the imperial ambassador Georg von Thurn. The main subject of the report was the establishment of a legislative committee, with the direct authority to persecute all those suspected of the heresy, including high-ranking royal officials and bishops²⁴⁴.

In the letter to the Metropolitan, Gennady also expressed his frustration over the fact that priest Denis, one of Skhariya’s first students and founders of the Judaizing sect, has been found not guilty of heretical practice, albeit being initially suspected²⁴⁵. He demanded from Zosima the convocation of a Church council, at which the heretics, who “don’t go to church but praise the Jewish faith”, were to be tried and “cursed”²⁴⁶.

²⁴⁰ Lurie Y., Kazakova N. (1955): *“The Letter of Archbishop Gennady of Novgorod to Metropolitan Zosima”*. In *“Anti-feudal Heretical Movements in Ruthenia XIV – Beginning of XVI Centuries”*. Sciences, Moscow-Leningrad. Pg. 374-375.

²⁴¹ Ibid., Pg. 373.

²⁴² Ibid., Pg. 377.

²⁴³ Ibid., Pg. 379.

²⁴⁴ Sedelnikov D. (1932): *“A 1490 Report of the Inquisition” // “The Proceedings of the Commission on Ancient Russian Literature”*. Vol. 1. Pg. 49-50.

²⁴⁵ Lurie Y., Kazakova N. (1955): *“The Letter of Archbishop Gennady of Novgorod to Metropolitan Zosima”*. In *“Anti-feudal Heretical Movements in Ruthenia XIV – Beginning of XVI Centuries”*. Sciences, Moscow-Leningrad. Pg. 376.

²⁴⁶ Ibid., Pg. 376.

However, as Gennady simultaneously sent a letter with identical demands to the Council of Bishops, the members of which elected Zosima to the realm of the Church, it is evident that the Novgorod archbishop was not too reliant on the Metropolitan to actually address his concerns of the Judaizing presence in Moscow.

While Gennady's principal accusation against the Judaizers was iconoclasm, the emphasis was made on the fact that according to the canonical rules, any clergyman associating with heretics is subject to be stripped of his title and defrocked. He urged the bishops to decisively eliminate the heresy: "There should not be any discussions with them about faith; the council is to be called up with the sole purpose of executing them – by burning and hanging!"²⁴⁷. Correspondingly, the archbishop's position on the danger of discourse with those professing the Judaic faith was generally accepted amongst Catholic theologians. For instance, Pier Damien's letter "*Against the Jews*" of 1040-1041²⁴⁸, as well as Peter of Blois's 1211 polemic "*Against the Unbelief of the Jews*"²⁴⁹, both warned against conducting any kind of discussions with Jews and heretics.

The Council against the Judaizers was conveyed nonetheless. It took place on October 17, 1490, and as follows from the "*Teachings to all of Orthodox Christianity*"²⁵⁰, written by Metropolitan Zosima on the basis of the council's verdict, the initiator of the trial was archbishop Gennady. The documentary base for the charges was formed on the evidence presented by Gennady and the testimonies of the witnesses gathered in Moscow. According to the text of the "*Conciliar Verdict*", the heretics were charged with iconoclasm, slander of Christ, the Virgin Mary and saints, the denial of the authority of the seven Ecumenical councils, the violation of fasts, honoring of the Sabbath instead of Sunday, and the disbelief in the ascension of Christ²⁵¹. Each of the charges, however, was explicitly characterized as following "Jewish customs".

²⁴⁷ Lurie Y., Kazakova N. (1955): "*The Letter of Archbishop Gennady of Novgorod to the Council of Bishops*". In "*Anti-feudal Heretical Movements in Ruthenia XIV – Beginning of XVI Centuries*". Sciences, Moscow-Leningrad. Pg. 381.

²⁴⁸ Damian P. (1040-1041): "*Against the Jews*". In "*The Fathers of the Church: Mediaeval Continuation*"(2005). Letters 141-180. CUA Press. Washington. Pg. 37-83.

²⁴⁹ Peter of Blois (1211): "*Against the Unbelief of the Jews*". In Williams L. (1935): "*Adversus Judaeos: A Bird's-Eye View of Christian Apologies Until the Renaissance*". Cambridge University Press. Cambridge. Pg. 400-407.

²⁵⁰ Lurie Y., Kazakova N. (1955): "*Teachings to All of Orthodox Christianity*". In "*Anti-feudal Heretical Movements in Ruthenia XIV – Beginning of XVI Centuries*". Sciences, Moscow-Leningrad. Pg. 384-386.

²⁵¹ Lurie Y., Kazakova N. (1955): "*The Conciliar Verdict of 1490*". In "*Anti-feudal Heretical Movements in Ruthenia XIV – Beginning of XVI Centuries*". Sciences, Moscow-Leningrad. Pg. 383.

Furthermore, the Judaizers were accused of possessing “renounced books”, of religious practice “in accordance with the Old Testament”, and of “praising the Judaic faith”²⁵².

The intervention of Grand Duke Ivan III most certainly had an impact on the verdict. While Monk Zakhar, whom Gennady accused of spreading false accusations against him, was pronounced to be the head of all Judaizers, the text of the “*Conciliar Verdict*” peculiarly does not make any reference to archpriest Aleksey, one of Skhariya’s original disciples, nor to Grand Clerk Fedor Kuritsyn. Although Gennady placed both Aleksey and Kuritsyn at the head of the Judaizing movement in his letters, it is likely that their close relations with the Grand Duke allowed them to escape persecution. Moreover, as the date of Aleksey’s death was stated in “*The Enlightener*” to be September 26, 1491²⁵³, which is almost a year after the anti-heretical council, it can be concluded that the head Judaizer was in fact able to avoid persecution.

Nine people in total were convicted for heresy at the Council, all of whom were high-ranking members of the clergy: archpriest Gabriel, priests Denis, Maksim and Vasili, deacon Makar, clerks Gridya, Vasuk and Samukha²⁵⁴. An anathema was declared on the Judaizers: they were defrocked, excommunicated and incarcerated. Two more members of the sect, Ignat Zubov and Ivan Cherni, were convicted in absentia, as they ran away “beyond the sea” and “entered into the Jewish faith”²⁵⁵.

Some of the condemned Judaizers were sent to Novgorod, into the realm of archbishop Gennady. Ahead of their “marketplace execution” (public flogging), the heretics were subjected to an embarrassing procedure: planted on horses face-to-tail with their clothes inside out, hay helmets on their heads and signs “this is the Satan’s army”, they were paraded through Novgorod. Once they reached the marketplace, the helmets were burned right on their heads²⁵⁶. Confirming Gennady’s high regard of the inquisitorial methods, the punishment of the Judaizers in part followed a tradition of the inquisition, which included the burning of caps on the heads of the convicted heretics²⁵⁷.

²⁵² Lurie Y., Kazakova N. (1955): “*Teachings to All of Orthodox Christianity*”. In “*Anti-feudal Heretical Movements in Ruthenia XIV – Beginning of XVI Centuries*”. Sciences, Moscow-Leningrad. Pg. 386.

²⁵³ Volotsky J. (1490-1504): “*The Enlightener*”. In “*The Enlightener, or the Condemnation of the Judaizers Heresy*”. Typography of the Imperial University. Kazan. 1903. Pg. 2.

²⁵⁴ Lurie Y., Kazakova N. (1955): “*The Conciliar Verdict of 1490*”. In “*Anti-feudal Heretical Movements in Ruthenia XIV – Beginning of XVI Centuries*”. Sciences, Moscow-Leningrad. Pg. 383, 385.

²⁵⁵ Lurie Y., Kazakova N. (1955): “*The Letter of Archbishop Gennady of Novgorod to Metropolitan Zosima*”. In “*Anti-feudal Heretical Movements in Ruthenia XIV – Beginning of XVI Centuries*”. Sciences, Moscow-Leningrad. Pg. 376.

²⁵⁶ Lurie Y., Kazakova N. (1955): “*The Message of Novgorod Archbishop Gennady to an Unknown Recipient (excerpt)*”. In “*Anti-feudal Heretical Movements in Ruthenia XIV – Beginning of XVI Centuries*”. Sciences, Moscow-Leningrad. Pg. 472.

²⁵⁷ Belova O., Petrukhin Y. (2008): “*The Jewish Myth in Slavic Culture*”. Hesharim publishing. Moscow-Jerusalem. Pg. 174-179.

It is evident that Gennady aimed to publicly ridicule and mock the exposed Judaizers. They were well known and respected people in Novgorod, and the clownish images that they were subjected to were meant to do away with their authority and dignity. Without a doubt, in the eyes of ordinary people, this act of a demonstrative frivolity was a much more effective method of discrediting the Judaic teachings, which these high-ranking clergy were accused of disseminating amongst their parishioners, than the most successful public debate.

Since detailed records of the investigation and court proceedings have not survived, it is rather hard to evaluate the validity of the allegations brought against the Judaizers. The “*Conciliar Verdict of 1490*” and the “*Teachings to All of Orthodox Christianity*” are typical examples of a Medieval inquisitional process: the heretical delinquencies of the Judaizers are based solely upon the denunciations of their accuser Gennady, while the heretics refused to admit any wrongdoing. The lone exception in this instance was the “repentance” of priest Denis, as he reportedly confessed to the “intemperance of the tongue”²⁵⁸. It can be said, therefore, that the sources portray not so much the ideology of the Novgorod freethinkers, but rather depict the reprisals against them by the feudal Church and State.

Having achieved provisional success in condemning the heresy physically, archpriest Gennady directed his efforts towards confronting the Judaizers ideologically. With the corrupting influence of the Judaizers on the parishioners, the problem of the enlightenment of the Novgorod congregation acquired a particular importance for the archbishop. In order to eradicate apostasy and reaffirm Orthodoxy, the Church was in a dire need of enlightened pastors, and Gennady was one of the first amongst the Russian clergy to talk about the need for the establishment of specialized clerical schools²⁵⁹. Furthermore, Gennady inspired the creation of the first full Slavonic translation of the Bible. The codex became known as “Gennady’s Bible”, and in 1499 the Moscow Patriarchate made several copies of the manuscript²⁶⁰. While a complete set of the Scripture did not exist in Ruthenia, in his letter to archbishop Joseph of Rostov, Gennady pointed out that the Judaizers used distorted texts²⁶¹. Without a doubt, the contention against the Judaizing apostates played a providential role in creating a sanctioned, ‘uncorrupted’ full-length translation of the Holy Book.

²⁵⁸ Lurie Y., Kazakova N. (1955): “*Teachings to All of Orthodox Christianity*”. In “*Anti-feudal Heretical Movements in Ruthenia XIV – Beginning of XVI Centuries*”. Sciences, Moscow-Leningrad. Pg. 388.

²⁵⁹ Lurie Y., Kazakova N. (1955): “*The Letter of Archbishop Gennady of Novgorod to Joseph, Former Archbishop of Rostov*”. In “*Anti-feudal Heretical Movements in Ruthenia XIV – Beginning of XVI Centuries*”. Sciences, Moscow-Leningrad. Pg. 318.

²⁶⁰ Alekseev A. (1999): “*Gennady’s Bible // Textual Analysis of the Slavic Bible*”. Dmitry Bulanin publishing, St. Petersburg. Pg. 143.

²⁶¹ Ibid., Pg. 318.

Between 1502-1504, archbishop Gennady commissioned the translation of two major Medieval European anti-Judaic treatises, namely Nicholas of Lyra's "*Against the Treachery of the Jews*" and Samuel Maroccanus' "*Epistle Against Judaic Errors*"²⁶². The referral to Catholic polemics demonstrates the magnitude of the heretical threat that the Orthodox hierarchy was faced with. Correspondingly, a question arises on the degree of the influence of the Judaizer circle at the Moscow court at the turn of the 16th century.

The Judaizer Circle of Moscow

Various researchers of Russia's Judaizer phenomenon had noted differences between the Judaizer circles of Novgorod and Moscow²⁶³. The most apparent difference was the social class of the heretics: while the vast majority of Novgorod's Judaizers were members of the clergy, Muscovite heretics were for the most part patricians with close ties to the Kremlin. Moscow's Judaizer sect included Elena Stefanovna, the daughter-in-law of the Grand Duke and the mother of the successor to the throne Dmitry, D'yaks Fedor and Ivan-Volk Kuritsyn, boyar Konoplev, merchants Klenov and Zubov, a Hungarian aristocrat Martin, and others.

Meanwhile, serving at the Kremlin's cathedrals, arch-heresiarchs priests Aleksey and Denis enjoyed a great degree of influence on Ivan III. The initial stage of their brilliant careers is shrouded in mystery: according to Josef Volotsky, the Grand Duke was so impressed with their knowledge of mysticism and astrology²⁶⁴, that he appointed the men to key clerical positions in Moscow.

Archpriest Aleksey served at the Cathedral of the Assumption, a central Cathedral of the Russian Orthodox Church. Perhaps this fact explains the peculiar passivity of Metropolitan Gerontius towards the heresy uncovered by archbishop Gennady at the end of the 1480's. Furthermore, it was Aleksey who recommended the candidacy of Zosima to the post of the next Metropolitan of the Russian Orthodox Church. As follows from the testimony of archbishop Gennady, it was at Aleskey's home where secret meetings of Moscow's Judaizer circle were held.

Priest Denis, in turn, served at the Cathedral of the Archangel Michael, which was the home church of the Moscow princes and the resting place of males from the ruling dynasty. Hence, this post provided Denis with greater influence over both the nobility and clergy of Moscow. Denis would have been the priest who took confessions from the family members of the Grand Duke. Amongst Denis's duties would have been conducting memorial services for the deceased parents and ancestors of Ivan III. Occupying a high rank within the Church, Denis, apparently, no longer considered it

²⁶² Konopeeva N. (1982): "*Western Sources in the Works of Novgorod Scribes at the End of XV - Beginning of XVI Centuries*". Federov readings. Moscow. Pg. 140.

²⁶³ Lurie Y. (1960): "*Russian Writing at the End of XV - Beginning of XVI Centuries*". Sciences, Moscow-Leningrad. Pg. 154-185.

²⁶⁴ Volotsky J. (1504-1505): "*The Word on Cunning Treachery*". In Lurie Y., Kazakova N. (1955): "*Anti-feudal Heretical Movements in Ruthenia XIV - Beginning of XVI Centuries*". Sciences, Moscow-Leningrad. Pg. 471.

necessary to conceal his unorthodox way of thinking. He allowed himself to publicly express blasphemy and demonstrate to the members of his congregation a conduct that contradicted the Christian practice, as per the testimonies of archbishop Gennady and Josef Volotsky. Until 1490, the patronage of the Grand Duke provided him with immunity. However once it became obvious that it was impossible to protect him from the amassing accusations coming from Novgorod, witnesses were found who claimed that during the service at the Cathedral of the Archangel Michael, Denis “danced at the throne and desecrated the cross”²⁶⁵.

Other influential members of the heretical circle were the so-called ‘cross clerics’ Istoma and Sverchok. Cross clerics were the deacons at churches located in the royal manors and princely palaces. The ‘cross room’ of the Kremlin palace was the Grand Duke’s place of daily prayers, and contained ancestral relics such as crosses, which were passed down as inheritance. According to abbot Volotsky, Istoma and Sverchok, along with Kuritsyn and Klenov, actively taught others how to “Judaize”²⁶⁶.

The predominantly affluent character of Moscow’s circle of the Judaizers, incorporated by the close proximity to the court of the Grand Duke, generated a more complex ideology and a different type of behavior in comparison with the heretics of Novgorod. Just as in Novgorod, in Moscow the Judaizers held meetings where they performed various Judaic rituals; however in contrast to Novgorod, the meetings in the capital apparently were strictly confidential in nature. Markedly, neither abbot Volotsky nor archbishop Gennady reported blatant vandalism or blasphemy towards sacred Christian objects by the Moscow heretics – priest Denis, who “danced at the throne and desecrated the cross” at the Kremlin was himself a Novgorodian. In their proselytizing activity in the capital, the Judaizers apparently did not place an emphasis on promoting anti-Christian views, but rather on the critique of the New Testament and on the spread of scientific and rational ideas, through which it seems that they had found the support of the Grand Duke, who highly valued astronomical knowledge. Josef Volotsky described the actions of the heretics during the reign of Metropolitan Zosima and the widespread consequences of their propaganda in the following manner: “And those who are reasonable and knowledgeable of the Divine Scripture, they dare not bring into Judaizing just yet, however by distorting the chapters of the Old and New Testament, they attract followers to their heresy, and by teaching astrology and mythology, and analyzing birth and human life by the stars, albeit whilst they despise the Divine Scripture”²⁶⁷.

²⁶⁵ Lurie Y., Kazakova N. (1955): “*The Letter of Archbishop Gennady to Metropolitan Zosima*” In “*Anti-feudal Heretical Movements in Ruthenia XIV – Beginning of XVI Centuries*”. Sciences, Moscow-Leningrad. Pg. 376.

²⁶⁶ Volotsky J. (1490-1504): “*The Enlightener*”. In “*The Enlightener, or the Condemnation of the Judaizers Heresy*”. Typography of the Imperial University. Kazan. 1903. Pg. 27.

²⁶⁷ Volotsky J. (1504-1505): “*The Word on Cunning Treachery*”. In Lurie Y., Kazakova N. (1955): “*Anti-feudal Heretical Movements in Ruthenia XIV – Beginning of XVI Centuries*”. Sciences, Moscow-Leningrad. Pg. 474.

Joseph Volotsky's Polemical Battle Against the Judaizers

While the edicts of the Church council of 1490 to some extent disrupted the Judaizer circle of Novgorod, the Moscow wing of the movement was virtually unaffected by the suppression. Evidently, the bishops could not insist on the persecution of the senior heretics, who were backed by a consolidated position of the Grand Duke and the Metropolitan. This is further reinforced by the fact that Elena Stefanovna, the mother of Prince Dmitry Ivanovich who was crowned in 1498 and became co-Regent along with his grandfather, Ivan III²⁶⁸, was later accused of belonging to the Judaizers²⁶⁹. Although Prince Dmitry was never indicted for heretical practice himself, his coronation as the successor to the Russian throne nonetheless posed a perceptible danger for the zealots of Orthodoxy, as it symbolized a particular degree of influence of the Judaizers on the Grand Duke.

It is interesting to note that Elena Stefanovna (nicknamed Moldovanka and Voloshanka) had family ties with three royal families: that of Muscovy, Moldavia and Kiev. Her marriage to Ivan Ivanovich the Younger, eldest son of Ivan III, made her the daughter-in-law of the Grand Duke and the mother to the successor to the Russian throne. Princess Elena was the daughter of Stefan the Great of Moldavia – while Fedor Kuritsyn, one of the leaders of the Judaizer movement, held embassy at the court of Stefan for extended periods of time in the 1480's. Stefan's wife and Elena's mother was Evdokiia, the daughter of Prince Olelko Vladimirovich of Kiev²⁷⁰. Thus, Elena also happened to be the direct cousin of the aforementioned Kievan Prince Mikhailo Olelkovich, with whom Zacharia the heresiarch arrived to Novgorod. Consolidating both personal and family ties with the individuals whose names are unreservedly entwined with the manifestation of the Judaizer movement in Russia, it comes as no surprise that Princess Elena partook in the heresy. Attracting members of the royal family into their ranks would have been a strategic endeavor on behalf of the conspirators, for as it had been pointed out by Taube, the Judaizers must have been aware of the accounts of the Christianization of Ruthenia and the Judaization of Khazaria, where in both cases a religious conversion of the rulers was followed by the conversion of their respective kingdoms²⁷¹. Meanwhile, the strengthening of the Judaizer party at the Moscow court forced their opponents to abstain from a public polemic against them; it was around the same time that Joseph Volotsky began his ideological crusade against the Judaizer heresy.

²⁶⁸ "The Sofia Chronicle" (1853) in "The Complete Collection of Russian Chronicles." St. Petersburg. Vol. 6. Pg. 353-355.

²⁶⁹ Zimin A., Lurie Y. (1959): "The Messages of Joseph Volotsky" Sciences, Moscow-Leningrad. Pg. 176.

²⁷⁰ Taube, M. (2005): "The 15th c. Ruthenian Translations from Hebrew and the Heresy of the Judaizers: Is there a Connection?" in "Speculum Slaviae Orientalis: Muscovy, Ruthenia and Lithuania in the Late Middle Ages". OGI, Moscow. Pg. 186.

²⁷¹ Ibid.

In 1544, bishop Savva Krutitski remembered the abbot of Volokolamsk, Joseph, with the following words: “And may our father and teacher Joseph be blessed for not letting the harmful heresy to multiply and enter the minds of unreasonable men. For through suffering and sacrifice, father Joseph gave himself fully to the unity of the Orthodox faith, so to prevent the evil heretical teachings from entering the royal chambers, so that the evil men not knowing the divine rules and scripture could not disseminate their blasphemy amongst the nobles and the Princes and lead them to apostasy from the Orthodox Christian faith, and all became known from his writings of the Novgorod heresy”²⁷².

Although the chronology of the majority of Joseph Volotsky’s writings, including the dating of his principal work “*The Enlightener*” cannot be stated with exact precision, the contents of the essays suggest that the abbot of Volokolamsk responded to the call of archbishop Gennady and became the striking force of the anti-heretical faction in the early 1490s²⁷³. It is known that around 1489, Joseph’s monastery, which he founded in Volokolamsk, received books which were to give the abbot literary material for the discourse against the heretics. On January 26 1489, Gerasim Popovka, the underling of archbishop Gennady of Novgorod, sent to Volotsky a book entitled “*Silevester the Pope*”²⁷⁴. Furthermore, Pavel Vasilyev of Novgorod transcribed the Pentateuch for Volotsky, to which two polemical treatises were attached: “*Faith and Resistance of the Baptized Jews in Africa and Carthage and of the Requests, Responses and Consolidation of Jacob the Jew*”, and “*The Epistle of Presbyter Kozma Against Heretics*”. Consequently, abbot Joseph used these texts as references in “*The Enlightener*”.

Volotsky’s letter to bishop Nifont of Suzdal marks the starting point of the abbot’s ascension to the vanguard position in the struggle against the Judaizers, as in the text, he spearheaded his contentions against Metropolitan Zosima himself, who remained at the realm of the Russian Orthodox Church until 1494. In a letter to Bishop Nifont, Volotsky wrote that on the throne of the holy hierarchs Peter and Aleksey “now sits a demonic wolf dressed in ministerial clothing, claiming the rank of a hierarch, but underneath he is Judah the traitor and an accomplice of the devil”²⁷⁵. In the same letter, the Metropolitan is named a “destructive snake”, “the forerunner of the Antichrist”, “the Satan’s vessel”, and is accused of “propagating Judaization”, “isonomic defilement”, “apostasy from Christ”,

²⁷² Nevostruev K. (1865): “*The Life of Venerable Joseph, Abbot of Volokolamsk, Composed by Bishop Savva Krutitski*”. Readings of the Moscow Society of Devotees to Spiritual Enlightenment. Moscow. Book 2. Pg 34.

²⁷³ Zimin A. (1982): “*Russia at the Turn of XV-XVI Centuries: Traces of Socio-Political History*”. Thought publishing. Moscow. Pg. 223.

²⁷⁴ This book is now part of the collection of the Russian State Library. Volok. 505. Pg. 1-166. A note about the sending of the book is on pg. 167. Description in *Joseph, the Hieromonk*. The inventory of manuscripts transferred from the library of Joseph’s monastery to the library of the Moscow Theological Academy. Moscow 1882. Pg. 131-133.

²⁷⁵ Zimin A., Lurie Y. (1959): “*The Letter of Joseph Volotsky to Bishop Nifont of Suzdal*” in “*The Messages of Joseph Volotsky*” Sciences, Moscow-Leningrad. Pg. 160.

“blasphemy of the Virgin Mary and Christ”, “iconoclasm and rejection of the Gospels, apostolic and patristic writings”, and “the disbelief in the second coming of Christ and the resurrection of the dead”²⁷⁶. Volotsky’s letters to archimandrite Evfimij²⁷⁷ and to his brother, monk Vassian Sanin²⁷⁸, evidently written simultaneously with his message to bishop Nifont, feature very similar, severe accusations of the Metropolitan being a satanic “Judaizing heretic”. Moreover, in his “*Narrative of the Newly-Appeared Heresy*”, the introduction of “*The Enlightener*” presenting the historical account of the Judaizers, Volotsky once again labeled the heretical Metropolitan with all of the epithets used in his epistles, as well as with a few new ones, such as “a multi-headed snake”, “the epitome of evil”, and so on²⁷⁹.

The gravest accusations and heinous insults that Joseph Volotsky used to address Metropolitan Zosima with his inherent polemicist talent do not have precedent up until the epoch of the Schism of the Russian Orthodox Church in the mid-seventeenth century, when fierce debates about faith often ended with the opponents of the Church authorities being burnt at the stake. It is therefore a mystery as to how the abbot of Volokolamsk, having entered into a public polemic with the principal Church authority backed by the Grand Duke, was able to avoid persecution, especially considering his own testimony, according to which the Orthodox faithful were subjected to severe oppressions during those years. Conversely, during his reign, Ivan III removed members of the clergy from their posts with ease for much lesser ‘crimes’ than apostasy – for example in 1497, the Grand Duke ordered for the archimandrite of Kremlin’s Chudov monastery to be publicly whipped for being involved in will forgery²⁸⁰.

Evidently free from censorship and external pressure, Volotsky began to work on “*The Enlightener*”, also known as “*The Book on Heretics*”, in the early 1490s, albeit most likely not distributing the essays widely until the Judaizers were entirely exposed and condemned in the early 1500s. Reminiscent of the classic Christian counter-arguments to the Jewish rejection of Christ, the work is written with a clear objective to defend the truth and validity of the Christian dogmas against the heresy. Each of the book’s chapters, or “words” as they are titled, address a specific subject matter, where the author first states a certain alleged teaching or conviction of the Judaizers, formulated in the form of a contention against Christianity, and then refutes the stated by sighting the

²⁷⁶ Ibid., Pg. 161.

²⁷⁷ Kobrin V. (1966): “*The Letter of Joseph Volotsky to Archimandrite Evfimij*” in “*Manuscript Volumes of V. I. Lenin State Library of the USSR*”. Vol. 28. Moscow. Pg. 227-235.

²⁷⁸ Kobrin V. (1966): “*The Letter of Joseph Volotsky to Monk Vassian Sanin*” in “*Manuscript Volumes of V. I. Lenin State Library of the USSR*”. Vol. 28. Moscow. Pg. 236-239.

²⁷⁹ Volotsky J. (1490-1504): “*The Enlightener*”. In “*The Enlightener, or the Condemnation of the Judaizers Heresy*”. Typography of the Imperial University. Kazan. 1903. Pg. 18.

²⁸⁰ Skrytnikov R. (1991): “*The Church and State in XIV-XVI Ruthenia*”. Sciences. Novosibirsk. Pg. 95-110.

scripture. “*The Enlightener*” features 16 principal chapters and an introduction, thematically divided as follows²⁸¹:

- The introduction discusses the solemnity of the crimes committed by the Judaizers, namely by Metropolitan Zosima, archpriest Aleksey, priest Dennis and the Grand Clerk Fedor Kuritsyn.
- In the first chapter, the evidence is presented in favor of the existence of the Holy Trinity based on the prophecies of the Old Testament, questioned by the Novgorod heretics.
- In the second ‘word’, Volotsky argues against the Judaizer claims that the messiah has not yet been born and is yet to come, and that the one whom the Christians call Christ is an ordinary man and not God.
- Using Saint Paul’s line of argumentation, the third chapter contends against the Judaizers appeal to adhere to the Law of Moses, the practice of circumcision and the practice of animal sacrifice.
- In the fourth part, the abbot rejects the argument of the Novgorod heretics that the act of suffering and self-sacrifice of Jesus did not save humanity from sin and defeat the devil.
- The fifth chapter contends against the Judaizers’ assertion that under the Oak of Mamre, Abraham saw God with two angels and not the Holy Trinity, and hence argues that the Trinity must be portrayed on icons.
- The sixth chapter refutes the opinion that it is not befitting to worship man-made objects, as propagated by the Novgorod Judaizers.
- The seventh chapter is dedicated to the justification of the Christian teachings of worshiping the Living Cross, holy icons, and relics of venerable saints, for they heal and perform miracles. Here, Volotsky quotes the Judaizers as saying; “let us desecrate icons like Jews desecrated Christ”.
- In the eighth chapter, Volotsky addresses the Judaizer’s question on how is it that the second coming of Christ has not yet happened. Does that not prove apostolic writings false? According to Volotsky, the apostolic writings are true, for they were inspired by the Holy Spirit.
- The ninth chapter further deals with addressing the questions on the second coming.
- The tenth chapter condemns the heretical disbelief in the miracles performed by Saint Ephraim the Syrian.
- In the eleventh chapter, Volotsky defends monastic life against the Judaic assertion that those who will not reproduce will be damned.
- The twelfth chapter denies allegations that if a heretical bishop curses or doesn’t bless an Orthodox parishioner, God’s judgment will follow that of the bishop.
- In the thirteenth chapter, Volotsky rejects claims of the Judaizers that it is wrong to condemn heretics and apostates. Here, the author stresses that not only should heretics and apostates be condemned and cursed, but that it is befitting for kings and princes to imprison and subject them to brutal executions.

²⁸¹ Volotsky J. (1490-1504): “*The Enlightener*”. In “*The Enlightener, or the Condemnation of the Judaizers Heresy*”. Typography of the Imperial University. Kazan. 1903. Pg. 18.

- In the fourteenth chapter Volotsky maintains that Orthodox faithful should search out and expose heretics and apostates. In that regard, using evidence from the scripture, Volotsky emphasizes that all those who love Christ must find in themselves the diligence and the determination to seek out heretics through the means of “prudent trickery”, while anyone trying to hide a heretic becomes an accomplice to the heresy.
- In the fifteenth chapter, Volotsky denounces the allegation of the Novgorod heretics, who claimed that if a heretic or an apostate repents, then he should enter the Church and indulge in Divine Mysteries. Here the author differentiates between the degrees of heresy and apostasy, stating that the Novgorod Judaizers are “the worst abomination of all heretics and apostates living under the heavens”.
- In the final sixteenth chapter, the abbot further discusses the question of repentance, arguing that if a heretic or apostate repents only after being convicted, mercy cannot be granted, as this kind of repentance is not sincere. An allegory is made with thieves, murderers and grave robbers, whose repentance upon conviction is not accepted.

While there is no solid evidence to suggest that the doctrines assigned to the Judaizers by Volotsky actually matched the ideologies embraced by the heterodox movement, the great majority of the abbot’s allegations do in fact match certain principles of traditional Judaism. Notably, in his essays, Volotsky used the terms “heretics” and “Jews” interchangeably. In the strict sense of the term, for abbot Joseph the manifestation of Judaization was not a “heresy”, or an arbitrary distortion of the Christian Orthodox dogmas, but rather a distinctive act of apostasy – the complete negation of the Christian faith in favor of its ideological binary opposition - Judaism. Furthermore, the fact that this negation was not declared openly only intensified its danger.

Correspondingly, troubled by other heresies and schisms, such as the “Strigolniki” movement, which in the mid 14th-early 15th centuries renounced the ecclesiastic hierarchy²⁸², the Late Medieval and Early Modern Russian Orthodox Church was in a dire need of a clearly defined manual for combating nonconformists. In that context, Joseph Volotsky’s “*The Enlightener*” constitutes precisely this kind of a manual, in which the author not only exposed and refuted the Judaizer heresy, but also set a precedent on how to approach the manifestation of any unorthodox teachings – whether religious, agnostic or sectarian. To quote Volotsky: “He who reads this text attentively will feel its pleasant essence and absorb its goodness, inasmuch it arises from the true Divine Scripture and prophetic writings, through the use of which all Judaic splendor and godless heretical idle talk will be eradicated”²⁸³.

²⁸² Goldfrank D. (1998): “*Burn, Baby, Burn: Popular Culture and Heresy in Late Medieval Russia*”. The Journal of Popular Culture, Vol. 31. No. 4. Michigan State University. Pg. 17-32.

²⁸³ Volotsky J. (1490-1504): “*The Enlightener*”. In “*The Enlightener, or the Condemnation of the Judaizers Heresy*”. Typography of the Imperial University. Kazan. 1903. Pg. 5.

The Debacle of the Judaizers

On the 17th of May 1494, Metropolitan Zosima descended from the hierarchy of the Russian Orthodox Church and retired to Moscow's Simonov monastery, moving to the Trinity Lavra of St. Sergius a few years later. The chronicles provide opposing accounts of this event: according to the Vologda-Perm chronicle, "the Grand Duke exiled Metropolitan Zosima from Moscow"²⁸⁴, while a chronicler from Vladimir, indicated that "Zosima left his post by his own wish"²⁸⁵. Furthermore, in "*The Book of the Degrees of the Royal Genealogy*" it is stated that Zosima was deprived of the archdiocese due to "a certain impediment"²⁸⁶. Although there is no evidence suggesting that Zosima's removal from the helm of the Church hierarchy was related to the heretical practices of which Joseph Volotsky fervently accused the Metropolitan in his writings, Zosima's resignation could be linked with the absence of the highly influential Grand Clerk Fedor Kuritsyn in Moscow in May 1494²⁸⁷. Kuritsyn, to whom both archbishop Gennady and abbot Joseph assigned the leading role amongst the Judaizers, was a close associate of Zosima and likely played a role in his appointment as Metropolitan in 1490²⁸⁸. In 1498, Kuritsyn was named third amongst D'yaks in the list of the governmental hierarchy at the Moscow court²⁸⁹.

There is evidence to suggest that even after his departure from Moscow, Zosima continued to assign to himself the role of the archdiocese. In October 1495, he led a communion service at the Trinity Lavra of St. Sergius "dressed in priestly attire and standing on the Eagle rug"²⁹⁰ – a position reserved solely for the Metropolitan²⁹¹. Despite

²⁸⁴ "*The Chronicle of Vologda-Perm*" (1959) in "*The Complete Collection of Russian Chronicles*". Vol. 26. Sciences. Moscow-Leningrad. Pg. 289.

²⁸⁵ "*The Chronicle of Vladimir*" (1965) in "*The Complete Collection of Russian Chronicles*" Vol. 30. Sciences. Moscow Pg. 213.

²⁸⁶ Vasenko P. (1913): "*The Book of Degrees of the Royal Genealogy*". The Archaeographical Expedition of the Russian Academy of Sciences, Typography of Alexandrov A., Saint Petersburg. Vol. 21. Part 2, Pg. 368.

²⁸⁷ Zimin A. (1982): "*Russia at the Turn of XV-XVI Centuries: Traces of Socio-Political History*". Thought publishing. Moscow. Pg. 224-225.

²⁸⁸ Tikhonyuk I. (1992): "*The Mystery of Archimandrite Evfimij: Origins of the Conflict Between Joseph Volotsky and Metropolitan Zosima*". In "*Problems of National History and Culture of the Period of Feudalism*". Readings in memory of V. Kobrin. Moscow. Pg. 176.

²⁸⁹ Kashtanov S. (1967): "*The Socio-Political History of Russia at the End of XV – First half of XVI Centuries*". Sciences. Moscow. Pg. 29.

²⁹⁰ Typography of Demis L. (1863): "*The Complete Collection of Russian Chronicles*". Vol. 15. Part 1. The Archaeographical Expedition of the Russian Academy of Sciences. Saint Petersburg. Pg. 368.

breaking the canonical rules by this act, Zosima evidently retained a revered position amongst the clergy and correspondingly could not have been considered a heretic at this time. Moreover, it is known that at the monastery of the Virgin Mary in Pskov, Zosima remained to be revered as the Metropolitan as late as 1497²⁹².

The continued influence of the Judaizers on the Russian Church and clergy, even after Zosima's demise from the ecclesiastical cathedra, is evidenced by the appointment of a member of the Judaizer circle and Zosima's blood relative Kassian in 1499 as the archimandrite of the Yuriev monastery and as the head of the black clergy in Novgorod²⁹³. It was Grand Clerk Kuritsyn who recommended Kassian to Ivan III for the position²⁹⁴. Being a state administered institution, the Yuriev monastery and Kassian's administration did not fall under the authority of archbishop Gennady. According to the testimony of Joseph Volotsky, the Yuriev monastery under Kassian's guidance became the city's principal meeting place of the heretics²⁹⁵.

Evidently, a political dilemma in the Grand-ducal family in 1502 was amongst the primary causes for the eventual debacle of the influential Judaizers circle. The Ioasafovskaya Chronicle states that on April 11 of that year, "Grand Duke Ivan III denounced his grandson Prince Dmitry and his mother Elena, and from that day forbade for their names to be mentioned during church service, nor to entitle Dmitry as Prince, and placed them under custody"²⁹⁶. Prince Dmitry was therefore stripped of the right of inheritance to the throne in favor of his uncle Vasili, and subsequently was imprisoned along with his mother Elena, whom Joseph Volotsky charged with belonging to the Judaizers²⁹⁷.

From the 1504 letter of abbot Joseph to Ivan III's spiritual adviser Mitrofan, archimandrite of the Andronnikov Monastery, it becomes known that between 1502 and

²⁹¹ Sokolof D. (1899): *"The Manual of the Orthodox Church's Divine Services"*. Holy Trinity Monastery (published in 2001). New York. P. 32.

²⁹² *"The Judiazers"* (2013). In *"The Orthodox Encyclopedia"*. Edited by the Patriarch of Moscow and All Russia Kirill. The Research Center of the Russian Orthodox Church, Moscow. Vol. 19, Pg. 189.; Main collection of manuscripts. Q.I. 1380. Russian National Library. St. Petersburg. Pg. 98

²⁹³ Yanin V. (2004): *"The Monasteries of Medieval Novgorod in the Structure of Governmental Institutions"* in *"Medieval Novgorod: Traces of Archeology and History"*. High school, Moscow. Pg. 238-240.

²⁹⁴ Ibid.

²⁹⁵ Volotsky J. (1490-1504): *"The Enlightener"*. In *"The Enlightener, or the Condemnation of the Judaizers Heresy"*. Typography of the Imperial University. Kazan. 1903. Pg. 323.

²⁹⁶ *"Ioasafovskaya chronicle"* (1967) in *"The Complete Collection of Russian Chronicles"*. Vol. 6, 2nd Ed. Sciences. Moscow-Leningrad. Pg. 144.

²⁹⁷ Zimin A., Lurie Y. (1959): *"The Messages of Joseph Volotsky"* Sciences, Moscow-Leningrad. Pg. 176.

1504, Volotsky met with the Grand Duke a number of times, in private, at the Kremlin²⁹⁸. According to Volotsky, the series of confidential meetings, initiated by Ivan, marked the rejection of the sovereign's patronage of the Judaizers and his aspiration to reconcile with the Orthodox party. During their initial meeting, the Grand Duke "spoke of Church matters", asked abbot Joseph for "forgiveness", and took upon himself "certain obligations" based on "certain conditions" set by Volotsky as the preconditions for the reconciliation²⁹⁹. It is rather striking that the Grand Duke, having already "received forgiveness from the Metropolitan and the Bishops" as is indicated in the letter, was seeking the forgiveness of an abbot of a monastery, which occupied a modest place in the hierarchy of the Russian Orthodox sanctuaries. Evidently, it was important for the Grand Duke to be forgiven for patronizing the Judaizers not just from the Church hierarchs, but also from the chief anti-heretical ideologist, Joseph Volotsky.

During the course of their second meeting, the Grand Duke "spoke of the Novgorod heretics", and admitted to Volotsky of "knowing of their heresy... the heresy that was kept by archpriest Aleksey, and the heresy that was kept by Fedor Kuritsyn"³⁰⁰. Of the meeting's outcome, Volotsky writes that he was ordered by the Grand Duke to "search out heretics in all towns and extirpate them"³⁰¹. Accordingly, a record in "*The Patericon of Volokolamsk*" testifies to Volotsky's presence at the Simonov Monastery in Moscow in 1502 on the orders of the Grand Duke: "And so told us father Joseph, having arrived at the holy sanctuary of the Virgin Mary in Simonov, that the sovereign of the Russian lands was searching for the godless heretics"³⁰². Notably, between 1485-1490, Zosima was the archimandrite of the Simonov monastery, before his appointment as the Metropolitan³⁰³. Being a stronghold for Zosima's supporters, therefore, the Simonov monastery was a prime target for a heretical audit, and Volotsky clearly intended to indict the former Metropolitan for spreading Judaic teachings amongst his followers. The appointment of Volostky's brother Vassian as the archimandrite of the monastery in 1502³⁰⁴ was likely due to the change in Ivan III's policy of patronizing the Judaizer movement.

In light of the concurrent change in the choice of the heir to the Russian throne, the key purpose for conducting the investigation on heretical practices was to find evidence

²⁹⁸ Ibid., Pg. 175-178.

²⁹⁹ Ibid., Pg. 176.

³⁰⁰ Zimin A., Lurie Y. (1959): "*The Messages of Joseph Volotsky*" Sciences, Moscow-Leningrad. Pg. 176.

³⁰¹ Ibid.

³⁰² "*The Patericon of Volokolamsk*" in "*Ancient Russian Patericons*" (1999). Edited by Olishchevskaya L. and Travnikov S. Published by the Joseph Volotsky Monastery. Moscow. Pg. 105.

³⁰³ Kuchkin V. (1995): "*The Beginning of the Simenov Monastery*" in "*Culture of Medieval Moscow XIV-XVII*". Sciences. Moscow Pg. 115.

³⁰⁴ Ibid. Pg. 120.

discrediting the faction of the denounced Prince Dmitry within both the official and clerical ranks. In December 1504, the exposed Judaizers were tried for heresy at a Church council in Moscow. The event is briefly described in a 1508 chronicle: “That winter the Grand Duke Ivan III and his son Prince Vasili, with Metropolitan Simon and the bishops, having searched out the heretics, condemned the sinners to death; and on December 27 deacon Volk Kuritsyn, Mitya Konoplev and Ivashka Maksimov were burned in a cage, while Nekras Rukov had his tongue cut out and then sent to Novgorod where he was burnt. And that same winter in Novgorod, archimandrite Kassian was burnt along with his brother, and many other heretics were burnt, while others were imprisoned, and others sent to monasteries”³⁰⁵.

The majority of the executed Judaizers were high-ranking officials, members of the clergy and prominent merchants. Deacon Volk Kuritsyn, one of the heretics who was “burnt in a cage”, was the brother of Grand Clerk Fedor Kuritsyn. Mitya Konoplev, son of a boyar, was one of Russia’s envoys to the Grand Duchy of Lithuania in September 1503³⁰⁶. Of Ivashka Maksimov it is known that he “brought into the heresy” Ivan III’s daughter-in-law Elena Stefanova, who was imprisoned and died in 1515³⁰⁷.

Notably, there is no record of Fedor Kuritsyn being tried at the council, or being executed. Furthermore, his son Afanasi Federovich made a successful career as a clerk at the court of Vasili III³⁰⁸. Correspondingly, former Metropolitan Zosima also avoided persecution, as records indicate that during the time of the council in 1504, he was residing at the Kirillo-Belozersky monastery in Vologda, and in 1510 at the Spaso-Kamenny Monastery in the same region³⁰⁹. Nonetheless, in the anathema issued against the Judaizers by the Kremlin’s Uspensky Cathedral in 1504, containing 43 names of all convicted heretics at the 1490 and 1504 councils, both Fedor Kuritsyn and Zosima are named, with the former Metropolitan opening the list: “New heretics, the unbelievers in our Lord Jesus Christ the son of God, and in the Pure Mother of God, blasphemers against our Holy Fathers and icons: Metropolitan Zosima of Moscow, the archimandrite of the Yuriev Monastery Kassian, Fedor and Volk Kuritsyn, archbishop Aleksey of Moscow, Mitya Konoplev...and those who spread and governed the heresy in the

³⁰⁵ “*Sofiskaya Chronicle*” (2000) in “*The Complete Collection of Russian Chronicles*”. Vol. 6, 1st Ed. Language of Russian Literature, Moscow. Pg. 49.

³⁰⁶ Veselovski S. (1975): “*Deacons and Clerks of VV-XVII centuries*”. Sciences, Moscow. Pg. 280.

³⁰⁷ “*The Collection of the Russian Imperial Historic Society*”(1882). Vol. 35. St. Petersburg. Pg. 413.

³⁰⁸ Agoshton M. (2006): “*The Problem of the Genealogy of Clerk Fedor Kuritsyn // Royal Court in the History of Russia XV-XVII centuries*”. Materials of the International Scientific Conference. Vladimir. Pg. 140.

³⁰⁹ Knyazevskaya O. (1987): “*Monuments of Literature in Museums of the Volgograd Region: Directory and Guide*”. Vologda regional museum. Part 1, Vol 2. Vologda. Pg. 56

Russian land, and all of the accomplices to the debauchery of the Orthodox Christian faith, may they be cursed”³¹⁰.

The clergy and the general masses met the news of the execution of the Judaizers by the means of burning - an unprecedented phenomenon in Russian practice - with indignation. Soon after the 1504 church council, Joseph Volotsky was evidently forced to write an epistle entitled “*The Word on the Condemnation of the Heretics*”, in which he argued of the brutal execution being a just and necessary punishment for “apostates”³¹¹. Rebuttal to the abbot’s arguments is contained in “*The Answer of Kirillov Elders to the Epistle of Joseph Volotsky on the Condemnation of the Heretics*”, the authors of which accused Volotsky of “cruelty characteristic of the Old Testament”, and of “neglecting New Testament teachings of grace and forgiveness”³¹². The presence of Zosima at the Kirillo-Belozersky monastery at the time, attests to his involvement in writing the epistle, as arguing in favor of merciful treatment of the repentant heretics was of a vital importance for the former Metropolitan, whose name appeared in the aforementioned anathema against the Judaizers. Volotsky, in turn, expressed his objections to the Kirillov elders in “*The Epistle on the Observance of the Council Verdict*”. Writing on behalf of the new Metropolitan in Moscow, the abbot contended that the Judaizers were not just heretics but “apostates who rejected Christ”, and that “none of them repented truly and purely, but only under the threat of death”³¹³. Consequently, this argument developed into a polemic between “Josephites” and “Non-possessors”, as the two camps became known henceforth³¹⁴. In the middle of the 16th century, the former archimandrite of the Trinity Lavra of St. Sergius Artemi was charged with upbraiding Volotsky’s “*The Enlightener*” and “not cursing the Judaizers”³¹⁵. Likewise, in 1584, bishop Leonid of Ryazan complained that the archbishop of Rostov Evfimi charged him and his followers with adherence to the Old Testament: “he calls us not Josephites, but Judaizers”.

³¹⁰ Begunov Y. (1957): “*Book of the Holy Trinity of the Uspenski Cathedral*” // “*Council Verdicts as Sources of History of the Novgorod-Moscow heresy*”. Works of the Department of Ancient Russian literature, Vol. XIII. Pg. 219.

³¹¹ “Lurie Y., Kazakova N. (1955): “*The Word on the Condemnation of the Heretics*”. In “*Anti-feudal Heretical Movements in Ruthenia XIV – Beginning of XVI Centuries*”. Sciences, Moscow-Leningrad. Pg. 495-497.

³¹² “Lurie Y., Kazakova N. (1955): “*The Answer of Kirillov Elders to the Epistle of Joseph Volotsky on the Condemnation of the Heretics*”. In “*Anti-feudal Heretical Movements in Ruthenia XIV – Beginning of XVI Centuries*”. Sciences, Moscow-Leningrad. Pg. 511-513.

³¹³ “Lurie Y., Kazakova N. (1955): “*The Epistle on the Observance of the Council Verdict*”. In “*Anti-feudal Heretical Movements in Ruthenia XIV – Beginning of XVI Centuries*”. Sciences, Moscow-Leningrad. Pg. 506-510.

³¹⁴ Kazakova N. (1978): “*When Did the Polemic Between Josephites and Non-possessors Begin?*”. In “*History of Feudal Russia*”. Sciences, Leningrad. Pg.

³¹⁵ “*Acts Collected in Libraries and Archives of the Russian Archeological Expedition of the Imperial Academy of Sciences*” (1836). Vol. 1. Saint Petersburg. Pg. 251.

The news of the execution of the Judaizers spread beyond Russia's borders. In February 1505, the Vogt of Narva reported: "Volk Kuritsyn, the Clerk of the old Grand Duke, was burned along with many other Russians due to some kind of heresy that spread amongst them. And Prince Vasili orders for the heretics to be detained at all times, everywhere where it is possible to locate them, and orders to burn them"³¹⁶.

The Teachings of the Judaizers

Although the precise mechanism employed by the Judaizers to attract Christians to their practice is not described in the primary sources, there is no doubt that the utilization of the Old Testament texts, that were known within the Church, was instrumental to this process. Moreover, while the allure of Moscow's nobility towards the heretical movement, according to Seebohm³¹⁷, may have been due to their veneration of the scientific literature circulated by the group, rather than spiritual convictions or matters of faith, the fundamental ontological concepts of the said translated literature reflect a strict prophetic Monotheism incompatible with the central concepts of the Christian dogma, such as the Trinity, Incarnation and Resurrection³¹⁸. Thus, the heresy of the Judaizers can be analyzed within the framework of a "textual community" phenomenon, understood by Brian Stock to consist of a group of believers that formed around a sage, who explained and interpreted religious texts³¹⁹. Moreover, archbishop Gennady's discovery of the translation of Immanuel ben Jacob Bonfil's astronomical manual "*Six Wings*" to be in possession of the Judaizers³²⁰ underlines the group's veneration of Jewish scientific literature. The central point of reference for another faith is the sudden conviction in the truth of the latter - in his analysis of the mechanism of the formation of Sabbatarian sects, Lvov noted: "the justification is reduced to the binding elements of the text (words or lines of scripture), with elements of extra-textual reality (rituals, beliefs, etc.), bypassing

³¹⁶ Kazakova N. (1976): "*Livonian and Hanseatic Sources on the Domestic Political History of Russia at the End of XV-Beginning of XVI*". Auxiliary of Historical Disciplines, Leningrad. Pg. 159.

³¹⁷ Seebohm T. (1977): "*Ratio und Charisma: Ansätze und Ausbildung Eines Philosophischen und Wissenschaftlichen Weltverständnisses im Moskauer Russland*". Mainzer philosophische Forschungen, Bd. 17. Bouvier publishing, Bonn.

³¹⁸ Taube M. (2005): "*The Fifteenth Century Ruthenian Translations from Hebrew and the Heresy of the Judaizers: Is There a Connection?*"// "*Speculum Slaviae Orientalis: Muscovy, Ruthenia and Lithuania in the Late Middle Ages*". Ed. by V. Ivanov. OGI, Moscow. Pg. 187.

³¹⁹ Stock B. (1986): "*History, Literature, and Medieval Textuality // Yale French Studies*" in "*Images of Power Medieval History/Discourse/Literature*". Yale University Press, New Haven. No. 70, P. 7-17.

³²⁰ Lurie Y., Kazakova N. (1955): "*The Letter of Archbishop Gennady to Bishop Prokhor Sarsky*". In "*Anti-feudal Heretical Movements in Ruthenia XIV – Beginning of XVI Centuries*". Sciences, Moscow-Leningrad. Pg. 310, 317.

the mediation of ideas through the direct and paradoxical identification of textual fragments, with fragments of reality”³²¹.

The success of the Judaizer ‘propaganda’ in Novgorod and Moscow was largely due to the efficacious refutation of the belief in the end of the world in the year 7000 of the Byzantine calendar, which corresponded to the year 1492 of the Gregorian calendar³²². While the majority of the Russian clergy remained committed to this conviction up to this date, the stimulation of doubt amongst the Orthodox faithful on the validity of such claims by the Judaizers certainly attracted followers to join their ranks. Abbot Volotsky conveyed the Judaizer’s assertions on the matter as such: “Seven thousand years shall pass, and Easter shall come, and the second coming of Christ will remain unfulfilled, and the essence of the paternal scripture is false and so it is befitting to have it burned”³²³. Archbishop Gennady quoted archpriest-heresiarch Aleksey exulting that “the years of the Christian chronicler are ending, while ours are amassing”³²⁴ – “ours” evidently being a reference to the Judaic calendar, according to which 1492 corresponded to the year 5252 from the creation of the world³²⁵. As follows from testimony of the Novgorod archbishop, he himself had heard Aleksey’s reasoning on the expected timing of Armageddon³²⁶.

The doctrine of the Judaizers is described in detail in “*The Enlightener*”. The heretical group rejected the dogma of the Holy Trinity, and believed that “Christ had not yet been born, while the one whom the Christians worship as God, he was just a regular man, not God”³²⁷. Furthermore, they appealed the following, according to Volotsky: “It is

³²¹ Lvov A. (2003): “*Between ‘Ours’ and ‘Foreigners’ (on the Treatment of Sabbatarian Sectarians) // Ours or Foreign? Jews and Slavs in the Eyes of Each Other*”. House of Jewish Book, Moscow. Pg. 248-265.

³²³ Lurie Y., Kazakova N. (1955): “*The Word on the Newest Heresy*”. In “*Anti-feudal Heretical Movements in Ruthenia XIV – Beginning of XVI Centuries*”. Sciences, Moscow-Leningrad. Pg. 480.

³²⁴ Lurie Y., Kazakova N. (1955): “*The Letter of Archbishop Gennady of Novgorod to Joseph, former Archbishop of Rostov*”. In “*Anti-feudal Heretical Movements in Ruthenia XIV – Beginning of XVI Centuries*”. Sciences, Moscow-Leningrad. Pg. 318.

³²⁵ The reason for the discrepancy in the chronology between Christians and Jews, as pointed out by Archbishop Gennady, is because Christians based their calculations on the *versio septuaginta interpretum* of Old Testament (LXX, ‘the translation of the seventy interpreters’), while Jews - on the editions of the Old Testament of Aquila, Symmachus and Theodotion. According to the Septuagint, the number of years from Adam to the flood was 2242, while according to the Masoretic text - 1656. The incarnation of Christ, therefore, occurred at 5500 and 3760 years from the creation of the world, respectively.

³²⁶ Lurie Y., Kazakova N. (1955): “*The Letter of Archbishop Gennady of Novgorod to Joseph, Former Archbishop of Rostov*”. In “*Anti-feudal Heretical Movements in Ruthenia XIV – Beginning of XVI Centuries*”. Sciences, Moscow-Leningrad. Pg. 318.

³²⁷ Volotsky J. (1490-1504): “*The Enlightener*”. In “*The Enlightener, or the Condemnation of the Judaizers Heresy*”. Typography of the Imperial University. Kazan. 1903. Pg. 50.

appropriate to keep the Law of Moses, conduct animal sacrifice, and circumcise”³²⁸. The Judaizers denied Christian sacraments, prayers, almsgiving, the veneration of the cross, icons and the relics of saints. According to archbishop Gennady, the Judaizers “prayed like the Jews”, “altered the psalms”, conducted the liturgy unworthily, and abused the cross³²⁹. At their meetings, the heretics practiced blasphemy: desecrated icons, communion bread for the sacrament of the Eucharist, and poured “foul water into wine”³³⁰. The clergy-Judaizers did not observe the fasts and mocked church services: “They eat well and drink to drunkenness, and in that state come into the Holy Church and conduct the Divine service”³³¹.

During the course of the investigation on the Judaizers conducted by Gennady in 1487-1490, it was discovered that the doctrine of the heretics was “not only Judaism”³³². The archbishop found traces of Marcionism and Messalianism, which he vindicated in the following way: upon being exposed, the heretics immediately renounced their beliefs and declared themselves to be faithful members of the Orthodox Church³³³. Moreover, their conduct of the Eucharist was unworthy. Although these charges pertain to the behavior of the Judaizers and not their teachings, Gennady employed a formal method to describe the encountered phenomena. Attempting to classify the newfangled heresy in accordance with an established practice, the archbishop drew on chapters 12 and 19 of the rules of Timothy I of Constantinople, which were referenced in Novgorod’s authoritative “Kormchaya Book”. Once exposed, the Judaizers immediately cursed their heretical beliefs and hypocritically repented, while the exact same behavior was prescribed to Marcionites and Messalians in the Korchmaya³³⁴. Accordingly, the Novgorod heretics were not just Judaizers, but also Marcionites and Messalians! Such characterization of the heretics must have comforted Gennady, as it allowed for a description of a new phenomenon using old terminology.

³²⁸ Ibid., Pg. 68.

³²⁹ Lurie Y., Kazakova N. (1955): “*The Letter of Archbishop Gennady to Bishop Prokhor Sarsky*”. In “*Anti-feudal Heretical Movements in Ruthenia XIV – Beginning of XVI Centuries*”. Sciences, Moscow-Leningrad. Pg. 310-313.

³³⁰ Lurie Y., Kazakova N. (1955): “*The Letter of Archbishop Gennady of Novgorod to the Council of Bishops*”. In “*Anti-feudal Heretical Movements in Ruthenia XIV – Beginning of XVI Centuries*”. Sciences, Moscow-Leningrad. Pg. 378.

³³¹ Lurie Y., Kazakova N. (1955): “*The Epistle on Respecting the Council Verdict of 1504*”. In “*Anti-feudal Heretical Movements in Ruthenia XIV – Beginning of XVI Centuries*”. Sciences, Moscow-Leningrad. Pg. 507.

³³² Ibid., Pg. 316.

³³³ Ibid., 310-311.

³³⁴ Library of the Trinity Lavra of St. Sergious. “*Sinodal Kormchaya of Novgorod*” (1653). No. 132, Pg. 418. <http://old.stsl.ru/manuscripts/staropechatnye-knigi/9-1>

In addition to the charges of Marcionism and Messalianism, other ‘non-Judaic’ elements are found in archbishop Gennady’s polemics on the teachings and practices of the heretical movement. In his epistle to bishop Nifont of Suzdal, describing the various practices of cross abuse by the group, Gennady depicted how the heretics tied crucifixes to the paws of birds, and applied to the crucifixes images of genitalia³³⁵. While the first charge indicated a conscious insult of a sacred Christian relic (characteristic of the Judaizers), the second charge, with all its countenance, pointed to a different Medieval tradition – the widespread use of magic amulets, which were considered to have protective powers³³⁶.

A number of sources indicate that the Judaizers opposed monasticism. Their criticism of this institution was based on an Old Testament notion of procreation, according to which the absence of an offspring infers sinfulness and hence is displeasing to God. This position was reflected in the marginal notes made by Ivan Cherni in “*The Hellenic and Roman Chronicler*”, a text which he copied by the order of Grand Duke Ivan III, as well as in glosses likely made by Cherni using cryptography (Permian letters of the alphabet) in a list of Old Testament prophecies³³⁷. In the 11th ‘word’ of “*The Enlightener*”, Joseph Volotsky quoted the Judaizers, proclaiming: “cursed is anyone that has not vested a seed in Israel”³³⁸, which was likely a quotation of Deuteronomy 25:9, distorted for polemically strengthening the condemnation of the heretics. They also did not shy away from appealing to the New Testament, arguing that if monasticism was pleasing to God, then Christ would have been a monk. Distorting the words of St. Paul, the Judaizers argued that in the First Epistle to Timothy, when writing of the apostates who will emerge at the end of times, St. Paul referred to monks³³⁹. The fact that in anti-monastic polemics, the Judaizers made references to the New Testament does not give grounds to doubt their Judaic convictions, for this technique had been widely used in the Jewish-Christian polemics in Medieval and Early Modern Europe. For the purpose of debate, each party tried to use a full set of arguments that were relevant in the eyes of the opponent. Accordingly, “*The Enlightener*” is predominantly based on texts of the Old Testament.

³³⁵ Lurie Y., Kazakova N. (1955): “*The Letter of Archbishop Gennady to Bishop Nifont of Suzdal*”. In “*Anti-feudal Heretical Movements in Ruthenia XIV – Beginning of XVI Centuries*”. Sciences, Moscow-Leningrad. Pg. 309-310.

³³⁶ Barabanov N. (2004): “*The Byzantine Church and the Phenomenon of Phylacteries*” // “*Slavs and Their Neighbors*”. Indric publishing, Moscow. Vol. 11, Pg. 79.

³³⁷ Lurie Y., Kazakova N. (1955): “*The Essay Against Monasticism*”. In “*Anti-feudal Heretical Movements in Ruthenia XIV – Beginning of XVI Centuries*”. Sciences, Moscow-Leningrad. Pg. 303.

³³⁸ Volotsky J. (1490-1504): “*The Enlightener*”. In “*The Enlightener, or the Condemnation of the Judaizers Heresy*”. Typography of the Imperial University. Kazan. 1903. Pg. 283.

³³⁹ Ibid., Pg. 253-254.

The doctrine of the Judaizers, expressed in Gennady's and Volotsky's epistles, denied the basic tenets of Christianity, and had no parallels in any other Christian heresies known to have occurred in Ruthenian lands. Hence, abbot Volotsky maintained that the conventional rules for the treatment of the repentant heretics could not have been applied in relation to the Judaizers, as the involvement with the group constituted not just heresy, but also apostasy from the Christian faith. While the heresy of the Judaizers had been interpreted as a pre-reformation movement in various studies, the great majority of Volotsky's refutations of the Judaizer assertions correspond to the themes found in Medieval polemics between Christians and Jews in Byzantium and Western Europe during the Middle Ages³⁴⁰. On this subject, Ryan noted: "All the 'Judaizer' texts would undoubtedly have been scorned as Medieval by West European humanists"³⁴¹.

The Literature of the Judaizers

The Judaizers did not leave any writings that would indicate the essence of their doctrine. In that regard, Speranski commented: "As unofficial literature, pursued by the ecclesiastical and secular authorities, it was forced to be hidden and was available to a small minority, and being limited in scope, it is therefore not so visible to the researcher"³⁴². Nevertheless, several works that are related to the Judaizers have survived to this day – namely "*The Laodicean Epistle*" and "*The Story of Dracula*", both associated with the leading figure of Moscow's circle of the Judaizers, D'yak Fedor Kuritsyn.

In the great majority of the manuscripts of "*The Laodicean Epistle*", the earliest dating to the end of the 15th century, the name and the profession of the person who authored the text (literarily 'translated' or 'delivered' the text, as indicated by the Russian verb "приведшего", which can mean either one or the other) was inscribed by numerical cryptography, evidently in order to conceal the identity of the author from the general readership. Lurie and Kazakova, who are amongst the most authoritative scholars on the sources pertaining to the subject, deciphered the cryptographic inscription to read: "Fedor Kuritsyn D'yak"³⁴³. The Epistle consists of a theological-philosophic poem, written in the form of a florilegium with rhyming lines, with every sentence beginning with the word that ended the previous one; a "table in squares", a cryptographic encryption consisting of two rows of letters in an alphabetical order with related commentary; and the encrypted

³⁴⁰ Vereshchagin V. (2001): "*The Church Slavonic Book Culture in Russia. Lingual-Textual Investigations*". Indric publishing, Moscow, Pg. 174-193.

³⁴¹ Ryan W. F. (1999): "*The Bathhouse at Midnight/ An Historical Survey of Magic and Divination in Russia*". Penn State University Press, PA. Pg. 17.

³⁴² Speranski M. (2004): "*History of Ancient Russian Literature*". Lan publishing, Saint Petersburg, 4th ed., Pg. 367.

³⁴³ Lurie Y., Kazakova N. (1955): "*The Laodicean Epistle of Fedor Kuritsyn*". In "*Anti-feudal Heretical Movements in Ruthenia XIV – Beginning of XVI Centuries*". Sciences, Moscow-Leningrad. Pg. 265-276.

signature of Fedor Kuritsyn. The first part, referred to as the “Poem on the Soul”, had been translated into English by Moshe Taube as follows:

The soul is an autonomous substance, its constraint is faith
Faith is established on the commandment of the prophets
The commandment of the prophet is confirmed by (their capacity to) work miracles
The gift of working miracles is strengthened by wisdom
The force of wisdom is a life of a pharisee
Its goal is learning
Learning is most blessed
By it we arrive at the fear of God - the incipency of virtue
By this the soul is defined³⁴⁴.

While a large number of versions of the Epistle had survived to this day, indicating that the Russian Church did not perceive it as a heretical work during the Early Modern period and beyond, the ideas conveyed in the “*Poem on the Soul*” are likely to have been originated from Jewish sources. A strong Maimonidean influence on the text had been demonstrated by Taube: for instance, the manner in which the notion of ‘learning’ is expressed in the poem directly resembles Maimonides’s treatment of this concept in his “*Logical Vocabulary*”, which states: “We say, e.g. of Man that...his agent is the Giver of life, and his purpose is the attainment of truth by means of intellect”³⁴⁵. This link is attested by archbishop Gennady’s mention of the Judaizers being in the possession of “*Logika*”³⁴⁶, a Slavic translation of Maimonides’ “*Logical Vocabulary*”, with sections on Metaphysics from Algazel’s “*Intentions of the Philosophers*”³⁴⁷. Moreover, the use of the terminology in the Poem – for example, of the soul being “an autonomous substance” (“самовластна” in Russian), the choice of wording for “barrier” (заграда), the allusion to a “pharisee” (фарисей) - all closely correspond to the use of these terms in “*Secretum Secretorum*”, a 10th century pseudo-Aristotelian text, which as had been demonstrated

³⁴⁴ Taube M. (1995): “*The "Poem on the Soul" in the Laodicean Epistle and the Literature of the Judaizers*”. Harvard Ukrainian Studies 19, Cambridge. Pg. 675.

³⁴⁵ Ibid., Pg. 680-681.

³⁴⁶ Lurie Y., Kazakova N. (1955): “*The Letter of Archbishop Gennady to Archbishop Josef*”. In “*Anti-feudal Heretical Movements in Ruthenia XIV – Beginning of XVI Centuries*”. Sciences, Moscow-Leningrad. Pg. 320.

³⁴⁷ Taube M. (1995): “*The "Poem on the Soul" in the Laodicean Epistle and the Literature of the Judaizers*”. Harvard Ukrainian Studies 19, Cambridge. Pg. 683.

by Ryan³⁴⁸, was translated into Ruthenian from its Hebrew version, and as attested by Taube, this translation could have been done only by a Jewish translator³⁴⁹.

Taube went further to suggest that the “*Poem on the Soul*” in the “*Laodicean Epistle*” was in fact excised from the original Slavic version of “*Secretum Secretorum*”³⁵⁰. This deduction is based on a passage in the text where Aristotle, the purported author, promises to Alexander the Great, the purported audience, to draw for him two circles, one worldly and one spiritual, which would summarize all the good advice given in the “*Mirror of Princes*”: “And I will start for thee the worldly by ‘world’ and the spiritual by ‘soul.’ And each one of them contains eight parts”³⁵¹. However, the promised circles are missing in all of the known versions of the Slavic “*Secretum Secretorum*” (meanwhile, in both Hebrew and Arabic versions, Aristotle promises one circle, which is then provided in a form of a poem with eight double lines). Hence, Taube suggested that while the fate of the missing “*Worldly Circle*” remains a mystery, the ‘Spiritual Circle’ beginning with “soul” is the “*Poem on the Soul*” in the “*Laodicean Epistle*”.

Another anonymous literary work that had been suggested to be affiliated with D’yak Fedor Kuritsyn is “*The Tale of Dracula*”³⁵², which is composed of legends about the 15th century Prince of Wallachia, Vlad Tepes. Just as in Hungarian and German narratives, the key characteristics prescribed to the Prince in the Russian version of the tale are Dracula’s cruelty and impartiality, unbound by the norms of Christian morality. The concluding part of the text reveals a detail pertaining to the author’s identity: it becomes known that the author “witnessed” the death of Dracula’s second son, which occurred in Hungary, whilst “currently” the throne of Dracula “is occupied by Vlad the Monk”, who in 1481 became the Prince of Wallachia. The author, apparently, was a Russian national (the tale opens with a reference to “our” Russian language), who visited Hungary in the early 1480’s with certain companions (the text features “in front of us”, “we have seen”). A likely candidate for the authorship, corresponding to the given indicators, is the persona of Fedor Kuritsyn, who during 1482-1485 headed the embassy of Muscovy to Hungary and Moldavia. Although the oldest known Russian manuscript of “*The Tale of Dracula*” dates to 1486, there is little doubt that the text is not an original

³⁴⁸ Ryan W. (1978): “*The Old Russian Version of the Pseudo-Aristotelian “Secreta Secretorum”*”. *The Slavonic and East European Review* Vol. 56, No. 2, London. Pg. 257-258.

³⁴⁹ Taube, M. (2005): “*The 15th c. Ruthenian translations from Hebrew and the Heresy of the Judaizers: Is there a connection?*” in “*Speculum Slaviae Orientalis: Muscovy, Ruthenia and Lithuania in the Late Middle Ages*”. OGI, Moscow. Pg. 190.

³⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, Pg. 198-200.

³⁵¹ *Ibid.*, Pg. 199.

³⁵² Comp. by Likhachev D., Dmitriev A. (1982): “*The Tale of Dracula*” in “*The Monuments of Literature of Ancient Russia. Second Half of the XV Century*”. Sciences, Moscow. P. 554-565.

Russian literary work³⁵³, and it is likely that Kuritsyn brought the story to Russia from Hungary.

If the manifestation of “*The Tale of Dracula*” in Russia was in fact the work of Fedor Kuritsyn, then this act was largely in line with the Dyak’s enterprise as a publicist and ideologue. After the defeat of the Judaizer movement in 1504, “*The Tale of Dracula*” practically disappeared from the Russian literary tradition, just as other texts deemed unfavorable by the Church and State. As one can imagine, the reason for this was the author’s candid expression of the inevitable cruelty of autocracy, coupled with the motives hostile to Christian morality.

It is known that Fedor Kuritsyn’s brother Ivan-Volk, who in 1504 was condemned to death by burning for Judaizing, copied the “*Book of the Pilot*”, or the ‘*Korchmaia Book*’, which constituted a guide for the management of the Church based on the existing ecclesial laws³⁵⁴. According to Belyakova, Kuritsyn’s version is made up of various previous versions of the “*Korchmaia*” and does not contain any original traits.

Kazakova and Lurie argued in favor of the cryptographic glosses made by Ivan Cherni in the marginal fields of the books of the Bible and in “*The Hellenic and Roman Chronicler*” (1485), both copied by him, to be directly related to the Judaizer literateness³⁵⁵. For “*The Hellenic and Roman Chronicler*”, Cherni wrote a postscript. According to archbishop Gennady, Ivan Cherni ran away “beyond the sea” and “entered into the Jewish faith”³⁵⁶, thereby escaping the condemnation of the Judaizers at the Council in Moscow in 1490.

In a letter to ex-archbishop of Rostov, Josef, archbishop Gennady listed the literature that he found to be in possession of the Judaizers in Novgorod. Gennady wrote to Josef, asking: “Do you have in Kirillov, or in Farafontov, or in Kammeni, the following books: “Selivester the Pope, and Athanasius of Alexandria, and the Word of Cosmas the Priest against the newly-appeared heresy of the Bogomilis, and the Epistle of Patriarch Photios to Prince Boris of Bulgaria, and Prophets, and Genesis, and Kings, and Proverbs, and Menander, and Joshua Sirach, and Logika, and Dionysius the Areopagite? As the heretics have all of these books in their possession”³⁵⁷. While there is little doubt

³⁵³ Bulaev F. (1863): “*On Determining the Foreign Sources of the Story About Muntenian Governor Dracula*”. *Chronicles of Russian Literature and Antiquity*, Moscow. Vol. 5, Part 3, Pg. 84-86.

³⁵⁴ Belyakova E. (1984): “*The Sources of the Korchmaia of Ivan Volk Kuritsyn // Ancient Russian Literature*”. *Chronology*, Leningrad. Pg. 75-83.

³⁵⁵ Lurie Y., Kazakova N. (1955): “*The Postscript of Ivan Cherni to the Greek Chronicler*”. In “*Anti-feudal Heretical Movements in Ruthenia XIV – Beginning of XVI Centuries*”. *Sciences*, Moscow-Leningrad. Source No. 8, Pg. 277-299.

³⁵⁶ Lurie Y., Kazakova N. (1955): “*The Letter of Archbishop Gennady of Novgorod to Metropolitan Zosima*”. In “*Anti-feudal Heretical Movements in Ruthenia XIV – Beginning of XVI Centuries*”. *Sciences*, Moscow-Leningrad. Pg. 376.

³⁵⁷ Lurie Y., Kazakova N. (1955): “*The Letter of Archbishop Gennady to Archbishop Josef*”. In “*Anti-feudal Heretical Movements in Ruthenia XIV – Beginning of XVI Centuries*”. *Sciences*, Moscow-Leningrad. Pg. 320.

that the books of the Old Testament and “*Logika*” formed some of the core beliefs of the Judaizers, the rest of the texts mentioned by Gennady embodied the literature used by the Christians for polemical discourses against Judaism and heresies. It can only be assumed that the Judaizers would have studied these texts in order to be informed of the arguments of their opponents.

Lurie identified the text to which Gennady referred to as “Selivester, the Pope” as the “*Deeds of Silvester*” (*Actus Silvestri, Vita Silvestri, Gesta Silvestri*, amongst other titles), a 4th century polemical text of pseudo-authorship of Eusebius of Caesarea, the second part of which depicts a dispute between Pope Silvester I and Jews, in which the Pope triumphs³⁵⁸. “Athanasius of Alexandria” was likely a reference to St. Athanasius’s “*Orations Against the Arians*”, another 4th century polemical work directed against the disbelief in the divinity of Christ³⁵⁹. Cosmas the Priest’s 10th century polemic “*Against the Newly-Appared Heresy of the Bogomilis*”, which condemned the Bogomil heresy founded in Bulgaria, was known in the ancient Russian book-learning from the 11th century³⁶⁰. The Epistle of Patriarch Photios I of Constantinople to the newly converted Prince Boris I of Bulgaria contains theological advice with the elucidation on the foundations of the Christian doctrine, with an emphasis made on the responsibility of Princes to organize the religious life of their subjects³⁶¹. “*Dionysius the Areopagite*” referred to the 5th-6th century work of Pseudo-Dionysius, known for its distinctive Christian Neo-Platonism and a mystical consideration of the Holy Trinity. In Medieval Ruthenia, the Old Testament cannon included “*The Wisdom of Sirach*”, and at times “*The Sentences of the Syraic Menander*”³⁶².

Grigorenko presented a number of arguments in favor of the opinion that “*Logika*” mentioned by archbishop Gennady should be understood as “*Dialectic*” of John of Damascus, which was well known in Ruthenia in the 15th century³⁶³. He pointed to the manuscript tradition of naming “*Dialectic*” as “*Logika*”, and that “*Dialectic*” was amongst the works commonly attributed to be circulating amongst heretics. The

³⁵⁸ Lurie Y. (1999): “*Commentary to Epistle of Gennady to Josef*”. Library of Literature of Ancient Ruthenia, Saint Petersburg. Vol. 7, Pg. 574.

³⁵⁹ Archangelski A. (1888): “*The Creations of the Church Fathers in Ancient Russian Literature: Examination of Manuscript Material*”. Journal of the Ministry of National Enlightenment, Saint Petersburg. July, Pg. 4-6.

³⁶⁰ Begunov Y. (1973): “*Cosmas the Priest in Slavic Literature*”. Bulgarian Academy of Sciences, Sofia. Pg. 87-93.

³⁶¹ White D. (1982): “*The Patriarch and the Prince. The Letter of Patriarch Phoitos of Constantinople to Khan Boris of Bulgaria*”. Holy Cross Publishing, Brookline, Mass.

³⁶² Alekseev A. (1999): “*Textual Analysis of the Slavic Bible*”. Bulanin Publishing, Saint Petersburg. Pg. 27-28.

³⁶³ Grigorenko A. (1999): “*The Spiritual Quest in Ruthenia in the late XV century*”. Eidos Publishing, Saint Petersburg. Pg. 40-41.

predominant opinion, however, remains that “*Logika*” should be understood as the 12th century treatise of a Spanish Jewish philosopher and scribe Moses Maimonides³⁶⁴. Furthermore, Taube had demonstrated an etymological connection between Maimonides’ “*Logical Vocabulary*” and “*The Laodicean Epistle*”, attributed to one of the leaders of the Judaizer movement Fedor Kuritsyn³⁶⁵.

There is considerable evidence to suggest that the Novgorod-Moscow Judaizer heresy was directly related to the distribution of astronomical and scientific literature in Russia, which was translated into Ruthenian predominantly from Hebrew and Arabic in the lands of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania. In addition to Moses Maimonides’ “*Logical Vocabulary*” (*Logika*) and Immanuel ben Jacob Bonfil’s “*Six Wings*”, both claimed to have been in possession of the Judaizers by archbishop Gennady³⁶⁶, as well as “*The Laodicean Epistle*” attributed to Fedor Kuritsyn, the following texts, known to have been translated into Ruthenian in the second half of the 15th century, have been branded as the “literature of the Judaizers”, following Sobolevskii’s 1903 appellation³⁶⁷:

- Al-Ghazali’s “*Intentions of the Philosophers*” (the first two sections, Logic and Theology)
- Johannes De Sacrobosco’s “*Book of the Sphere*” (Sobolevskii’s “*Cosmography*”)
- The collection of nine Old Testament Hagiographa in the single sixteenth century Vilnius Codex
- Pseudo-Aristotle’s “*Secret of Secrets*” (the Slavic version includes the interpolations of Maimonides’ Treatise on Sexual Intercourse, On Poisons and their Antidotes, Book of Asthma, and Rhazes’ chapter on Pshysiognomy from the second part of his book *Al-Mansuri*³⁶⁸).

In his research on the relation of the Judaizer heresy to the mystical works translated and distributed in Ruthenia at that time, Turilov had suggested that the following

³⁶⁴ Sobolevskii (1903): “*The Translated Literature of Muscovy Ruthenia*”. Typography of the Imperial Academy of Sciences, Saint Petersburg. Pg. 401-409.

³⁶⁵ Taube M. (1995): “*The “Poem on the Soul” in the Laodicean Epistle and the Literature of the Judaizers*”. Harvard Ukrainian Studies 19, Cambridge. Pg. 683.

³⁶⁶ Lurie Y., Kazakova N. (1955): “*The Letter of Archbishop Gennady to Bishop Prokhor Sarsky*”. In “*Anti-feudal Heretical Movements in Ruthenia XIV – Beginning of XVI Centuries*”. Sciences, Moscow-Leningrad. Pg. 310.

³⁶⁷ Sobolevskii (1903): “*The Translated Literature of Muscovy Ruthenia*”. Typography of the Imperial Academy of Sciences, Saint Petersburg. Pg. 401-423.

³⁶⁸ Taube, M. (2005): “*The 15th c. Ruthenian Translations from Hebrew and the Heresy of the Judaizers: Is there a Connection?*” in “*Speculum Slaviae Orientalis: Muscovy, Ruthenia and Lithuania in the Late Middle Ages*”. OGI, Moscow. pg. 189.

additional texts likely circulated within heretical circles at the turn of the 15th century³⁶⁹: “*Aristotle’s Gates*”, “*Rafli*” (Rafli of King David), “*Vorongrai*” and “*Zodei*”. At the Stoglav Synod in 1551, the Church banned all of these texts, along with the aforementioned “*Six Wings*”.

The connection of the literature in question to the Judaizer movement is further corroborated by the fact that Zacharia ben Aharon ha-Kohen of Kiev, asserted by certain scholars (Bruckus, Taube) to be one and the same person with Zacharia Skariya the heresiarch of “*The Enlightener*”, had copied a Hebrew translation of Johannes De Sacrobosco’s “*Book of the Sphere*” in Kiev in 1454³⁷⁰. Furthermore, evidence linking Zacharia to the translation of Maimonides’ “*Logika*” into Slavic comes from the preface to a 16th century Ruthenian Psalter contained at the library of the Kiev Theological Academy. The folium of the manuscript contains a list of authors and the terminology they used for different sciences, with one of the mentioned authors being “Skhariya” (Cxapia)³⁷¹. The terms ascribed to Skhariya – arithmetic, geometry, music, astronomy, politics, physics, theology – are depicted as the “seven wisdoms” in the afterword of the Slavic version of “*Logika*” in the same order and are practically identical in their spelling³⁷².

Further linking the translations of the discussed literature to the Judaizers is the 1470 commentary of the renowned Kiev scholar and Kabbalist Rabbi Moses ben Jacob ha-Gole on the “*Six Wings*”³⁷³, a copy of which was found to be in the possession of the heretics by archbishop Gennady. A manuscript collection contained at the Vienna Imperial library, with the ownership marked as “belonging to Moshe ben-Jacob”³⁷⁴, includes a Hebrew translation of Al-Farghani’s “*Elements of Astronomy - Arabic compendium of Ptolemy’s “Almagest”*”, the copy of which, as the colophon on folio 40r testifies, was made in “Kiev on the 20th of Shvat 5228” (January 16, 1468) and bears the

³⁶⁹ Turilov A. (1989): “*To the Cultural-Historical Characteristic of the “Judaizer” Heresy // Hermeneutics Ancient Russian Literature*”. Institute of World Literature named after I. M. Gorkiy, Moscow. Vol. 1, Pg. 410-411.

³⁷⁰ Taube M. (2010): “*Transmission of Scientific Texts in 15th-Century Eastern Knaan*”. Aleph: Historical Studies in Science and Judaism, Vol. 10, issue 2. Indiana University Press. Pg. 325-326.

³⁷¹ Taube, M. (2005): “*The 15th c. Ruthenian Translations from Hebrew and the Heresy of the Judaizers: Is there a Connection?*” in “*Speculum Slaviae Orientalis: Muscovy, Ruthenia and Lithuania in the Late Middle Ages*”. OGI, Moscow. pg. 197-198.

³⁷² Ibid.

³⁷³ Taube M. (1995): “*The Kievan Jew Zacharia and the Astronomical Works of the Judaizers*”. Jews and Slavs 3. Jerusalem. Pg. 326-327.

³⁷⁴ Taube M. (2010): “*Transmission of Scientific Texts in 15th-Century Eastern Knaan*”. Aleph: Historical Studies in Science and Judaism, Vol. 10, issue 2. Indiana University Press. Pg. 322.; Vienna, Imperial Library. Codex 183 in Schwarz’s 1925 Catalogue. Table IX, item m.

mark of authorship of “Zacharia, the son of Aharon the Kohen of blessed memory”³⁷⁵. Thus, the connection of Zacharia Skariya, the pronounced initiator of the Judaizer heresy in Novgorod, to Rabbi Moses of Kiev, the author of the contemporaneous commentary to “*Six Wings*”, is more than amply conceivable.

There is evidence to suggest that Hebrew texts began to be translated into Slavic in Ruthenian lands even prior to the outbreak of the Judaizer heresy. Various Russian compilations and chronicles, dating to the first half of the 15th century, contain integrated Hebrew works, most of which are historical accounts³⁷⁶. These include the “*The Life of Moses*”, integrated in the “*The Explanatory Paleia*”, excerpts from “*Josippon*” in “*The Academy Chronograph*”, and a complete reworking of the last part of “*Josippon*” dealing with the destruction of the Temple, integrated into the second reduction of “*The Hellenic and Roman Chronicler*”. These Slavic texts show traces of Ruthenian, as well as of the Novgorodian dialect. While the circumstances behind the creation of these texts are unclear, it is known that the Judaizers of Moscow showed interest in them – the heretic Ivan Cherni extensively glossed a 1489 copy of “*The Hellenic and Roman Chronicler*”³⁷⁷.

According to certain researchers of Medieval Russian literature, such as Florovskii³⁷⁸ and Alekseev³⁷⁹, the translations of biblical accounts from Hebrew into Slavic were carried out for the internal use of the Jewish communities, or “Synagogal” purposes. Taube, on the other hand, had refuted such conjectures, asserting that while Jews normally adopted the local tongue of the land they lived in, there is a great difference between speaking and writing – the literature in question, relating to Astronomy, Logic, Theology, etc. would have been read by highly cultivated Jewish scholars, who were without a doubt fluent in Hebrew, and therefore did not need a translation³⁸⁰. Hence, according to this view, the translations were intended for a non-Jewish audience interested in Jewish writings. While sources reveal that the Judaizers in Novgorod, ascribed to be the followers of the teachings of a Jew named Skariya of Kiev, had “*Six Wings*” and “*Logika*” in their possession, it follows that the heresiarch likely spread the Slavic translations of these texts amongst the learned Orthodox clergy for the

³⁷⁵ Taube M. (1995): “*The Kievan Jew Zacharia and the Astronomical Works of the Judaizers*”. Jews and Slavs 3. Jerusalem. Pg. 172.

³⁷⁶ Taube, M. (2005): “*The 15th c. Ruthenian Translations from Hebrew and the Heresy of the Judaizers: Is there a connection?*” in “*Speculum Slaviae Orientalis: Muscovy, Ruthenia and Lithuania in the Late Middle Ages*”. OGI, Moscow. pg. 188-189.

³⁷⁷ Ibid., 189.

³⁷⁸ Florovskii G. (1981): “*The Ways of Russian Theology*”. YMCA Press, Paris.

³⁷⁹ Alekseev A. (1999): “*Textual Analysis of the Slavic Bible*”. Bulanin Publishing, Saint Petersburg. Pg. 184-185.

³⁸⁰ Taube, M. (2005): “*The 15th c. Ruthenian Translations from Hebrew and the Heresy of the Judaizers: Is there a Connection?*” in “*Speculum Slaviae Orientalis: Muscovy, Ruthenia and Lithuania in the Late Middle Ages*”. OGI, Moscow. pg. 194.

purposes of proselytization. Moreover, the aforementioned evidence linking Skhariya to the translation of “*Logika*” further testifies to the validity of this deduction. Taube had also demonstrated that the translator of “*Logika*”, comprised of Maimonides’ “*Logical Vocabulary*” and Al Ghazali’s “*The Intentions of the Philosophers*”, deliberately dissimulated the Muslim origin of the second part of the text by erasing any traces of Arabic – the names of places and persons were changed from Arabic to Jewish (i.e., “Zayd” and “Umar” of the Hebrew version were changed to “Abraham” and “Isaac” in the Slavic)³⁸¹. By presenting the Muslim heritage as Jewish, the author evidently intended to exalt the Judaic heritage in the eyes of the intended Slavic audience. Moreover, the deliberate elimination of all traces of another faith from the text implies that the translation might have been undertaken for the purposes of proselytizing Judaism amongst the Slavic Orthodox readership.

Judaic Proselytism and the Judaizer Heresy

In the twentieth century Russian historiography, a firm opinion was promulgated on that the testimonies on the Judaizers contained in the epistles of archbishop Gennady and texts of Josef Volotsky are unreliable, as their authors did not aspire to objectively present the truth of the matter, but rather intended to portray the group as apostates deserving death - possibly out of a personal grudge or career ambitions³⁸². Accordingly, this line of argumentation rejects the possibility of Judaic practice by the men convicted for heresy during the time period in question. Yet, it cannot be disregarded that the basis of their accusations were the materials of investigations and trials on the Judaizers of 1488, 1490 and 1504. Moreover, authors of these polemics understood that if they were to falsely depict the beliefs and practices of the Judaizers, not only would their argumentation be ignored by the governmental and ecclesiastical authorities, but that they also risked a slander charge. This is reinforced by the fact that despite a solid set of accusations presented against Metropolitan Zosima and deacon Fedor Kuritsyn, neither man was convicted, for they were under the patronage of the Grand Duke. Moreover, if the Jewish factor behind Gennady’s numerous epistles, voluminous treatise of abbot Volotsky, monk Savva’s “*The Epistle Against Jews and Heretics*” and the translations of anti-Judaic polemics are to be disregarded, then what effect on society did the accusers hope to achieve by waging a polemic against not a real, but a mythical danger?³⁸³

The principal argument against the veracity of the “Judaizing” allegations is based on the denial of the very possibility of Jewish proselytism. Nonetheless, in light of the current anthropological studies, Jewish proselytism appears as a perceptible phenomenon

³⁸¹ Ibid., pg. 195.

³⁸² Lurie Y. (1973): “*On Certain Principles of Source Critique*”. Chronology of National History, Moscow. Pg. 94-96; “*On Methods of Proof in the Analysis of Sources (Based on the Materials of Ancient Russian Monuments)*”. Questions of History, Moscow. No. 5, Pg. 63, 68.

³⁸³ Howlett Y. (1993): “*The Testimony of Archbishop Gennady on the Heresy of “Novgorod Heretics Judaizer Philosophizers”*”. Words of the Division of Ancient Russian Literature. Pushkin House, Saint Petersburg. Vol. 46. Pg. 58-73.

in various locations in Medieval Europe: based on their research of the Jewish diaspora in the Bosphorus, Kashaev and Kashkovskaya concluded that a form of proselytism was practiced by the local Jewish communities up to the modern period, thereby “setting the stage for changes in the ethnic composition of communities for the future”³⁸⁴. Furthermore, Prohorov hypothesized that proselytism, uncharacteristic for representatives of Talmudic Judaism, could have radiated from the members of the Karaite communities: the religious life of the Jewish communities in the Crimea and the North Caucasus is characterized as a "pre-rabbinic Judaism", in which the practice of proselytism was seen as a necessary condition for survival³⁸⁵.

According to this view, the directive to proselytize came from the advocates of Jewish rationalism, who upon the dominance of Rabbinical Judaism in the Middle Ages were deprived of the channels of influence on the majority of the Jewish populace. Without a doubt, through the active mobilization of anti-Christian polemical texts, non-Ashkenazi Jewish communities of Eastern and Southern Europe, in which Jewish rationalist philosophy largely based on Maimonides and contemporary French Jewish thinkers was prevalent, attempted to prevent the conversion of their coreligionists to Christianity. The dispersion of texts such as “*Toledot Yeshu*” – “*The Book of the History of Jesus*”³⁸⁶, which denounced the gospel story as false and employed the Talmudic reference to Jesus³⁸⁷ to claim that he practiced black magic, naturally questioned the validity of the Christian doctrine. Accordingly, from the 14th century Jewish-Christian syncretic groups sprung up in various corners of the Byzantine Empire³⁸⁸. The polemics of the archbishop of Thessaloniki, Gregory Palamas, raised awareness of such groups, as he waged an ideological battle against a religious group that he called “Chiones”, whose dogma combined Jewish, Christian and Muslim elements³⁸⁹. Occasionally, the conflicts

³⁸⁴ Kashaev S., Kashkovskaya N. (2009): “*The Archeological Data on the Jewish Diaspora in the Bosphorus//Archeologia Abrahamica: Research in the Area of Archeology and Traditions of Judaism, Christianity and Islam*”. Russian Academy of Sciences, Institute of Archeology, Moscow. Pg. 61-62.

³⁸⁵ Prohorov G. (1972): “*The Debate of Gregory Palamas with “Chione and Turks” and the Problem of “Jewish Subtilize*”. Works of the Department of Ancient Russian Literature, Leningrad. Pg. 339; Achkinazi I. (2000): “*Krymchaks. Historical and Ethnographic Essays*”. Dar publishing, Simferopol. Pg. 55.

³⁸⁶ Dan J. (2006): “*Toledot Yeshu*”. In Michael Berenbaum and Fred Skolnik. Encyclopaedia Judaica 20 (2nd ed.). Gale Virtual Reference Library, Detroit. Pg. 28.

³⁸⁷ Talmud (Sanhedrin 107a).

³⁸⁸ Melioranskiy B. (1895): “*On the History of Anti-Feudal Movements in Macedonia in XIV//Stephanos*”. Collection of essays in honor of F. Sokolov, Saint Petersburg. Pg. 65-72.

³⁸⁹ Prohorov G. (1972): “*The Debate of Gregory Palamas with “Chiones and Turks” and the Problem of “Jewish Philosophizers*”. Works of the Department of Ancient Russian Literature, Leningrad. Pg. 339.

between the converts to Judaism and Orthodox Christians had to be resolved at the level of the highest authorities in Constantinople³⁹⁰.

In the European Far East, the foundation for the emergence of the Jewish-Christian dialogue were Jewish settlements that existed in the region from the time of the Medieval Kievan state³⁹¹. In the 15th century, one of the most appropriate places for such contacts was Novgorod, which was a major center for trade and hence a place of convocation of the representatives of different faiths. In the Russian chronicles, reports of contacts with Jews are rare, as the chroniclers reported of such instances only when such cross-confessional interaction occurred in exceptional circumstances. Thus, writing of a famine that occurred in 1445, a Novgorod chronicler recounted that while many of the city's residents fled to Lithuania and German lands, others "sold themselves into slavery to foreign and Jewish merchants in exchange for bread"³⁹². Additional evidence pointing to the rather intensive Jewish-Christian relations in Novgorod is found in the "*Life of Saint Zosima of Solovki*", which features an episode about a feast where monk Zosima saw six Novgorod boyars without a head, which signified their subsequent execution in 1471³⁹³. The closest parallel to Zosima's vision is a Talmudic principle, which states that if someone will not see the shadow of his head on the night of Hoshana Rabbah, the final day of divine judgment of the High Holidays, that person is destined to die before the end of the year³⁹⁴. A Jewish trace in the use of this motive in the story of monk Zosima is therefore most probable.

The year 1471 concurrently marks the foundation of the Judaizer movement in Novgorod. Clearly, by the time of the arrival of Zacharia Skhariya to the northern Republic from Kiev, Jews already had well-established trade outlets and channels of communication in the region. Although there are no indubitable sources to suggest that Jews were engaged in proselytization of their faith in Novgorod prior to the arrival of Zacharia, the lack of such information also does not eliminate said possibility. What is certain, however, is that a dialogue between the representatives of the two faiths on the veracity of each other's beliefs was commonplace: the records of the Novgorod Church dating to the beginning of the 15th century, the so called '*Kormchaya Books*', registered

³⁹⁰ Zanamonec A. (2004): "*The Case of Hionios: to the History of the Byzantine Judaic Sect*". Byzantine Vremennik, Moscow. Vol. 63 (88), pg. 317-323.

³⁹¹ Toporov V. (1995): "*The Jewish Element of Kievan Rus // Slavs and Their Neighbors. The Jewish Population in Central, Eastern and South-Eastern Europe: From the Middle Ages to the Beginning of the Modern Times*". Collection of Theses of the XII reading in the memory of V. D. Korolyuk, Moscow. Pg. 28-43.

³⁹² "*Novgorodian Codex*" (2000) in "*The Complete Collection of Russian Chronicles*". Russian Literature, Moscow. Vol. 3, Pg. 425.

³⁹³ Dubnov S. (2003): "*History of Jews in Europe // Middle Ages Until the End of the Crusades*". Gershaim/Bridges of Culture, Moscow. Vol. 1, Pg. 244.

³⁹⁴ Ibid.

the names of Jews who baptized into Orthodoxy³⁹⁵. It is interesting to note that during this time, an essential condition for baptism was that it was undertaken voluntarily, for the record states: “And these Jews come to the Christian faith not for the sake of need, nor due to trouble. Not out of fear, temptation, or out of poverty or debt. For if it is done out of envy or material benefit, it is meaningless, nor can the virtue of baptism be forced upon”³⁹⁶. However, the extent to which this ideological point was actually followed is questionable.

Various factors indicate that in contrast to 15th century Spain, to the experience of which archbishop Gennady unsuccessfully tried to appeal, contemporaneous Russia did not feature an anti-Jewish sentiment. For instance, the main agent of Ivan III in Crimea was an influential Jewish merchant Chosa Kokos, with some of his letters to Moscow having been written in Hebrew³⁹⁷. Simultaneously, between 1481 and 1500, Ivan III persistently invited the Prince of Taman, Zacharia Gvizolfi, to serve in Moscow, while addressing him as “Zacharia Skhariya the Jew” in his initial letter³⁹⁸. In 1490, Ivan III invited a Venetian Jewish doctor named Master Leon to be the court physician, and although the death of the heir to the throne, Ivan the Younger, resulted in the doctor’s execution, there is no indication that his faith or ethnicity had an effect on the verdict³⁹⁹.

According to Josef Volotsky, Ivan III admitted to him to have been aware of the heresy of archpriest Aleksey and Fedor Kuritsyn⁴⁰⁰. Over a decade earlier, when archbishop Gennady publicly accused both of these men of Judaizing, Aleksey continued to retain an exceptional trust of the Grand Duke to the extent that his recommendation of appointing Zosima to the post of Metropolitan of the Church was ratified. Meanwhile, the peak of Kuritsyn’s career at the Kremlin came in 1490’s. In Novgorod, followers of the Judaizing teachings did not include supporters of the independent republic who were disadvantaged by Moscow’s conquest, but rather members of the high clergy and nobility who demonstrated to the Moscow autocrat the willingness to serve him in the forefront. Meanwhile, their spiritual convictions did not prevent the Judaizers from being appointed

³⁹⁵ The Archive of the Russian National Library. “Records of Jews coming to the Christian faith”. Fond II. 119, beginning of XV century. Pg. 161.

³⁹⁶ Ibid., Q II. 49. First Half of the XV century Pg. 265.

³⁹⁷ “The Letter of Ivan III to Chosa Kokos Dated 1472”. In *Collection of the Russian Historic Society* (1884). Vol. 41, Part 2: Monuments of Diplomatic Relations between Russia and Crimean Horde and Turkey. Saint Petersburg. Pg. 8

³⁹⁸ “The Letter of Ivan III to Zakharia Skariya the Jew Dated 1482”. In “*Collection of the Russian Imperial Historical Society*” (1884). Vol. 41: Monuments of Diplomatic Relations between Russia and Crimean Horde and Turkey. Saint Petersburg. Pg. 40-41.

³⁹⁹ Typography of Edward Prats (1841): “*The Sofia Chronicle*”. In “*The Complete Collection of Russian Chronicles*”. Vol. 6., 2ed. The Archaeographical Expedition of the Russian Academy of Sciences, Saint Petersburg. Section 237.

⁴⁰⁰ Zimin A., Lurie Y. (1959): “*The Messages of Joseph Volotsky*” Sciences, Moscow-Leningrad. Pg. 176.

to the leading positions at the Kremlin, both religious and secular, as the Grand Duke, for instance, listened to Fedor Kuritsyn “on all matters”⁴⁰¹.

Jewish Mission to the Slavs

In this work, the Judaizer heresy is analyzed in the context of a successful proselytization of certain elements of Judaism amongst a small, but influential group comprising of the clergy and nobility in Novgorod and Moscow, including high-ranking officials at the court of Grand Duke Ivan III and within the Russian Church. If Jews from the Grand Duchy of Lithuania (Kiev) were responsible for the emergence of the Judaizers movement in Russia, as had been stated by the group’s aforementioned adversaries, and scientific works translated by these Jews from Hebrew into Ruthenian served as the textual basis for the transmission of the Judaic teachings, a question arises on the motives that drove the Kievan Jewish scholars to translate the texts intended for inter-Jewish readership and to circulate them amongst Christians.

As had been proposed by Schneider⁴⁰², the connecting link might be found in the works of Rabbi Moses ben Jacob ha-Goleh (the Exile) from Kiev, the only Jewish author working in the region during the period in question whose writings survive to this day. Having studied with the Jewish community of Constantinople in his youth, Rabbi Moses was a rationalist and a Maimonidean, and is best known for his Kabbalistic work “*Lily of Secrets*”, completed in 1511 and circulated from the 16th century⁴⁰³. His collection of Hebrew manuscripts, currently contained at the Vienna Imperial Library, indicates that he had a number of followers who copied texts for him: one of the documents in the collection, a geographical-astronomical work “*The Form of the Earth*” (“*Sefer Tzurat Ha-aretz*”) was copied by Joseph b. Moshe on the 27th of Sivan 5232 (1472) “for our master and teacher Rabbi Moses ben Jacob the Russian”⁴⁰⁴. Other manuscripts in the collection suggest a link between Rabbi Moses and the Judaizer movement of Russia: one of the texts is “*The Commentary to Six Wings*”, completed by Rabbi Moses himself in 1470; the other - a Hebrew version of Al-Fergani’s abridgement of the “*Almagest*”, copied in 1468 by “Zacharia, the son of Aharon the Kohen of blessed memory” in Kiev. While “*Six Wings*” was found to be in possession of the Judaizers, as discussed above, Zacharia ben Aharon of Kiev had been identified as the most likely candidate for

⁴⁰¹ Volotsky J. (1490-1504): “*The Enlightener*”. In “*The Enlightener, or the Condemnation of the Judaizers Heresy*”. Typography of the Imperial University. Kazan. 1903. Pg. 11.

⁴⁰² Schneider M. (2014): “*The “Judaizers” of Muscovite Russia and Kabbalistic Eschatology*” in “*The Knaanites: Jews in the Medieval Slavic World*”. Jews and Slavs, Vol. 24. Bridges of Culture publishing, Moscow. Pg. 222-258.

⁴⁰³ Taube M. (1995): “*The Kievan Jew Zacharia and the Astronomical Works of the Judaizers*”. Jews and Slavs 3. Jerusalem. Pg. 326.

⁴⁰⁴ Schneider M. (2014): “*The “Judaizers” of Muscovite Russia and Kabbalistic Eschatology*” in “*The Knaanites: Jews in the Medieval Slavic World*”. Jews and Slavs, Vol. 24. Bridges of Culture publishing, Moscow. Pg. 229.

Zacharia Skariya the proselytizer of the “*Enlightener*”, who arrived in Novgorod in 1471 and instigated the heresy. Such a perfect overlap of place (Kiev) and time (1460s-1470s) suggests that Rabbi Moses’ connection to both the “*Six Wings*” and Zacharia cannot be sheer coincidence.

In his primary work, “*Lily of Secrets*” (*Shoshan Sodot*), Rabbi Moses voices a positive attitude towards proselytes to Judaism. He writes: “And also King David said, “the Lord keeps the proselytes.” Rashi comments that God sees the proselytes as if they had fulfilled the entire Torah from *alef* to *tav*”⁴⁰⁵. Schneider had analyzed this passage in the following manner: “This apocryphal midrash, which has no analogues in ancient or Medieval sources, goes much further than merely voice a positive attitude toward converts. It states that the very act of conversion is seen by God as the equivalent of fulfilling all the commandments. The idea suggests the possibility of proselytism without requiring practical observance”⁴⁰⁶.

As had been first noted by Zinberg⁴⁰⁷, Rabbi Moses quoted extensively from two anonymous Kabbalistic works written by a single author in Constantinople in the 14th century, “*The Book of Marvel*” (“*Sefer ha Peliá*”) and “*The Book of the Staff*” (“*Sefer ha Qana*”). Based on a fragment from “*The Book of the Staff*”, Rabbi Moses contends that the spiritual status of proselytes to Judaism is higher than of naturally-born Jews, because at the moment of their conversion the proselytes “shed the shell of wickedness and assume the shell of purity”⁴⁰⁸. This conviction is explained by the worship of the Golden Calf at Mount Sinai by the Israelites - a sin that stays with the Jewish people throughout generations. By worshiping the Golden Calf, the Israelites “cut down the saplings” that caused a rift in the divine union with the Torah, while by the very act of the conversion to Judaism, according to Rabbi Moses, the proselyte achieves this union during a time of separation, meaning in Exile⁴⁰⁹.

The redemption of Israel and the advent of the Messianic age is a central theme in “*Lily of Secrets*”. For the possible date of the coming of the Messiah, Rabbi Moses quoted from the “*Book of Marvel*”, stating the year 5250 of the Jewish calendar, which

⁴⁰⁵ Moshe ben Jacob of Kiev (1509): “*Lily of Secrets (Shoshan Sodot)*”. Partial ed., Koretz, 1784. (Reprint Jerusalem, 1995). Section 4a.

⁴⁰⁶ Schneider M. (2014): “*The “Judaizers” of Muscovite Russia and Kabbalistic Eschatology*” in “*The Knaanites: Jews in the Medieval Slavic World*”. Jews and Slavs, Vol. 24. Bridges of Culture publishing, Moscow. Pg. 237.

⁴⁰⁷ Ibid. Pg. 229; Zinberg I. (1929): “*The History of Jewish Literature*”. Tomor, Vilno. Vol. 3, 344fn.1.

⁴⁰⁸ Taube M. (2010): “*Judaizer Heresy and the Translations from Hebrew in Medieval Russia*” in “*History of the Jewish People in Russia: From Antiquity to the Early-Modern Period*”. Vol. 1. Bridges of Culture/Gershaim publishing, Moscow. Pg. 390.

⁴⁰⁹ Schneider M. (2014): “*The “Judaizers” of Muscovite Russia and Kabbalistic Eschatology*” in “*The Knaanites: Jews in the Medieval Slavic World*”. Jews and Slavs, Vol. 24. Bridges of Culture publishing, Moscow. Pg. 238.

translates to 1490 AD⁴¹⁰. The date is arrived at by calculating the middle of the 11th 500-year cycle, and is reinforced by the Kabbalistic exegesis of Job 38:7 - “While the morning stars were singing together and all the sons of God cheered”, by which the numerical value of “singing” (סָרַח) is equal to 250 (i.e. 5250 from creation) and if counting the preposition (כִּי) – “while”, it comes to 252, or 1492 AD⁴¹¹. The same paragraph in “*The Book of Marvel*” discussing the arrival date of the Messiah, quoted by Rabbi Moses, states that “that man” (a standard circumlocution for Jesus in Jewish literature), “called the subjugation of the Nations by Israel the Destruction of the World for he was afraid to pronounce their demise, lest they persecute him”⁴¹². Being aware of the Christian tradition that projected the end of the world for the year 7000 of the Byzantine calendar (1492AD = 5252 of Jewish calendar), the author of the text therefore fused the two eschatological traditions together, explicating the “Destruction of the World” to be understood as the coming of the Jewish Messiah and the subjugation of the Nations by Israel, of which Jesus himself was apparently aware but distorted the prophesy so to avoid persecution. Markedly, this notion was echoed in archbishop Gennady’s quotation of archpriest Aleksey, a senior Judaizer, exulting that “the years of the Christian chronicler are ending, while ours are amassing”⁴¹³ – “ours” evidently being a reference to the Judaic calendar.

The disparagement of Jesus and Christianity is rampant throughout “*The Book of Marvel*”. In connection with the transgression of “the cutting down of samplings”, the author once again referred to “that man”, who “has also caused the destruction by setting a brick upright and worshipping it, while this was the Diadem (Malkhut), which is called a brick, and he took it for himself, and made it a sovereign of other gods in order to accomplish his desire through witchcraft”⁴¹⁴. This passage is an explanation of the

⁴¹⁰ Schneider M. (2014): “*The “Judaizers” of Muscovite Russia and Kabbalistic Eschatology*”. In “*The Knaanites: Jews in the Medieval Slavic World*”. Jews and Slavs, Vol. 24. Bridges of Culture publishing, Moscow. Pg. 251.; Moshe ben Jacob of Kiev (1509): “*Lily of Secrets (Shoshan Sodot)*”. Partial ed., Koretz, 1784. (Reprint Jerusalem, 1995). 73a.

⁴¹¹ Taube, M. (2005): “*The 15th c. Ruthenian Translations from Hebrew and the Heresy of the Judaizers: Is there a Connection?*” in “*Speculum Slaviae Orientalis: Muscovy, Ruthenia and Lithuania in the Late Middle Ages*”. OGI, Moscow. pg. 202.

⁴¹² Schneider M. (2014): “*The “Judaizers” of Muscovite Russia and Kabbalistic Eschatology*”. In “*The Knaanites: Jews in the Medieval Slavic World*”. Jews and Slavs, Vol. 24. Bridges of Culture publishing, Moscow. Pg. 251.; *Qana/Pelia*, Koretz, 1784, 102a.

⁴¹³ Lurie Y., Kazakova N. (1955): “*The Letter of Archbishop Gennady of Novgorod to Joseph, former Archbishop of Rostov*”. In “*Anti-feudal Heretical Movements in Ruthenia XIV – Beginning of XVI Centuries*”. Sciences, Moscow-Leningrad. Pg. 318.

⁴¹⁴ Schneider M. (2014): “*The “Judaizers” of Muscovite Russia and Kabbalistic Eschatology*”. In “*The Knaanites: Jews in the Medieval Slavic World*”. Jews and Slavs, Vol. 24. Bridges of Culture publishing, Moscow. Pg. 251; *Qana/Pelia*, Koretz, 1784,102a.

reference to Jesus in the Talmud (Sanhedrin 107a)⁴¹⁵, where Jesus is said to have been a disciple of Rabbi Yehoshua ben Perahya, who excommunicated him for a minor wrong doing. When Jesus tried to repent, the Rabbi refused to receive him. Then, as the story goes, Jesus “set up a brick and worshipped it”. And when Rabbi Yehoshua saw this, he ordered for Jesus to repent, to which Jesus answered: “Thus have I learned from you: whoever sins and causes others to sin, is deprived of the power of doing penitence”.

From a Kabbalistic point of view, the brick that Jesus worshiped and “took for himself” was the 10th emanation, or the “Sephira”, of the Kabbalistic Tree of Life, called the “Malkhut”⁴¹⁶. It follows that as Jesus’s successors, Christians possess a certain power over the immanent aspect of divinity. And until the Sefirot alignment is not repaired, the redemption of the Jews, that is the return to the land of Israel and the restoration of the Temple, cannot occur. This means that until the wrongs committed by Jesus and Christianity are not repaired, the Messiah will not come. According to Schneider, the repairing of Jesus’s transgression, and of his excommunication, can then be understood as purifying Christianity of idolatry by reinvigorating the Jewish-Biblical heritage, which Christianity implicitly bears within itself⁴¹⁷. In that context, Rabbi Moses stressed the importance of proselytes for the redemption of Israel during the “end of days”, as by the very fact of their conversion, the proselytes bring the world into a state of “repair” (tikkun – תיקון), which is essential for the advent of the Messianic Age.

The practice and the beliefs of the Judaizers, who were said to reject the divinity of Jesus, denounce the Trinity, deny the sanctity of the cross and icons, and mock the association of doomsday with the year 1492, noticeably correspond with the eschatology of the 14th century Constantinopolitan Kabbalistic works, so heavily exploited by Rabbi Moses in his writings. The connection between the theological convictions of the Kiev Rabbi and the course of events leading to the proliferation of the Judaizer heresy in Russia is established primarily through the persona of Zacharia Skariya, a learned Jew from Kiev who was said to have attracted a number of senior members of the clergy by his ‘mysterious’ knowledge. The association of the Kievan Jews to the inculcation of the “heresy” is further indicated by archbishop Gennady’s testimony that a newly baptized Jew from Kiev, upon his arrival to Novgorod, told him that having learned of Ivan III’s removal of churches from the Kremlin, the Jews of Kiev “rejoiced”⁴¹⁸.

The significance of Judaic proselytism discussed in the essay of Rabbi Moses, therefore, is likely the connecting link between the Judaizer movement of the late 15th -

⁴¹⁵ Schäfer P. (2007): *“Jesus in the Talmud”*. Princeton University Press, New Jersey. Pg. 34-35.

⁴¹⁶ Schneider M. (2014): *“The “Judaizers” of Muscovite Russia and Kabbalistic Eschatology”*. In *“The Knaanites: Jews in the Medieval Slavic World”*. Jews and Slavs, Vol. 24. Bridges of Culture publishing, Moscow. Pg. 244.

⁴¹⁷ Ibid., Pg. 246.

⁴¹⁸ Lurie Y., Kazakova N. (1955): *“The Letter of Archbishop Gennady of Novgorod to Metropolitan Zosima”*. In *“Anti-feudal Heretical Movements in Ruthenia XIV – Beginning of XVI Centuries”*. Sciences, Moscow-Leningrad. Pg. 374-375.

early 16th century Russian State and the Ruthenian translations of the Kabbalistic Hebrew texts. Accordingly, the theological argument of the fundamental importance of proselytes for Judaism and the advent of the Messianic age could have been the driving force behind the missionary enterprise of the Kievan Kabbalists, the aim of which was to shed the light of the Jewish faith onto gentiles.

If the formation of the Judaizer movement in Novgorod and Moscow was a result of a conscious ‘mission’ impelled by Jews of Kiev, then initially it was rather successful, with highly influential personas such as the Metropolitan of the Orthodox Church Zosima, D’yak Fedor Kuritsyn and the mother of the successor to the throne Elena all said to have been part of the Judaizer circle. Moreover, according to Josef Volotsky, Ivan III admitted to him of “knowing of their heresy... and asked for forgiveness”⁴¹⁹. Captivatingly, the debacle of the Judaizers was not a result of a polemical triumph of its opponents, based on theological argumentation, but rather caused by the cessation of the Grand Duke’s patronage of the movement, likely due to political predicament in the royal family.

Although the Judaizer movement was violently suppressed in 1504, thereby preventing a deeper infiltration of the Judaic doctrine into the Russian spiritual realm, the legacy of ‘Judaizing’ remained a recurring theme in polemical literature. ‘Judaizing’ remained a serious offence throughout the Early Modern period, and was often imputed upon rivals across political, clerical and commercial spheres. At times, the targets for such accusations became christened Jews, as suspicions of their relapse into their former faith and its proselytization amongst the Orthodox faithful was rampant – such instances will be described in the consequent chapters. As evidenced by a statement made by Ivan IV the Terrible, who during his reign explicitly forbade Jews to reside in the Russian lands lest they baptized into Orthodoxy, the anxieties of Judaic proselytism remained at large with the Russian authorities and within the public consciousness: “Jewish infidels led the Russian people away from Christianity, and poisoned our lands, and caused mischief to many of our people”⁴²⁰. Underscoring the significant mark that the Judaizer heresy left on the Russian society, in 2004 a number of Russian and Ukrainian Christian Orthodox outlets published articles marking 500 years since the victory of the Church over the Judaizing Heresy⁴²¹.

⁴¹⁹ Zimin A., Lurie Y. (1959): *“The Epistles of Joseph Volotsky”*. Sciences, Moscow-Leningrad. Pg. 176.

⁴²⁰ *The Monuments of Diplomatic Relations of Muscovy with Polish-Lithuanian State. Part II* (1987). The Collection of the Imperial Russian Historical Society, Saint Petersburg. Vol. LIX.,Ch 21. Pg. 341-342.

⁴²¹ “The 500th anniversary of the defeat of the Judaizing Heresy” (2004). *“The Word of Savvinsk”*, the newspaper of the Savvino-Storozhesk Stauropelial Monastery. (<http://archiv.kiev1.org/page-969.html>)

Chapter 2: From the Shtetl to the Cross: Baptized Jews in the Early Modern Russian State

In the aftermath of the Russian-Polish wars of 1632-1634 and 1654-1667, scores of inhabitants of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth's eastern territories were taken prisoner by the Russian forces and transferred to the Moscow state. The captive civilians included Jews, whose settlements were scattered across the Ruthenian territories of the Commonwealth. These events marked a turning point in the history of Muscovite-Jewish relations, as never before had the two cultures come into such a close contact with one another. While these communities enjoyed the freedom of worship, royal protection and a certain level of autonomy under the Polish rule, the wars drastically disturbed this long-established political, judicial and economic framework. Finding themselves in the midst of the rigorously Christian Orthodox society, inherently intolerant of other faiths, for the Jews in captivity the situation was particularly complicated. Although the same rules of conduct applied to the Jews as to the other civilian captives initially, their increasing numbers forced the authorities to enact clear-cut regulations for dealing with the heathens. Preserved is a mandative correspondence, issued soon after the end of military operations in Lithuania in 1634, specifically addressing the different nationalities that were present on Muscovy territory after the war: Poles, Lithuanians, "Germanic peoples"⁴²², Cossacks and finally, the Jews. As follows from these documents, Tsar Mikhail Federovich Romanov ordered to "identify and release" the Jews back home to Lithuania, except for those who expressed the desire to baptize into Orthodoxy and remain in Muscovy⁴²³. Captivatingly, the sources indicate that a larger number of Jewish captives chose to accept baptism and settle in Russia than those who remained devoted to the faith of their forefathers and returned home to the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth⁴²⁴.

While there is evidence of Polish-Lithuanian Jews having spent extended periods of time in Muscovy in the 16th century, frequently on assignment of the Polish Royal court and treasury⁴²⁵, the presence of the Jewish faithful amongst the population was worrisome for the Orthodox clergy, which sought to guard their flock from contact with other religions. Since the outbreak of the controversial 'Judaizer heresy' at the end of the 15th century, which infiltrated the highest echelons of the ecclesiastical and governmental circles, the adherents of the Jewish faith were strictly forbidden from residing in Moscow

⁴²² In Russia at the time, all Western Europeans were referred to as "Germans", or 'Nemtsi' ('Немцы'), with the root of the word being "немой", meaning "mute".

⁴²³ Feldman D., Minkina O. (2007): *"The Fair Jewess" in Russia XVII-XIX Centuries: Images and Realities*. Ancient Archive, Moscow. Pg. 17; The Russian State Archive of Ancient Acts. Fund 210. Office of the Ranks, Column 102. Section 1, line 1.

⁴²⁴ Gessen Y. (1925): *"History of the Jewish People in Russia"*. Typography of the Cooperative Society, Vol. 1. Leningrad. Pg. 10.

⁴²⁵ Gessen Y. (1913): *"Three Hundred Years Ago: Jews in the Moscow State Before and After the Times of Trouble"*. Voshod journal, № 9. St. Petersburg. Pg. 34-38.

controlled territories. The unprecedented mass conversion of Jewish captives to Christianity in mid-1630's, however, motivated the Church and State authorities to supersede the policy of exclusion, based on ethnic belonging, by a policy of integration, based on religious allegiance, henceforth decreeing the act of baptism to signify the authorization for the admission of Jews into the fold of the Russian society, both spiritually and legally.

It must be noted that in Muscovy, the conversion to Christianity by a Jew translated into receiving extensive benefits, coupled with obtaining complete freedom and equal rights on par with the local Slavic-Orthodox population⁴²⁶. Therefore, for the question of whether the conversion process was voluntary or forced upon, the answer tilts more towards the former. On the other hand, not only did the refusal to baptize mean certain expulsion from the Russian territory, but it could have also been perceived as dangerous by the captive Jews, who had no reason to trust their subjugators with their lives. Furthermore, while the practice of Judaic rituals in secret by baptized Jews was deemed to signify apostasy from Christianity, the inducement of Christians to Judaism was regarded as one of the most heinous crimes – according to the Council Code of 1649, the proselytization of a foreign faith was an offence punishable by burning at the stake⁴²⁷.

Various types of documents (petitions, military reports, governmental decrees, clerical notes, etc.) contained across the funds of the Russian State Archive of Early Acts in Moscow reveal that Jewish migration to the Russian state during the 17th century occurred not only by forceful relocation, but also voluntarily. What is more, the authorities did not in anyway impede such initiatives, but on the contrary welcomed Jewish immigrants into the country, based on the condition of their conversion into the Christian Orthodox faith. This policy caught the attention of the Austrian Ambassador to Russia (1698-1699) Johann Georg Korb, who commented on the matter in his memoirs: “Jews are not tolerated in Muscovy lest they are baptized. The Muscovites explain this by stating that to them, it appears incongruous that living amongst them could be those, whose religious morals are marked by cunning treachery and skillful deception”⁴²⁸. In a similar vein, in his 1858 monograph on the history of Russia's Ministry of Internal Affairs, the senior governmental official Nikolai Varadinov explicated “the imprint of distrust towards the followers of the Mosaic Law” in the 17th century Russia in the following manner: “Through their false teachings, the Jews lured into their religion persons of other faiths, even Christians; that is why their civil rights were always more or less hampered, and their relocation to Russia from other countries forbidden”⁴²⁹. As follows, whilst Jews were nominally attributed with the intention of proselytizing their

⁴²⁶ Ibid., Pg. 37.

⁴²⁷ Abramovich G., Mankov A. (1987): *“The Council Code of 1649: Text, Commentaries”*. Institute of History of the USSR, Leningrad. Pg. 15.

⁴²⁸ Georg J. (1906): *“A Diary of a Journey to Muscovy”*. Publishing house of A. S. Suvorin, Saint Petersburg. Pg. 239.

⁴²⁹ Varadinov N. (1858): *“History of the Ministry of Internal Affairs”*. Typography of the Ministry of Internal Affairs, Saint Petersburg. Vol. 2, part 1, pg. 129.

faith amongst Christians, the optimal solution to this problem the authorities considered to be their conversion to Orthodoxy. The reasons for endorsing such a policy, rather than restricting Jewish presence in the country all together, were first and foremost ideological: in light of the threat of Judaization, a voluntary baptism of a Jew symbolized the theological supremacy and triumph of Christianity over Judaism.

In this chapter, the application of these policies in practice will be examined through a variety of case studies of Jewish conversions to Orthodox Christianity in the 17th century Russian state. The objectives of this examination are multifold: to identify and analyze the factors that influenced the Jews of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth to migrate to Russia and change their faith; scrutinize the mechanisms of socio-cultural adaptation of baptized Jews and their interaction with the environment; construct models of perception of Jews in Russia in relation to the concerns of burgeoning proselytism of Judaism and ‘Judaizing’; uncover the features of self-representation of baptized Jews before the Church and State authorities; and study the phenomenon of the Jewish conversion to Christianity as bureaucratic and ideological processes.

Jewish Settlement in Russia in the mid-17th Century: Forced or Voluntary?

A range of sources in the collection belonging to the voluminous Office of the Ranks (“Разрядный Приказ”) fund, stored at the Russian State Archive of Early Acts, contain information on the fate of Jews who were transferred to Muscovy in the 17th century not only as captives, but also migrated on their own initiative. Of a primary interest to this study is a section of the fund entitled “Desyatni Cases” (“Дела Десятен”) which were produced throughout the course of the operations of the Office of the Ranks, a central governmental military-administrative institution, and contains records dealing with the remunerations and entitlements to land ownership (including serfs) bestowed upon noblemen for their service in the military. Amongst these records are also documents concerning other matters that the institution was charged to oversee, such as the status and fate of the captives taken to Russia during the course of the 1654-1667 Russian-Polish war, the resettlement of groups from one locality of the country to another, and the reception of migrants from neighboring countries in Russia. As indicated by the documentation, Jews were present across all three of these sectors. Notably, while the practice of Judaism was strictly outlawed by governmental regulations, for a Jew, residence in the 17th century Russian State, whether voluntary or forceful, connoted baptism into Orthodox Christianity – an act emphatically welcomed and rewarded by both royal and ecclesiastical authorities.

One of the handwritten books belonging to the “Desyatni Cases”, entitled “On the transfer of Polish and Lithuanian captives from Moscow to lower towns”⁴³⁰, dated 1659, lists 190 people “of various ranks” taken captive by the Russian forces during a military operation against the Polish-Lithuanian army in Belarus. In the lengthy list, just one of the captives is distinguished to be Jewish – “A Jew of Myavilovka Marchko Samoilov”. Upon being taken to Moscow, by the decree of the Tsar, the group of captives was sent to Kazan, where some of them were allocated as serfs at boyar courts, while others were

⁴³⁰ Feldman D. (2010): “*The List of Jews, sent from Novgorod to Kazan in the Middle of XVII Century*”. Ancient Ruthenia, Moscow. No. 2 (40). Pg. 119; The Russian State Archive of Early Acts. Fund 210. Office of the Ranks, Desyatni Cases. Case 278, Pg. 132.

sent to the “lower towns” for appointment. Samoilov was amongst those sent to Kazan, and although it doesn’t state so explicitly in the documents, there can be little doubt that he was promptly baptized.

The same book of the “Desyatni Cases” contains a register entitled “The List of Jews and their wives, children and craftsmen, that were sent to Kazan from Yaroslavl”⁴³¹. The list consists of 30 families with different compositions: a husband and wife with children/siblings/parents, some of whom are said to have been widows/widowers with children, while others are listed as siblings. The place of origin of the group is not indicated; what’s stated is that they first appeared in Russia in Novgorod, from where they were transferred to Yaroslavl and finally to Kazan, which in the middle of the 17th century was the most common final destination for Jewish groups. Although the document is not dated, it is likely that the event took place in the 1650s, as the subsequent document in the book is entitled as “The record of Lithuanian migrants to Moscow in 1653”⁴³². While the Jewish group might have also come from Lithuania, in that case they could have found a significantly closer route to Russia than through Novgorod, which is in the north of the country. Since Novgorod was the nearest point into Russia from Livonia - Livonia could have been the previous place of residence of the Jewish migrants.

Notably, there is no indication as to the forceful nature of the Jewish group’s appearance in the Moscow state. The migrants were rather wealthy, as indicated by the title of “craftsmen” ascribed to a number of names on the list. In the concluding part of the document it becomes known that one of the craftsmen remained in Novgorod in order “to be baptized”. Although nothing is stated regarding the conversion of the rest of the group, chances are they were willingly baptized either in Yaroslavl or in Kazan. While it is stated that 3 of the Jews died en route from Novgorod to Yaroslavl, the total number of individuals said to have migrated to Russia is 176 people – a rather significant number.

The supplied case of a voluntary migration of Jews to Russia was not an isolated incident during said time period. Another fund of the Russian State Archive of Early Acts contains a record consisting of four petitions of Jewish residents of Breslau (today’s Wrocław, then belonging to Austria) addressed to Tsar Aleksey Mikhailovitch, and three records of their subsequent baptism into the “Orthodox Christian faith”, dated 1659⁴³³. According to the documents, in the midst of the Russian-Polish war, five Jewish men, with their wives and children, and a widow, petitioned to the Russian monarch with a request to be permitted to baptize and migrate to Russia. These Jews, referring to

⁴³¹ Feldman D. (2009): “*And in Kazan the Jews are to be Ordered to Baptize...*” *The Documents Relating to the Transfer of Captive Jews to the Volga Region in 1655*. Bulletin of the Hebrew University, Moscow. Pg. 216-217; The Russian State Archive of Early Acts. Fund 210. Office of the Ranks, Desyatni Cases. Case 278, Pg. 112-114.

⁴³² The Russian State Archive of Early Acts. Fund 210. Office of the Ranks, Desyatni Cases. Case 278.

⁴³³ Feldman D. (2005): “*Pleading for Mercy are Old-Law Orphans...*” *The Case of the Petitions of Jews of Breslau for the Baptism into Orthodoxy* // Historic Archive, Moscow. No. 1. Pg. 198-202; The Russian State Archive of Early Acts. Fund 141. Orders of Previous Years. Case 135, Pg. 1-7.

themselves as the “Old law orphans”, expressed the desire to serve the Tsar and underscored the willingness to convert into the “true Christian faith”⁴³⁴. The letters, written “by their own hand”, were presented by the Jews to the Russian envoy in Silesia Pisarev, who passed them on to Moscow, and in a timely manner was ordered by the Tsar to organize a safe passage for the Jewish group to the Russian capital. The recipients of the migrants were the priests of the Cathedral of the Archangel at the Kremlin, who were to oversee the subsequent conversion of the group. The number of persons in the group “with wives and children” added up to 17 people in total⁴³⁵.

Accordingly, the given cases demonstrate that the flow of Jews to Muscovy during the Russian-Polish wars of mid 17th century occurred not only from Belarus and other territories of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, but also from Silesia and quite possibly Livonia. The distinctive feature of this migration was its voluntary nature, in contrast to the scores of Jews from the Polish Kingdom, who were brought to Muscovy by force as prisoners of war. As attested by the documentation, these Jewish groups purposefully moved to the neighboring Russian State and in the process changed their faith to Orthodox Christianity by their own free will. While the practice of Judaism was categorically outlawed on the territory of the 17th century Muscovy, primarily due to the anxieties and suspicions related to the proselytization of the Jewish faith amongst the Russian population, the authorities fervently welcomed Jewish converts in their country. The application of such policy implies that the contention of the Russian State and Church against Jewish people was not based on racial prejudice, but rather on religious chauvinism, where the act of a Jewish baptism was considered as an ideological victory of Christianity over Judaism.

Isolated instances of Jewish migration to Russia also occurred before the outbreak of the Russo-Polish wars, despite the fact that in the first half of the 17th century, the presence of Jews in the country, including temporary, was strictly outlawed. Yet, these circumstances did not prevent Jews of the neighboring Polish Kingdom from infiltrating the border to the east, even if that connoted application of deceitful means. Such was the case of one Alexander Grigorev son of Isaac, who in 1618 successfully settled in Moscow by presenting himself as a Polish nobleman (*szlachcic*), and entered into the service of the Tsar⁴³⁶. While a migrant’s aspiration to inflate his social standing and thus legitimize his nobleman status in the new environment is not startling, by doing so Grigorev also tried to hide his Jewish origins. However, it was eventually found out that the “Polish *szlachcic*” was really a disguised Jew. Unmasked, Grigorev hastened to submit a petition in which he expressed the desire to enter the fold of the Russian Orthodox Church and his request was granted. Not only was the exposed Jewish impostor able to avoid persecution, but also having been consequently baptized by Patriarch Philaret himself, the neophyte was honored “to see the eyes of the sovereign”, meaning

⁴³⁴ Ibid., Pg 199.; Ibid., Pg. 2.

⁴³⁵ Ibid., Pg 201.; Ibid., Pg. 6.

⁴³⁶ Oparina T. (2009): *“Audience of the Tsar as a Reward for Conversion to Orthodoxy // Spatial and Temporal Crossroads of Cultures”*. Altai State University publishing, Barnaul, Pg. 19-21.

that he received the privilege of Royal audience⁴³⁷. Hence, through the act of baptism into Orthodoxy, a representative of an outlawed ethno-confessional community, who entered the country by deception, was granted citizenship and various other privileges. This event, therefore, underlines the significance that the Orthodox Church placed on the conversion of Jews to Christianity.

The Case of a Baptized Jew Trained in Firearms

In 1658, in the midst of the Russian-Polish war, a Jew by the name of Isachko (a sobriquet for Isaac) from the Belarusian town of Mogilev (belonging to the Grand Duchy of Lithuania) appealed to Tsar Aleksey Mikhailovitch Romanov to “have mercy on him” and asked for the permission to be baptized into the Christian faith⁴³⁸. A royal edict issued to Russia’s central military institution, the “Office of the Military” (“Пушкарский Приказ”) apropos the Jewish convert, contained at the “Orders of Previous Years” (“Приказные Дела Старых Лет”) fund of the Russian State Archive of Early Acts, sheds light on Isaac’s fate and enunciates the demeanor of the country’s authorities towards the ‘new Christians’, or baptized Jews. While Isachko is said to have been a “migrant from Mogilev” at the time of submitting his appeal to be baptized, indicating that at that moment he was already on the territory of Muscovy, it is not stated whether he migrated on his own or was brought over as a captive of war. Chances are it was the second scenario, as Mogilev was directly affected by the course of the military proceedings. However, it is rather captivating that a Jewish prisoner of war was neither forced nor offered to change his faith to Orthodoxy by the authorities, and appealed to the Tsar with a request to be baptized by his own initiative.

As one would expect, Isachko’s request was approved, and by the order of the “great sovereign”, the head of Moscow musketeers, Colonel Artemon Matveev, notably a non-ecclesiastical persona, baptized the Jewish migrant, changing his name to Yaakov. “For the christening into the Orthodox Christian faith and for the loyal service” as stated in the document, Yakushko (sobriquet for Yaakov) was trained in “firearm and grenade skills, and secret techniques”⁴³⁹. For the instruction, he was given a printed book written in German. In Moscow, not only did the new Christian obtain a military profession, but also married. Upon completing the training, Yakushko was assigned to serve in the regiment of Lieutenant-General Nikolai Bowman, a highly achieving commander of a Danish origin. The mere act of entrusting a former Jew with the responsibility of cannon fire is rather unique. At the same time, this act serves as an indication of a considerably favorable treatment of christened Jews by the Russian authorities. Over a few years of serving in Bowman’s regiment, Yakushko apparently achieved significant results, as in the text it is stated that he had been “trained in his profession with excellence”.

⁴³⁷ Ibid., Pg. 20.

⁴³⁸ Feldman D. (2012): *“A Note from the Musketeer Office on the Baptized Jew Yaakov 1667”*. Parallels, Moscow. Pg. 181-188.; The Russian State Archive of Early Acts. Fund 141. Orders of Previous Years. Office of the Military. Case 273, Pg. 1-2.

⁴³⁹ Ibid., Pg. 183; Ibid., Pg. 1.

The reason for the issue of the given edict, according to the text, was Yakushko's unilateral withdrawal from the regiment to the service of "the great and plenipotentiary envoys at the court of his majesty", and his intention to leave "towards Lithuania"⁴⁴⁰. The "Office of the Military" was involved in resolving the issue, under the jurisdiction of which were musketeer related matters. The edict, issued by the order of the Tsar, stipulated for Yakushko to be returned to Bowman's regiment, and prohibited him from travelling to Lithuania. The text of the document specifies that the edict was issued repeatedly, as upon its original issue the order to return Yakushko to the army had not been implemented. Evidently, having spent an ample amount of time and resources on Yakushko's training, it went against the interest of the State to allow a skilled gunman to leave the country, more so to his native Lithuania. Furthermore, the possibility of the relapse of the baptized Jew into his former faith if allowed to go home, even for a temporary visit, was likely to have been taken into consideration. The implementation of the Tsar's order was entrusted to boyar Pronchichev and D'yak Mikhailov, underscoring the importance consigned to the matter by the authorities.

The case of a christened Jew serving at the Russian military in the 17th century is not an isolated incident. While traces of evidence testifying to the service of Jews in the Russian army throughout that century are scattered across the materials of the Russian State Archive, apparently not all of these Jews had gone through the process of conversion to Christianity. A book belonging to the "Office of the Ranks" fund contains a record, dated 1634, which notes a soldier in the Rylsk regiment of the Russian army named Isaac Samoilov, "who was of the Jewish faith"⁴⁴¹. Furthermore, a record in the "Desyatni cases" contains an entry dated 1664 of the issue of a monthly food allowance of 11 rubles to captain Danila Eremeev, who signed for the receipt of the money in Hebrew, as apparently he was not yet able to write in Russian⁴⁴². While there can be little doubt that both of these men were baptized at some point of their military service, the two cases further demonstrate the high degree of tolerance of the Russian authorities towards Jewish converts to Christianity.

Baptized Lithuanian Jewess Melanya Klemenova in 17th Century Muscovy

Although the development of gender studies and the interest in personal life, as well as the personalization and fragmentation of history in the second half of 20th century had a definite effect on the study of Eastern European Jewish history, inquiry into female

⁴⁴⁰ Ibid., Pg. 185; Ibid., Pg. 2.

⁴⁴¹ Feldman D. (2010): *"The List of Jews, sent from Novgorod to Kazan in the Middle of XVII Century"*. Ancient Ruthenia, Moscow. No. 2 (40). Pg. 119.; The Russian State Archive of Early Acts. Fund 210. Office of the Ranks. Records of the Moscow table. Book 36, chapter 1, pg. 856.

⁴⁴² Feldman D. (2012): *"A Note from the Musketeer Office on the Baptized Jew Yaakov 1667"*. Parallels, Moscow. Pg. 188.; The Russian State Archive of Early Acts., "Desyatni cases". Case 276, pg. 46.

historiography remains a marginal stream in modern Judaica⁴⁴³. The primary challenge for historians is the creation of historiography that would be valuable not just due to its 'exotic' character, but also due to the application of the appropriate research methods and the contextualization within the respective area of research – in this case being the conversion of Polish-Lithuanian Jews into Orthodox Christianity during the Early Modern period.

This case study addresses the problem of the self-representation of a baptized Jewish woman, whose behavior directly conflicted with the traditions of the Ashkenazi communities in Early Modern Eastern Europe, and the perception of this extraordinary individual by the Russian Christian Orthodox milieu. In the general context, the account embodies an analysis into the cross-cultural interaction and conflict between Judaism and Christianity through the prism of gender history.

Amongst the captives transferred to Muscovy at the end of the Smolensk offensive in 1634, was a Lithuanian (Belarusian) Jewess by the name of Melanya (in the archival sources also referred to as Malanya, Malanica, Molannica, Molanka). Despite having been presented with repeated opportunities to return home, the woman chose to baptize into the Orthodox faith and settle in the Russian State, subsequently creating a family. A uniquely large number of sources documenting her fate have survived in various parts of the voluminous "Records of the Belgorod Table" ("Столбцы Белгородского Стола"), which is stored at the Russian State Archive of Ancient Acts in Moscow⁴⁴⁴.

The earliest source that mentions Melanya's persona is her petition to Tsar Mikhail Federovich Romanov, written in mid-1635⁴⁴⁵. As follows from the document, Melanya resided within the Jewish community in a town called Borzna, which was then part of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania. When the Russian army occupied the town in 1634, Melanya was taken captive and brought to Russia, where soon after she was 'bought' by Ivan Klemenov, a son of a boyar from Rylsk. At that point, "by her own will, she left the cursed Jewish faith and was baptized into the Orthodox Christian faith at the church of the venerable father Mikhail the miracle-worker of Rylsk"⁴⁴⁶, changing her name from the Jewish 'Malka' in favor of a more Slavic sounding 'Melanya'. In her letter, the baptized Jewess reminded the Tsar of his ruling, by which he allowed the Poles who baptized into Orthodoxy to stay in Muscovy, and referred to herself as "the Tsar's

⁴⁴³ Pushkareva N. (2002): *"The Problem of the Institutionalization of the Gender Approach in the System of Historic Sciences and Historic Education"*. In *"Women. History. Society: A Collection of Articles"*. Edited By Uspenskaya V. Tver Regional Literature Publishing house, Tver. Vol. 2. Pp. 9-22.

⁴⁴⁴ The archival records pertaining to the case were published in Feldman D., Minkina O. (2007): *"The Fair Jewess" in Russia XVII-XIX Centuries: Images and Realities"*. Ancient Archive, Moscow.

⁴⁴⁵ Ibid., Pg. 22.; The Russian State Archive of Early Acts. Fund 210. Office of the Ranks. Records of the Belgorod Table. Section 61. Pg. 36.

⁴⁴⁶ Ibid.; Ibid., Pg. 37.

orphan”, who embraced Orthodox Christianity and stayed in Rylsk under his ”royal patronage”.

Melanya went on to state that her father, a Jew from Borzna named Gron, having learned of her whereabouts and her baptism, came to Rylsk a number of times and appealed to the authorities to have her returned to him on the basis of the peace treaty between Russia and Poland. “My father”, she wrote, “wants to forcefully take me away from the Orthodox faith and return me back into the infidel Jewish faith, and hence forever deprave my soul”⁴⁴⁷. To further strengthen her position, the former Jewess stated that the venerable father Mikhail had also written to the authorities with a request for her to be allowed to stay in Rylsk under his guidance. She concluded the petition by begging Tsar Mikhail Federovich to have mercy on her “in the name of Christ” and to not permit for her to be taken to Lithuania by her father, so that “he doesn’t defile the Orthodox faith and eventually ruin me”⁴⁴⁸.

Another document reveals that in addition to the numerous requests of Melanya’s father, pan Kozanowski, and “other constables from the Lithuanian side” wrote to the Russian authorities with appeals to have Melanya returned home⁴⁴⁹. As a result of these appeals, the governor of Rylsk Fedor Boyashev had launched an investigation into this matter⁴⁵⁰. The case did not go unnoticed, and in September 1635 a ruling addressed to the Rylsk governor was received from the Office of the Ranks in Moscow, declaring that “due to the royal decree allowing for the Lithuanian captives who chose to baptize and stay in our lands, the newly baptized Jewess Malanica of Rylsk is free to live in Rylsk or wherever she wants in the Orthodox Christian faith”. The document further issued a ban on her return into the “captivity of her father’s Jewish faith”⁴⁵¹.

The given set of documents is concluded with a report to the Office of the Ranks, written by the governor of Rylsk Boyashev in early 1636, which contains a summary of a letter he received from the Tsar with a ruling on “Polack Melanya”⁴⁵². For her voluntary baptism and “devotion to the true Orthodox Christian faith without any doubts”, Tsar Mikhail Federovich Romanov granted the former Jewess a broad range of benefits: she was free to move to Moscow, if she so wished, and was to be provided compensation from the State; including a “lavish and warm fur coat”. The accompaniment of a Church official on her journey to Moscow, as well as the fur coat, were to be paid out of Rylsk’s treasury. Furthermore, when entering into a marital union, she was to receive a generous dowry. However, from this same letter, it becomes known that Melanya was already “married off by her spiritual father Mikhail” to her master, Igor Klemenov of Rylsk, and

⁴⁴⁷ Ibid.; Ibid.

⁴⁴⁸ Ibid.; Ibid.

⁴⁴⁹ Ibid., Pg. 23; Ibid., Pg. 373.

⁴⁵⁰ Ibid., Pg. 24; Ibid., Pg. 38.

⁴⁵¹ Ibid., Ibid.

⁴⁵² Ibid., Pg. 25; Ibid., Pg. 372-373.

even prior to the wedding, she had given birth to his child. Due to the fact of already being married, Melanya therefore was unable to seize the favorable opportunity to move to the capital and live in more civilized conditions, but had received a small government subsidy of 50 kopecks.

Of even greater interest is the letter written by Melanya to Mikhail Federovich in January 1645, requesting for the Tsar to grant her the subsidy that was promised earlier for her “exit” to Muscovy and conversion to Orthodoxy, due to the dire financial situation of her family⁴⁵³. Judging by the text, at the time of the composition of the letter in 1645, Melanya and Ivan Klemenov already had three sons - Gregory, Osip and Ivan, and a daughter – Vasilisa, all adolescents. The “poor and helpless foreigner newly baptized Jewess Melanya” as she referred to herself, used the opportunity to emphasize once again to the Tsar her devotion to Orthodoxy, writing that her husband Ivan Klemenov “conveyed her into the Orthodox faith” and into the domain of the Tsar’s “Royal name”, that she left her “cursed Jewish faith”, her father and mother, her “clan-tribe” and all her possessions, and baptized into the “true Orthodox faith”. Nonetheless, from 1636 to the present time, according to Melanya, she did not benefit from the subsidy because her husband was “constantly on royal service and never at home”, and further lamented that “due to his devoted military service” her husband Ivan was in “dire health”⁴⁵⁴. The Tsar had granted Ivan Klemenov with an estate, but in recent times it had come into “a complete decay, became desolate and overgrown: many of their surfs died and their children left the land”. During the war with the Tatars, which affected Rylysk, all wheat and corn crops were ruined, and thieves stole the grain”. Melanya also mentions that throughout all this time, her husband was not exempted from the state taxes and other state contributions, and they were paid from the remaining savings that they’ve had. Such troublesome conditions forced the family of the baptized Jewess to “use her last chance”; leave the estate in Rylysk and move together with her husband and children to Moscow, where they arrived “hungry, naked and barefoot just after Christmas of 1645”, so that the Tsar would fulfill his longstanding promise to “have mercy” on her “in the name of the Orthodox faith” and for the sake of his own “health and longevity”. Time and time again Melanya accentuated her “foreignness” and “conversion” in the letter, while as one of the premises under which the convert pleads for the Tsar’s graciousness – it is so that her and her family “would not be dependent on the voracious Jewish merchants in Rylysk”⁴⁵⁵.

A second group of archival sources that contain information on Melanya’s life in Russia are official documents that primarily deal with tax exemption benefits of her husband, Igor Klemenov. The ‘boyar’s son’ was granted these privileges due to the baptism of his wife into Orthodoxy, yet did not benefit from them until 10 years after Melanya’s conversion. This is stated in two royal decrees, dated March and April 1645 respectively: the first is addressed to the Musketeer Order, and exempted Klemenov from payment of the otherwise mandatory military taxes for the next ten years⁴⁵⁶, while the

⁴⁵³ Ibid., Pg. 28; Ibid., Pg. 53-54.

⁴⁵⁴ Ibid.; Ibid., Pg. 53.

⁴⁵⁵ Ibid., Pg. 29; Ibid., Pg. 54.

⁴⁵⁶ Ibid.; Ibid.

second is addressed to the governor of Rylsk, freeing Klemenov from paying city taxes for the same ten year duration⁴⁵⁷. Furthermore, the second decree also states that Klemenov's wife Melanya was to receive 10 rubles from the royal treasury for "leaving her cursed Jewish faith and baptizing into our true Greek-Orthodox faith"⁴⁵⁸. Curiously, even ten years after the woman's conversion, Melanya was referred to as a "new Christian". Evidently, in the Christian-Orthodox societies, the mark of being a convert accompanied the person long after the baptism, perhaps never fully thawing away.

Information about the subsequent course of events is contained in a third group of archival materials at the Russian State Archive of Early Acts. A royal decree dated February 6th, 1646 states that Melanya was to be sent to the Patriarch's court⁴⁵⁹, the residence of the Patriarch of Moscow and all of Ruthenia (head of the Russian Orthodox Church) within the Kremlin walls. By that time, Aleksey Mikhailovich Romanov replaced his father Mikhail Fedorovich on the throne, and it is likely that the baptized Jewess was hoping that the new monarch would show her as much favor as did his father. The situation of her family did not improve, but on the contrary, became unbearable. In a petition that Melanya submitted to the Office of the Ranks shortly after her arrival to the Kremlin, she asked for the Tsar to "have mercy" and for her to be sent to a monastery "for the correction and guidance in accordance with the Christian Orthodox faith"⁴⁶⁰. From the Patriarch's court, by the order and "blessing" of Patriarch Josef, Melanya was sent to the Ivanovsky women's convent in central Moscow⁴⁶¹. According to a record dated December 19, 1646⁴⁶², Melanya spent six weeks at the convent (according to her own count – seven weeks⁴⁶³), during the time of the Great Fast earlier that year. The record further states that after her voluntary mission at the convent, Melanya was to be sent back to the Patriarch's court. Approximately around the same time, the "foreigner newly-baptized Jewess from Rylsk", as Melanya referred to herself, sent two petitions to the Office of the Ranks, in which she requested to be issued a compensation for first of all, her baptism, and also for the "guidance" at the Ivanovsky convent, both of which, according to her, she did not receive⁴⁶⁴. A record issued by the Office of the Ranks, dated December 28, 1646, addressed Melanya's request, stating that for the tenure at the convent, normally "foreigner women receive a government remuneration of 3 rubles,

⁴⁵⁷ Ibid., Pg. 31; Ibid., Pg. 45.

⁴⁵⁸ Ibid., Pg. 36; Ibid., Pg. 53.

⁴⁵⁹ Ibid., Pg. 40; Ibid., Orders of the Office of the Ranks, column 562. Pg. 310.

⁴⁶⁰ Ibid., Pg. 45; Ibid., Pg. 314.

⁴⁶¹ Ibid., Pg. 46-47; Ibid., Pg. 315-316.

⁴⁶² Ibid., Pg. 32; Ibid., Pg. 305.

⁴⁶³ Ibid., Pg. 33; Ibid., Pg. 306-307.

⁴⁶⁴ Ibid.; Ibid.

everyone else 4 rubles, and all are issued a woolen cloth”⁴⁶⁵. Hence, it was ordered for Melanya to be issued “4 rubles and a woolen cloth, or 2 rubles in cash instead of the cloth”, which was the maximum amount possible. Incidentally, in one of those petitions submitted by Melanya, the new-Christian Jewess was either let down by her memory, or purposefully distorted the account of her arrival to Russia and the subsequent baptism, writing that: she came out from “the Lithuanian side to Rylsk in 1636”, whereas already in 1635, in her first petition to the Tsar asking to stay in Russia, she stated 1634 as the time when she was taken prisoner and brought to Rylsk⁴⁶⁶. Moreover, in 1636 Melanya received a royal grant for the baptism, migration and marriage⁴⁶⁷.

Finally, in August 1647, the “newly baptized Jewess” Melanya submitted yet another petition to the Tsar⁴⁶⁸. From the text, it becomes known that her husband’s “degraded” estate was transferred over to four Rylsk Cossacks of high military ranks. Moreover, Melanya herself, as a foreigner who settled in Russia, was issued land as a grant from the Tsar, however it had already been three years since that estate was also taken away from her, thereby depriving the Klemenov family of all “means of livelihood”. It also becomes known that in the first half of 1647, Melanya already petitioned to Tsar Aleksey Mikhailovich to get back her husband’s estate that was transferred to “sly Cossacks”, and the Tsar indeed ordered for this question to be addressed by the local authorities. The authorities did not rule in Melanya’s favor, however, as the case was allegedly “outdated”. Nevertheless, a side note on the document states that on July 17, 1647, the Tsar “had mercy” on the converted Jewess and ordered for 2 rubles to be paid to her.

Noteworthy material, further broadening the information on Melanya’s family and their fate, is contained in the fourth group of documents at the Russian State Archive of Early Acts. First of all, the patronymic name of Melanya’s husband, Ivan Klemenov, is revealed as “Karpov’s son”. Furthermore, these documents present a rather detailed account of Klemenov’s military service. For instance, on December 26, 1646, the Belgorod voevoda (military commander) Fedor Khilkov reported to the Office of the Ranks in Moscow that in September 1644, a squadron was dispatched from Belgorod to strike the Crimean Tatar forces stationed nearby, who at that time often raided southern Russian borderlands⁴⁶⁹. The armies met in battle in the Belgorod region, in which the Tatars were defeated. Ivan Klemenov took part in the battle – “fought distinctly” and “killed three men”, while being wounded in his neck and left arm. Thereby, Khilkov’s report confirms the account in Melanya’s appeal to the Tsar, in which she asked the

⁴⁶⁵ Ibid., Pg. 41; Ibid., Pg. 311.

⁴⁶⁶ Ibid., Pg. 22.; The Russian State Archive of Early Acts. Fund 210. Office of the Ranks. Records of the Belgorod Table. Section 61. Pg. 36.

⁴⁶⁷ Ibid., Pg. 24; Ibid., Pg. 39.

⁴⁶⁸ Ibid., Pg. 41; Ibid., Pg. 311.

⁴⁶⁹ Ibid., Pg. 49; Ibid., Pg. 319.

monarch to have mercy on her family, in light of her husband's "dire health" due to his "devoted military service".

Somewhat prior to the report of the Belgorod military commander, "Ivashko of Rylsk", as Klemenov called himself, filed his own petition to the Tsar⁴⁷⁰. In the document, based on the demonstrated military merit and wounds sustained – "for the service and for the blood", Klemenov requested to be granted "a monetary compensation and land". Curiously, Klemenov's petition was submitted in the capital by his wife Melanya, as evidenced on the back of one of the pages of the document⁴⁷¹. The reason for this could be the following: in another record at the Clerical table, related to Klemenov's case, it is stated that the requests of the "son of a boyar from Rylsk are not to be considered in Moscow, as he is currently stationed on state service in Belgorod"⁴⁷². Nevertheless, it was ordered for the soldier to receive a standard compensation, to the amount of seven rubles per wound, and another three rubles for the severity of the injuries, therefore a totaling to a rather decent sum. In comparison, the yearly salaries of musketeers in Muscovy in the mid 17th century ranged from three to twenty rubles⁴⁷³. In addition, the documents reveal another notable fact regarding the Klemenov family biography. In his petition, Ivan mentions his "service in Borzna", for which he received an additional two rubles. Accordingly, it is most likely that he himself brought his future wife Melanya to Muscovy from her town of birth, suggesting a romantic element in the relations of the boyar's son and the young Jewess from the time of their first encounter.

The uniqueness of the analyzed set of archival sources, related to the Lithuanian Jewess convert and her family is that first and foremost, the very possibility of tracing the fate of a proselyte during a course of a rather lengthy period of time (1635-1647), moreover of a woman, is rare, if not exceptional. Moreover, the documents reveal the vicissitude of a conversion of a Jew into Orthodoxy at the very infancy of the Jewish presence in Muscovy, even before the mass appearance of captive Jews during the continuous Russian-Polish war in the middle of the 17th century. The facts around Melanya's life indicate that although the mark of a convert would never be fully eradicated from the person's identity in an Early Modern Christian Orthodox society, positive relations and a favorable treatment with the highest of both monarchic and religious authorities were nonetheless possible. Not least important is that the manuscripts related to Melanya were deposited in the archives of one of the country's main institutions of the time – the Office of the Ranks, comprising four separate cases of 15 varieties of documents (petitions, military reports, monarchical orders, clerical notes, etc.), and contain valuable information on the socio-economic, legal and religious situation of baptized Jews (almost exclusively of Polish-Lithuanian/Ashkenazi origins) in the 17th century Russian state.

⁴⁷⁰ Ibid., Pg. 50; Ibid., Pg. 320.

⁴⁷¹ Ibid., Pg. 49; Ibid., Pg. 319.

⁴⁷² Ibid., Pg. 52; Pg. 322.

⁴⁷³ Volkov V. (2004): *"The Wars and Forces of the Moscow State (End of XV – First Half of XVII)"*. Young Guard publishing, Moscow. Pg. 238.

Baptized Jews versus Patriarch Nikon

The nearly complete absence of Jews in Russia until the mid-17th century did not exclude the existence of various problems related to Jews and Judaism. Before the Russo-Polish war of 1632-1634, the Russian encounter with the adherents of the Jewish faith was primarily based not on real life situations, but rather on their ‘biblical’ imagery, originating primarily from anti-Judaic polemical works composed by members of the clergy. The situation began to change in the mid 17th century, when a significant number of Jewish captives from Poland settled in the Russian State. While the settlement in Muscovy inevitably entailed for the conversion to Christianity, the label of a “christened Jew” accompanied these individuals, in most cases, for the rest of their lives. Moreover, the suspicions of a convert’s relapse into the former faith remained rampant, causing the ‘new Christian’ to repeatedly prove their devotion to Orthodoxy, often at the expense of their former co-religionists. All these aspects were demonstrated in the accusations made by a christened Jew named Mikhail Afanasev against Patriarch Nikon, ‘the seventh Patriarch of Moscow and all Ruthenia of the Russian Orthodox Church’, in 1666.

Nikon is unquestionably one of the most prolific figures in the Early Modern Russian historiography. Having been elected as Patriarch in 1652, Nikon instigated a number of significant reforms within the Church, aimed not only at establishing uniformity between the Greek and Russian religious practices and rituals, but also at the exaltation of the ecclesiastical authority on political matters and the jurisprudence of the state. Having the full support of Tsar Aleksey Mikhailovich, Nikon practically achieved the equality of patriarchal and royal authority, procuring the right to use the sovereign title in official documents⁴⁷⁴. When the power of the Patriarch began to eclipse that of the Tsar, tensions between the two parties escalated to such an extent that in 1658 Nikon retired from Moscow to the New Jerusalem monastery in a town called Istra, where for the next 8 years he obstructed the election of a new Patriarch. In 1666-1667, Nikon stood trial in front of the Holy Synod and was found guilty of the excessive use of power and the abandonment of the Patriarchal throne, the employment of torturous practices against the clergy, and the “anathematization” of the Patriarchs of Alexandria and Antioch, amongst other wrongdoings⁴⁷⁵. As a result, Nikon was stripped of his sacerdotal titles and exiled to the Ferapontov Monastery in the north of the country. Nonetheless, in 1667 the Synodal council approved all of the reforms initiated by the disgraced Patriarch and anathematized the supporters of the ‘old practices’, causing a major schism within the Russian Church that became known as the “Raskol” (literally a “split” or a “break”).

In October 1666, when the Synod was preparing for Nikon’s trial, “a newly christened Jew Mikhail Afanasev” arrived in Moscow and submitted an appeal to his majesty the Tsar, in which he accused Patriarch Nikon of committing a number of offences⁴⁷⁶. Afanasev was a “boyar’s child” (a title of the lowest class of servants) at the

⁴⁷⁴ Kartashev A. (1991): *“Essays on the History of the Russian Church”*. Terra publishing, Moscow. Vol. 21, Pg. 135, 141.

⁴⁷⁵ Ibid., Pg. 143.

⁴⁷⁶ Prokopenko M. (2001): *“The ‘Jewish Motives’ of the Case Against Patriarch Nikon: The Denunciation of a Baptized Jew M. Afanasev to Tsar Aleksey Mikhailovich in 1666”*. Publication

New Jerusalem monastery, where Nikon resided at the time. First and foremost, Afanasev claimed that a fellow christened Jew and “boyar’s child” at the New Jerusalem monastery Demyamin Levitsky was tortured by the orders of Nikon, in order to get him to confess to ‘Judaizing’ – that is practicing Jewish rituals in secret, and not only by himself but together with the personal physician of the Tsar named Danila whilst in Moscow. Having been subjected to repeated beatings, an incarceration in a cellar and threats to be burned if he did not admit to the charges, Levitsky maintained his innocence. He firmly denied having been involved in Judaic practices, and while admitting to having met with Danila the physician in Moscow, he was “unaware” of his involvement in Judaizing activities⁴⁷⁷. Even when Nikon promised Levitsky his release if he were to admit to Judaizing, and a reward for testifying against Danila, the christened Jew decisively denied all accusations. According to Afanasev, the reason Nikon tried to obtain such testimony was so that during the Synodal trial, he would be able to accuse the Tsar of having been treated by a Judaizing physician.

Other accusations brought forward by Afanasev against the Patriarch included claims of people from Nikon’s inner circle being involved in “shady” activities, cruel treatment of his servants, breaking the rules of the Church by receiving foreigners from Moscow’s German district at the monastery, and finally of bathing with “young women” and trying to seduce Afanasev’s wife⁴⁷⁸. Hence, the document composed based on Afanasev’s statements was titled “*The Testimony of Mikhail Afanasev of the Relation of Patriarch Nikon Towards Women*”.

While Afanasev’s accusations were not included in the list of offences committed by the Patriarch at the subsequent Synodal trial, an additional investigation was launched immediately after the baptized Jew’s testimony was recorded. The investigation concluded only in April 1667, which is three months after Nikon’s sentencing and banishment. The details of the proceedings of this investigation survive in two documents stored at the Russian State Archive of Early Acts, namely the letter of Patriarch Nikon to Tsar Aleksey Mikhailovich dated October 25, 1666⁴⁷⁹, and the record of the questioning of the baptized Jew Demian Levitsky (whom the Patriarch accused of Judaizing) and of other witnesses pertaining to the case, dated October 30, 1666⁴⁸⁰.

As follows from the documents, upon the receipt of Afanasev’s testimony, the secretary of the Tsar Bashmakov and the archimandrite of Moscow’s Chudov monastery

of the Hebrew University, Moscow. №6 (24), Pg. 349-366; The Russian State Archive of Early Acts. Fund 27, Office of Secret Matters. Case 267, Pg. 215-237.

⁴⁷⁷ Ibid., Pg. 359; Ibid., Pg. 215-216.

⁴⁷⁸ Ibid., Pg. 359-365; Ibid., Pg. 215-237.

⁴⁷⁹ Prokopenko M. (2003): “*Baptized Jews Versus Patriarch Nikon: The Materials of the Investigation on Patriarch Nikon in 1666*” // *Jewish Moscow: Collection of Articles and Materials*”. MEKPO Publishing, Moscow. Pg. 330-338; The Russian State Archive of Early Acts. Fund 27, Office of Secret Matters. Case 140, chapter 8, Pg. 238-243.

⁴⁸⁰ Ibid., Pg. 333-338; Ibid., Pg. 244-255.

Ioakim, accompanied by a squad of musketeers, were sent to the New Jerusalem monastery to investigate the matter. In his letter to Tsar Aleksey Mikhailovich, Nikon declared that he was “very distressed” by this act. In his defense, the Patriarch maintained that Demian Levitsky was imprisoned rightfully, claiming that there were “a lot of witnesses” who attested that Levitsky was “in the Jewish faith”, that he “disputed with priests, praising the Jewish faith and blaspheming against the Christian faith, the Gospel and the Holy apostles”⁴⁸¹. Moreover, Nikon claimed that having left the Orthodox faith, Levitsky “ate meat during the time of the holy fasts” and seduced young monks, convincing them to eat meat and “to get married”. These “young monks”, according to Nikon, “took part in the Judaizer heresy” and “stole money and clothes” from him⁴⁸². Furthermore, Nikon asserted that “he heard from a lot of people” that on his trips to Moscow, Levitsky celebrated the Sabbath with the physician of His Majesty “Danila the Jew”, while “never attending Church service and never confessing in front of a spiritual father”. Nikon maintained that in Moscow Levitsky “spread lies” about the Patriarch. For these reasons, Nikon ordered for him to be detained and questioned, and according to the Patriarch, Levitsky confessed to all the aforementioned wrongdoings. Apparently, Levitsky even wrote a note to Nikon, in which he expressed the will to appear in front of the Patriarch in person in order to confess his sins, but Nikon refused to “desecrate his ears with Jewish vileness”⁴⁸³. In order to conceal his crime, according to Nikon, Levitsky instructed his wife to tell “Mikhail the Jew” that he will face the same punishment as her husband, because the two baptized Jews were Judaizing together. Thus Nikon explained Mikhail Afanasev fleeing to Moscow and submitting the appeal against him. Accordingly, the Patriarch urged the Tsar not to believe “them, the Jews”, as that went against “Godly rules”⁴⁸⁴. Intriguingly, throughout the letter the Patriarch speaks of “the Jews” without any mention of their baptisms.

At the New Jerusalem monastery, the envoys of the Tsar questioned the witnesses pertaining to the case. One of them was Nikon’s secretary, Ostafei Glumilov, who by the orders of the Patriarch had interrogated Levitsky. According to Glumilov, when questioned on his connection to the Tsar’s physician Danila the Jew, concerning how Danila celebrated the Sabbath, as well as on the location of Moscow’s “congregation of the Judaizers”, Levitsky stated that while Danila and he were well acquainted, as they were born in the same town and went to the same school, he had not celebrated the Sabbath with him in Moscow and was unaware of any Judaizing activity practiced by the physician⁴⁸⁵. Moreover, according to Levitsky, Danila was of the Lutheran faith. After Levitsky had been imprisoned, according to Glumilov, he had passed a note to Nikon in

⁴⁸¹ Ibid., Pg. 331; Ibid., Pg. 238.

⁴⁸² Ibid., Ibid.

⁴⁸³ Ibid., Ibid..

⁴⁸⁴ Ibid., Pg. 332; Ibid., Pg. 239.

⁴⁸⁵ Ibid., Pg. 333; Ibid., Pg. 244.

which he begged the Patriarch to receive him so that he could repent and tell him the truth.

The other servants at the New Jerusalem monastery questioned by the Tsar's envoys generally confirmed that both Demian Levitsky and Mikhail Afanasev were Judaizing. One of the servants named Ostashka stated that while he had also interrogated Levitsky on the matter, the baptized Jew was not subjected to torture and in a letter to the Patriarch admitted to his sins⁴⁸⁶. In turn, a monastery scribe Timoshka also attested that Levitsky was indeed Judaizing, as the baptized Jew often visited a choir singer named Vasili in Moscow, whom Timoshka had overheard saying that "the prophets spoke not of Christ and the Virgin Mary"⁴⁸⁷. According to Timoshka, all of the christened Jews at the parish of the Church of John the Apostle in Moscow "rarely attended Church service". Another choir singer Andrey confirmed that 'Vasili the Jew' was Judaizing, stating that Vasili had in his possession many "Jewish and Latin books", that he "resisted the Christian faith, didn't bow to the Living Cross and the Holy Icons", that he "praised the Jewish faith" and had "many Jews visiting him"⁴⁸⁸. Yet, Andrey could not confirm whether Levitsky was involved in Judaizing, because he did not know him.

Without a doubt, the analysis of the given sources requires a critical approach, since the charges manifested by the servants of the New Jerusalem monastery against their master, just as Nikon's counter-accusations of their involvement in 'Judaizing', are certainly questionable. Notwithstanding the ethical aspects of the equation, at times baptized Jews became the most zealous defenders of the Christian doctrines. Thus, the actions of neophytes were often directed against their former coreligionists, expressed through informing on their wrongdoings such as relapses into the former faith, as well as against the representatives of the dominant religion, at times very influential ones, such as Patriarch Nikon. The reasons for such phenomena are rather clear – the converts desired to gain a foothold in their new environment, since through their baptism, all ties with their former community were annulled. For the process of integration and acceptance in the new community, it was certainly advantageous to perform an imperative deed, particularly one that demonstrated their devotion to Christianity and simultaneously safeguarded the religion's integrity. This however does not exclude the possibility of a neophyte acting out of fanatical devotion to the new faith.

Despite the weighty evidence indicating that the baptized Jews Demian Levitsky and Mikhail Afanasev were involved in 'Judaizing', when the two men appeared in front of the Synodal court in April 1667, in the presence of the Patriarchs of Alexandria and Antioch, the court ruled in their favor, and accepted their denunciation of their former master as valid. This act is particularly significant, since according to the Council Code of 1649, the apostasy from Christianity and proselytization of a foreign faith were offences punishable by burning⁴⁸⁹. While the determination with which Patriarch Nikon

⁴⁸⁶ Ibid., Pg. 334; Ibid., Pg. 246.

⁴⁸⁷ Ibid., Pg. 335; Ibid., Pg. 249.

⁴⁸⁸ Ibid.; Ibid., Pg. 251.

⁴⁸⁹ Abramovich G., Mankov A. (1987): *"The Council Code of 1649: Text, Commentaries"*. Institute of History of USSR, Leningrad. Pg. 15.

attempted to charge his former servants with practicing Judaic rituals in secret and necessarily include the Tsar's physician, Danila, in their ranks is evident, it is hard to say whether there is any truth to his claims, even though it was backed by the testimonies of various witnesses. Even if the said group was indeed 'Judaizing', which is plausible, the fact that Nikon instigated an inquisitional inquiry into the matter at precisely the same time when the royal authorities in Moscow promulgated his impeachment suggests that the Patriarch was driven by supplementary motives: the inculcation of the Tsar's physician with one of the most heinous crimes – the proselytization of Judaism amongst the Orthodox faithful – would have certainly tarnished the Tsar's standing in front of the Holy Synod and simultaneously lessened the validity of the charges brought against Nikon. The case therefore demonstrates that in the Early Modern Russian state, members of the clergy did not shy away from charging their adversaries with 'Judaizing' for political or personal gains. Moreover, the very presence of Jewish motives in the investigation and trial of the head of the Russian Church demonstrates the extent of the perceptibility of Jewish migrants, albeit baptized, in the 17th century Russian society.

Doctor Danila von Gaden, a Baptized Jew at the Royal Court

Various additional sources shed light on the persona of the aforementioned baptized Jew Danila, a physician of the Tsar whom Patriarch Nikon attempted to indict of Judaizing – specifically of secretly celebrating the Sabbath along with other baptized Jews in Moscow. Named in various documents as Danila Evlevich, Danila Ilin, Danila Zhidovinov (Jewish pejorative), Daniil von Gaden and Stephan von Gaden, the doctor was born into a Jewish family in Smolensk in the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, from where he moved to Kiev and in 1657 was brought to Moscow by the initiative of a boyar Vasili Buturlin⁴⁹⁰. In Moscow, Danila started his medical career as a feldsher, gradually gaining popularity as a doctor in the capital, and in 1672 was issued a doctoral diploma by the Tsar himself⁴⁹¹. According to the Swedish envoy Johan Kilburger who visited Moscow in 1674, at that time Danila was the most authoritative doctor at the Royal court⁴⁹². During his service, Danila received numerous privileges from the Tsar rarely granted to foreigners, amongst which was the permission to travel to the Polish Kingdom in order to visit his mother in Smolensk⁴⁹³. Furthermore, records indicate that

⁴⁹⁰ Berin I. (1888): *"Two Jewish Doctors at the Moscow Court"*. Voshod Journal, Num. 3, Saint Petersburg. Pg. 114.

⁴⁹¹ Richter W. (1820): *"History of Medicine in Russia"*. Wsewolojsky typography, Saint Petersburg. Vol. 2, Pg. 262.

⁴⁹² Kurts B. (1916): *"Kilburger's Essay on Russian Commerce During the Reign of Aleksey Mikhailovich"*. Chokolov typography, Kiev. Pg. 88.

⁴⁹³ Berin I. (1888): *"Two Jewish Doctors at the Moscow Court"*. Voshod Journal, Num. 3, Saint Petersburg. Pg. 114.

the Tsar repeatedly permitted his mother and other Jewish relatives to visit Danila in Moscow, and each time they were granted presents from the Royal treasury⁴⁹⁴.

Of the physician, Kilburger wrote that Danila was “Jewish by birth, then he became Catholic, then Protestant, and now he’s Orthodox”⁴⁹⁵. Not only is this information in line with the aforementioned 1666 testimony of Demian Levitsky, who rejected accusations of Danila’s involvement in ‘Judaizing’ by claiming that the physician was “of the Lutheran” faith⁴⁹⁶, but it also matches two other contemporary testimonies, both of which attest that by the time of his death in 1682, Danila converted to Orthodoxy and received the name Stephan with his baptism⁴⁹⁷. It is rather likely that Danila baptized into Orthodoxy after being accused of Judaizing by Patriarch Nikon, in order to eradicate all suspicions and accentuate his allegiance to the Orthodox monarch. However, having undergone the conversion process three times into the three contending branches of Christianity, it is doubtful that Danila acted out of spiritual convictions in either of the cases. It is clear that without having performed these conversions, Danila wouldn’t have been able to achieve such success in his medical career. Accordingly, if his repeated profession of the Christian faith was in fact superficial, examples of which are not uncommon in the Early Modern Jewish history, then such a disposition increases the possibility of Danila’s commitment to the faith of his ancestors and the practice of Judaism in secret, as was alleged by Nikon and other witnesses.

Although there is no direct evidence proving Danila’s adherence of Judaism, two other contemporaneous sources attest not only that the physician retained ties to the Jewish community, but also that he baptized into Lutheranism “pretendedly”. Thus, a British physician Samuel Collins, who served at the Russian court between 1659 and 1666, wrote: “The Jews of late are strangely crept into the City and Court, by the means of a Jewish Chyrurgion (pretendedly baptized Lutheran)”⁴⁹⁸. In a similar vein, an unnamed German traveler to Russia at the time noted that “a large number of Jews were present at the Russian court, thanks to the help of certain Jewish patrons, who converted

⁴⁹⁴ Milyukin A. (1909): *“Visits of Foreigners to the Moscow State / From the History of Russian Law XVI-XVII centuries”*. Trud publishing, Saint Petersburg. Pg. 221.

⁴⁹⁵ Kurts B. (1916): *“Kilburger’s Essay on Russian Commerce During the Reign of Aleksey Mikhailovich”*. Chokolov typography, Kiev. Pg. 88.

⁴⁹⁶ The Russian State Archive of Early Acts. Fund 27, Order of Secret Matters. Case 267, Pg. 244.

⁴⁹⁷ Sakharov I. (1841): *“Notes of Medvedev S. // Notes of Russian People. Events of the Epoch of Peter the Great”*. Sakharov typography, Saint Petersburg. Pg. 33; Sumarkov A. (1768): *“The First and Principal Musketeer Revolt in Moscow in May of 1682”*. Imperial Academy of Sciences, Saint Petersburg. Pg. 47.

⁴⁹⁸ Collins S. (1671): *“The Present State of Russia: In a Letter to a Friend at London”*. Printed by “John Winter for Dorman Newman At the Kings Arms in the Poultry”, London. Chap. XXV, Pg. 120. From the first edition at Houghton Library, Harvard University. Edited by Poe M. (2008), Department of History Publications, University of Iowa.

to Lutheranism”⁴⁹⁹. There can be no doubt that in both cases, the referenced individual was indeed the physician Danila.

As a consequence of the Musketeer revolt, triggered by the death of Tsar Fedor Alekseevich in 1682, Danila and a German doctor at the Royal court named Guttmensh were accused of poisoning the monarch and were brutally executed at the Red Square⁵⁰⁰. Executed along with Danila was his son Mikhail, who was also a convert to Orthodoxy⁵⁰¹. Information of the event is confirmed by a Jewish source. A response of a Lublin Rabbi Morduch Ziskind Roternburg contains the testimony of a witness to the murder of Danila’s son, a baptized Jew named Zevi Girsh⁵⁰². A group of Jews, who according to Zevi Girsh were also witnesses to the murder, were pronounced by the Rabbi to have been ‘*anusim*’ – a term used to depict ‘forced converts’ to Christianity in the Jewish law. The document also speaks of another baptized Jew named Jacob ben Isaac, who participated in the funeral procession of Danila and his son in Moscow along with other Jews, however at the time of his testimony, Jacob had “renounced the wicked ways” and returned into the Jewish faith. According to Jacob, he was one of the few Jews who fled Moscow during the musketeer revolt, while the majority remained in the Russian capital as ‘*anusim*’. Not only do these testimonies further reaffirm Danila’s strong connection to the Jewish community, but also indicate that for the Jews in Russia, the conversion to Christianity was a conscious and often superficial choice, since returning to their former faith by fleeing the country remained a possibility.

On the Conversion of Jews into the Christian Orthodox Faith

In the Early Modern societies, religion was the defining factor for the formation of the set of values and symbolic forms, by the means of which an individual orientated in the surrounding world. The change of one’s confession implied if not a radical transformation, then certainly a substantial alteration of these tenets. Yet, the degree of change in a neophyte’s outlook was emphatically based not only on his unique life experiences, but also on the motivation for undergoing the conversion. Taking into consideration the representatives of the Jewish faith who expressed the will to convert to Orthodoxy in the 17th century Ruthenia, the sources provide little or no indication as to how knowledgeable these individuals were of the tenets of Christianity. For the most part, the degree of familiarity with the dogmas of the Orthodox faith held by these

⁴⁹⁹ Berin I. (1888): “*Two Jewish Doctors at the Moscow Court*”. Voshod Journal, Num. 3, Saint Petersburg. Pg. 115. Citing “*Reise nach Norden Lepzeig, 1706*, chapter XLVII, pg. 234.

⁵⁰⁰ Sumarkov A. (1768): “*The First and Principal Musketeer Revolt in Moscow in May of 1682*”. Imperial Academy of Sciences, Saint Petersburg. Pg. 47.

⁵⁰¹ Kostromov N. (2007): “*Russian History Through the Lives of its Principal Figures*”. Eksmo publishing, Moscow. Vol. 2, Pg. 485.

⁵⁰² The Responsa of Morduch Ziskind Rotenburg (1746), Amsterdam. A fragment of response Num. 22 was cited in Katz B. (1898): “*On the History of Jews in Russia, Poland and Lithuania XVI-XVII centuries*”. Sion publishing, Saint Petersburg. Pg. 47-48.

migrants depended on the reasons, upon which they decided to receive the baptism. Thus, a Jew who converted to Orthodoxy for ideological reasons naturally had a greater understanding of the new faith than one who baptized in order to be able to settle on the territory of the Russian State and receive the privileges that came along with the act. Accordingly, of primary interest are the considerations given to these aspects by the Orthodox Church, specifically the processes developed for the instruction and the integration of Jewish neophytes into the fold of the Christian religion, as well as the measures implemented to ensure the detachment of the converts from their previous faith.

The evidence testifying to the rather scant knowledge of Orthodoxy held by future proselytes is found in a private correspondence between a graduate of Kiev's Theological Academy (the oldest college of the Russian Orthodox Church) Jacob Markovich, and his teacher, archbishop Feofan Prokopovich⁵⁰³. In a letter to his student dated 1716, Feofan reported of an incident concerning a conversion of a Jew into Orthodoxy. The circumstances of the archbishop's meeting with the Jew were the following: Feofan arrived to visit Markovich at his home, however did not find his student there. At that point, "some Jew" came to Markovich's house and expressed to Feofan his desire to undergo baptism. Feofan writes: "... he wants to be a Christian, but doesn't know anything about Christianity. He had not heard anything about Christianity from anyone, but told me that he had been 'pronounced'; and when I asked what did he mean by 'pronounced', he answered that some priest changed his name. Here's an example for you of the great state of the Church! With whichever frame of spirit this Jew wished for what he wished, in any case, God requires us to instruct him, otherwise blood will be spilled by our hand". The task of instructing the 'pronounced' Jew Feofan designated upon Markovich: "Since I cannot fulfill this duty, it passes to you, my dear brother! Please perform the righteous task, for you have the understanding of the heavenly doctrine and posses all the necessary theological writings. Take advantage of this divine gift". In the conclusion of the letter, the archbishop outlined the core principles of Orthodoxy, the understanding of which, in his opinion, were essential for converts coming from Judaism: "This Jew must be taught particularly the following: 1. That the Messiah had already come; 2. That the Messiah is God; 3. That the mission of the Messiah was to be a mediator and to free the world from sin by his own blood; 4. The sacrament of the Trinity; 5. That all external rituals and legal provisions are destroyed"⁵⁰⁴. All of the listed provisions, according to Feofan, were to be fitted with the appropriate quotations from the Old Testament.

While in his letter archpriest Feofan complained of the potential Jewish convert's complete ignorance of the foundations of Christianity and of the priest's failure to carry out his duties of instructing a future member of the Church, it becomes appropriate to ask - to what extent is this example representative? To what degree does the described incident reflect a typical situation, in which a priest was incapable or unwilling to instruct a potential convert of the Orthodox dogmas?

⁵⁰³ *"The Letters of F. Prokopovich, Written During the Reign of Peter the Great" (1865)*. Works of Kiev Theological Academy, Kiev. No. 1, pg. 143.

⁵⁰⁴ Ibid.

Since the Russian Orthodox Church did not conduct active missionary activity, specialized institutions responsible for the instruction of converts did not exist. Monasteries played a primary role in the guidance and adaptation of converts, and the priest of the church where the baptismal ceremony took place was typically responsible for assigning a spiritual mentor to the neophyte. In addition to the aforementioned letter of archpriest Feofan to his student, there is further evidence indicating the active involvement of Orthodox intellectuals in the guidance of christened Jews in the Early Modern Russia. For instance, in his letter to the archbishop of Pskov Simon Todorski, a baptized Jew named Afanasi (former Jewish name Wolf) wrote: “Last year, having been in the holy city of Kiev, I had heard from your honor that the Messiah has already come, and you had pointed out to me many prophecies about the time of his coming. Your holy speeches opened my heart and enlightened my eyes. I realized that the Messiah, the son of David, annunciated by you, is the truth, as true as God himself, whereupon I adopted the true faith in the Son of God. May God reward you for this to the fullest, for under his protection and cover I have now been sheltered”⁵⁰⁵. Markedly, Todorski was also a graduate of the Theological Academy of Kiev, renowned for its focus on Hebraic studies, where archpriest Feofan had taught. Considering Feofan’s aforementioned list of the essential provisions that were to be taught to a Jewish neophyte, Todorski’s accentuation on the acceptance of Jesus as the Messiah, therefore, is not surprising. According to Nichik, Todorski’s knowledge of Yiddish innately enhanced his ability to carry out missionary activity amongst Jews, and during the course of his clerical career, the archbishop successfully attracted a number of individuals to the Orthodox faith⁵⁰⁶.

The most detailed and authoritative instruction on the preparation and conduct of the rite of baptism was traditionally contained in the so-called ‘Trebniks’, literarily “*The Book of Prayers*”. Guidelines for the reception of the Jews into the fold of Orthodoxy were an indispensable element of every “*Great Book of Prayer*”, which also nominally included the behavioral guidelines for the christened individuals coming from other faiths and repentant heretics, as well as the instructions for the conduct of rituals such as the unction, the anointing of the sick, wedding ceremonies, repentance, amongst other⁵⁰⁷. Two types of Trebniks emerged during the Early Modern Period - Russian and Ukrainian (or of Moscow and Kiev). While both types were inherently based on the Byzantine tradition, over time they were influenced by various other precepts. Both rites, however, were reproduced and followed regardless of the region, with the Moscow rite being published in the Trebniks of Kiev and Chernigov in the first half of the 18th century, and many of the elements of the Kiev rite appearing in Trebniks published in Moscow⁵⁰⁸. The

⁵⁰⁵ “*Materials of the Biography of the Reverend Simon Todorski, Archbishop of Pskov*” (1872). Saint Petersburg Theological Seminary, Saint Petersburg. Spiritual Conversations No. 24, Pg. 428.

⁵⁰⁶ Nichik. V. (2002): “*Simon Todorski and Hebraic Studies at Kievan-Mogilyan Academy*”. KM Academy, Kiev. Pg. 38.

⁵⁰⁷ Aleksey II (2000): “*Orthodox Encyclopedia: Russian Orthodox Church*”. Church-Research Center, Moscow. Pg. 390.

⁵⁰⁸ Ibid., Pg. 391.

Russian rite of the reception of the Jews into Orthodoxy heavily relied on the canonical tradition and had not undergone major changes, being re-published in the 'Great Trebniks' during the 17th century with insubstantial differences relating to wording. According to the formula for the renunciation of Judaism outlined in the Trebniks of the Moscow print yard, during the catechesis process a Jew had to renounce his faith twice, on the first and the second day of the ceremony. The text of the anathema pronounced on the first day was relatively brief: "I renounce all the Jewish practices, and their laws, and the unleavened bread, and the sacrifices, and the rites of reverence, and all the other Jewish holidays, and the prayers, and the sprinkling, and the cleansing, and the fasting, and the propriety, and the new moon, and the Sabbath, and the enchantments, and the gatherings, and the Jewish victuals and drinks. I straightforwardly renounce all the Jewish things and laws, and customs. And above all, in the image of Christ, I renounce the antichrist of the Jews"⁵⁰⁹. On the second day of the catechesis, the Jewish neophyte was required to confirm the sincerity of his intentions: "On this day I detach from the Jews and come to the Christian faith not because of a certain trouble or need, or due to fear, or threat, or poverty, or debt, or guilt, or for honor, or for benefits, or for wealth, or for profit, or due to betrayal, or for the sake of envy or strive, or in order to pretend to be a Christian. Rather out of love for Christ and his faith with my heart and soul..."⁵¹⁰. The anathema continued with a long and rather complicated text, listing not only the conventional Jewish daily practices and holidays, but also those of the archaic Jewish sects, namely of the Pharisees, Sadducees and Essenes, indicating an ancient origin of the formula. Thus, at least half of the text of the renunciation was completely detached from the realities of the time of the baptism. Moreover, written and read in Church Slavonic, the text was hardly understandable to Jews. In the Trebnik it is specified that if the neophyte could not replicate the text dictated to him by the priest, a translator was to assist during the ceremony. Since a comprehensive understanding of the text was not required of the neophyte, for the Orthodox clergy the catechesis ceremony was a symbolic act, where the verbalization of the formula renouncing the old faith by the converting Jew was sufficient.

A different approach to the text pronounced by a Jew during the catechumenate ritual was depicted in a Trebnik compiled by the Metropolitan of Kiev Peter Mogila in 1647. While the Russian Orthodox discourse was predominantly based on the Byzantine heritage, the Ukrainian Orthodox intellectuals generally did not adhere to strict confessional boundaries. Their inherent geographical mobility that easily crossed the national and confessional boundaries of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, and the unavoidable interaction with western Christian traditions certainly had an impact on the dogmas of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church⁵¹¹. In addition, unlike their Russian neighbors,

⁵⁰⁹ "Trebnik" (1659): Moscow Print Yard, Moscow. Reprint 2008. Publishing house of the Russian Orthodox Church, Moscow. Pg. 343-344.

⁵¹⁰ Ibid., Pg. 344.

⁵¹¹ Panchenko A. (2000): "Russian Culture on the Eve of the Reforms of Peter the Great. // Russian History and Culture: Works of Different Years". Azbuka publishing, Saint Petersburg. P. 196.

the Early Modern Ukrainians and Belorussians contacted with the Jews in everyday life, as Jewish communities were numerous across the eastern territories of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth. During Mogila's tenure as the Metropolitan, the Ukrainian Orthodox Church issued a number of rulings aimed at limiting the relations between Christians and Jews. These included the prohibitions on the Orthodox residents of the Commonwealth on working for the Jews, as well as on buying meat from Jewish butchers, which was sold "poisoned and dirty"⁵¹².

While according to the Kievan tradition, the catechesis ceremony continued for four days, rather than two as per the Moscow tradition, the text of the anathema compiled by Mogila was more concise and succinct. It was marked by a rather aggressive rhetoric as can be seen from the very first lines: "...and having learned and acknowledged the wicked unbelief of the Jews, and all the superstitions and fables of the Jews, and from their blasphemous ordeals of God and our Savior Jesus Christ, the true son of God, and his Most Pure mother and all his holiness, I renounce all the blasphemous cursing and attacks on the Christians, for they are soul-wrecking and unpleasant to God, and I curse them; as is wretched to God the teachings of the Talmud and the ungodly traditions, I denounce and curse them"⁵¹³. Very evident is that the emotional component of the renunciation became more extreme. Judaism as a religion is denied the very right to exist: "their laws" becomes "the wicked unbelief". Written using a more modern language, this text was certainly more understandable for the Polish-Lithuanian Jews. Whereas the text of Moscow's Trebniks prescribed to treat the Jews wishing to accept baptism as children: "the same is the essence of the Christian children wishing to baptize"⁵¹⁴, Kiev's version is deprived of this paternal tone. Furthermore, the renunciation of the archaic Jewish sects is missing in Kiev's version, with the focus made predominantly on the renunciation of the Jewish rituals, practices and texts – the Talmud and the "ungodly traditions"⁵¹⁵. Mogila's modernized version was subsequently adopted by Moscow and spread across the churches of Russia. His rite of the reception of Jews into Orthodoxy was eventually printed in "The Rite of Joining from the Infidels to the Orthodox Eastern Church" by the Synodal Typography in Moscow in 1757.

Being a product of the Orthodox hierarchs of Kiev, the text was formulated for the ritualistic renunciation of Judaism, and depicts their consideration of the Jewish dogma. Judaism is named as a "wicked unbelief", the fundamental principles of which are based on "fables" and "superstitions" directed against the revered figures of Christianity – Jesus

⁵¹² *The 1640 Church Council of Kiev as Depicted by Kasiyan Sakovich* (1878) in *Russian Historic Library*. Archeographic Commission, Saint Petersburg. Vol. IV, Book 1, Pg. 37.

⁵¹³ *"The Trebnik of Metropolitan Peter Mogila"* (1646), Kiev. Reprint, 1996. Liturgical Literature, Kiev. Pg. 53.

⁵¹⁴ *"Trebnik"* (1659): Moscow Print Yard, Moscow. Reprint 2008. Publishing house of the Russian Orthodox Church, Moscow. Pg. 344.

⁵¹⁵ *"The Trebnik of Metropolitan Peter Mogila"* (1646), Kiev. Reprint, 1996. Liturgical Literature, Kiev. Pg. 55.

Christ, the Virgin Mary and the Saints. While it is hard to say what the authors meant by the “ungodly traditions”, the reference to the Talmud – a central text of Rabbinical Judaism - is certainly not accidental. Thus, in a different version of the Trebnik, the mention of the Talmud was modified in the following manner: “...and the rites and the customs of the Old Testament are obsolete and are not useful, and the book of the Talmud, a demonic inspiration of the Jewish Rabbis, who are unpleasant to God, is fictitious and is not for the guidance of kind faith, but contains ungodly doctrine of damned superstitions and funny fables of the Jews, blasphemies and attacks on the Lord God Jesus Christ...”⁵¹⁶. Yet another formula for the denunciation of Judaism that was in circulation contained the following statement: “...having learned that the law of the Jews, which awaits for the Messiah and does not accept Jesus as the son of God and as the true Messiah, is false, vile and ungodly, I renounce and curse the current Jewish law”⁵¹⁷. In this case, the author stressed the importance of the recognition of Jesus Christ as the Messiah for a Jewish convert.

According to the canon, baptism of a new member into the fold of Orthodoxy was necessarily preceded by forty days of fasting, prayer and confessions⁵¹⁸. On the day of the catechesis ceremony, the future Christian received the right to stand by the door of the Church, as entrance inside was prohibited for the non-Orthodox. At this time, the candidate received a Christian name, which symbolically marked his entry onto the path of the initiation. The actual baptism ceremony was conducted only after the individual’s negation of Judaism and three days of confession and instruction on the fundamentals of the Orthodox faith. Mogila’s stipulations required the priest to teach the neophyte “to believe in one God”, and at the very least the following prayers: the Lord’s Prayer, the Trisagion, the Symbol of Faith and Ave Maria⁵¹⁹.

Traditionally, before the conversion process could take place, it was also required of the Jew to write an appeal to the Tsar, requesting to be granted permission to be accepted into the fold of Orthodoxy. In its essence, the submission of such an appeal indicated the voluntary nature of the desired conversion. This tradition was codified in 1750 with an edict being issued that required members of the clergy to obtain from the individuals wishing to baptize into Orthodoxy a formal “voluntary petition”⁵²⁰. In practice, this bureaucratic procedure occurred between the catechesis ceremony and the actual baptism. The text of the formal petition had a three-part structure: a preamble with

⁵¹⁶ “*Trebnik*” (1736). Typography of Kiev-Pechersk Lavra, Kiev. Pg. 352.

⁵¹⁷ “*Trebnik*” (1754). Typography of Troisk-Ilinsk monastery, Chernigov. Pg. 308.

⁵¹⁸ “*The Rite of Joining From the Infidels to the Orthodox Eastern Church*” (1757). Synodal Typography, Moscow. Pg. 7.

⁵¹⁹ “*The Trebnik of Metropolitan Peter Mogila*” (1646), Kiev. Reprint, 1996. Liturgical Literature, Kiev. Pg. 56.

⁵²⁰ The Complete Collection of Laws of the Russian Empire, from 1749 to 1753 (1830). Typography of the Chancellery of His Imperial Majesty, Saint Petersburg. First edition. Vol. 13, No. 9825.

the person's name and place of origin, the negation of Judaism and the profession of the foundations of Christianity, most commonly based on the fragment of the text of the Trebnik, and a request addressed to "His Imperial Majesty" for the permission to be baptized⁵²¹. Finally, the neophyte placed his signature under the following statement: "the newly christened from the Jews is obliged until the end of his/her life to stay in the Orthodox Greco-Russian faith unswervingly, under the threat of otherwise being condemned not only to spiritual torment, but also being liable to answer according to the law in the civil court, based on the signature placed here"⁵²².

While the texts of the analyzed Trebniks and the bureaucratic documents represent the framework prescribed for the conversion process of the Jews into the fold of Orthodox Christianity by the Church and State authorities, there is no substantial evidence to identify to what extent these guidelines were actually followed. The aforementioned letter of archbishop Feofan Prokopovich, for instance, attests that there were substantial discrepancies between the prescribed norms and actual practice. It is evident that the objective of both the ritualistic and the bureaucratic aspects of the process was not only to ensure that the neophyte's separation from the Jewish domain and the commitment to the Church would be guaranteed by the ecclesiastical and civil laws, but also to impact the convert's self-consciousness in such a way, so to persuade him of the ideological supremacy and the dogmatic veracity of Christianity over Judaism. For Orthodox intellectuals, it was of critical importance to extricate the neophyte not just from the Jewish religion, but also from his Jewish ancestral identity, thereby requiring the individual to sever all ties with his former community in order to prevent the possibility of a relapse. Reaffirming that each successful conversion of a Jew was regarded as an ideological victory of the Church over the Synagogue, a lush ceremonial feast was traditionally held upon the baptism of an individual of a high social standing in the Jewish community, as was the case during the christening of Aron Rabinovich, a former Rabbi of Skvira, Ukraine in 1773⁵²³.

On the Motives of Jewish Migration to Russia and the Conversion to Orthodox Christianity

For the analysis of the phenomenon of Jewish conversions to Christianity during the Early Modern period, it is necessary to take into account a number of factors: the processes occurring internally within the community, the peculiarities of the relations with the surrounding population, and the attitude of the governmental and ecclesiastical authorities towards the followers of the Jewish faith. While it cannot be asserted that a certain historical event or a particular socio-cultural process provided the impetus for an individual to leave his community and change his faith, just as it is impossible to

⁵²¹ Zanomenec A. (2003): *"Renunciation of Judaism in Byzantine Culture // Ours or Foreign? Jews and Slavs in the Eyes of Each Other"*. Sefer publishing, Moscow. Pg. 17.

⁵²² Ibid., Pg. 20; The Central State Historical Archive of Ukraine. Fund 127, Inventory 167, Case 95.

⁵²³ Ibid., Pg. 22.

reconstruct the unique life experience of every neophyte, the decision to undergo such a radical change was based precisely on the person's reasoning and individual circumstances (notwithstanding the cases of forced conversion). Nevertheless, the transition from the 'macro-historic' events to the life experience of a specific individual can be carried out by the reconstruction of the contexts, which affected the individual directly, or indirectly. Thus, an analysis of the factors stipulated above allows for the formation of context(s), in which an individual made the decision to baptize and accordingly break with his old way of life.

The Cossack uprising against the Polish crown led by Bogdan Khmel'nitsky interrupted the regular rhythm of everyday life of the Jewish communities of Ukraine and Belarus. The events of 1648-1656 marked a new era in the existence of the Jewish settlements in the Ruthenian lands of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth. The Jewish sources depicted the rebellion as a massacre, accompanied by martyrdom for the 'sanctification of God's name' ("kiddush ha-shem"), the extermination of entire communities and forced baptisms. Correspondingly, Poland's wars against Russia (1654-1667) and Sweden (1655-1660) had a further negative effect on the functioning of the Jewish communities in the region. Furthermore, the breakout of the plague (1659-1663), coupled with the military activities, led to a significant reduction of the population in the eastern lands of the Commonwealth⁵²⁴. In light of these circumstances, since baptism into Orthodoxy provided for the Jews the opportunity to migrate into the relative safety of the neighboring Moscow state, and on top of it stipulated being granted various privileges for the conversion, it is understandable why a Jewish individual might have decided to convert to Christianity.

Having been discriminated against ethno-confessional minority, certain Jewish individuals could have experienced the temptation to leave the fold of Judaism in exchange for socio-economic perspectives. This given group, most likely, included the majority of the voluntary Jewish migrants to Russia in the 17th century. Yet, it is difficult to determine how much detailed information these Jewish migrants could have possessed regarding Russia. Plausibly, for these individuals Russia represented a land of opportunity. Not of least importance was the nearly complete absence of a Jewish population on the Russian territories, thereby allowing for the representatives of the traditional Jewish professions (merchants, tax-farmers, doctors, etc.) a greater opportunity to obtain their economic niche in the absence of additional competition in the form of their former coreligionists.

It is not conceivable to limit the analysis of the environmental factors that influenced Jewish conversions to Orthodoxy strictly to the field of Jewish-Christian relations. The processes occurring within the Jewish community could not have remained unnoticed by its individual members. In the second half of the 17th century, Jewish communities of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth experienced the outbreak of one of the most large-scale messianic movements in Jewish history - Sabbatianism. The founder of the movement Sabbatai Zevi, who in 1665 proclaimed himself to be the Messiah, gained a considerable following amongst the contemporary Jewry worldwide, including

⁵²⁴ Weinryb B. (1973): *The Jews of Poland: A Social and Economic History of the Jewish Community in Poland from 1100 to 1800*. The Jewish Publication Society of America, Philadelphia. Pg. 110-111.

the support of the most erudite spiritual leaders. The period of the socio-economic crisis, caused by the numerous military conflicts, stimulated a wave of a spiritual ferment amongst the Jews of Ruthenia, who hoped for the imminent arrival of the Messiah. This view was reflected by Leib ben Ozer, the notary of the Ashkenazi community in Amsterdam, who wrote, “We, the Jews in this bitter exile, love to hear about the good tidings of comfort and salvation...especially in Poland where evil and exile are exceedingly great, and every day brings new persecution and harassment”⁵²⁵. Thus, in light of the Sabbatian mysticism, the endured suffering was deemed to have been borne not in vein, being justified as a necessary phase leading to redemption.

In light of the events, priest Johannes Galatowski of Kiev wrote a book defending Jesus Christ as the true Messiah⁵²⁶. In preparation for the divine intervention and the imminent transfer to the Holy Land, according to Galatowski, the Jews of Poland and Ukraine sold their homes, liquidated their businesses and took to the streets with portraits of Sabbatai Zevi in joyous celebrations, attracting both the interest and condemnation from their Christian neighbors. The Jews threatened the Christians with such claims as: “soon we will be your lords and you will be our servants”⁵²⁷. The celebrations of the beginning of the anticipated Messianic age in such manner are confirmed in the 1665 “*Chronicle*” of Joachim Jerlicz, who also witnessed the Jews of Poland getting rid of their possessions during the preparation for departing to Jerusalem⁵²⁸. Even after Sabbatai’s arrest, and forced conversion to Islam by the Turkish authorities in 1666, the messianic frenzy did not completely cease, with crypto-Sabbatian movements anticipating Sabbatai’s ‘second coming’ remaining active within the Jewish communities across the Commonwealth well into the 18th century⁵²⁹. Consequently, in 1670 The Council of the Four Lands, the central body of Jewish authority in Polish controlled territories, issued a ban of excommunication on the adherents of Sabbatianism and ordered for the documents on Sabbatai Zevi and his followers to be destroyed⁵³⁰.

⁵²⁵ Leib ben Ozer (1711-1718): “*The Story of Shabbetay Zevi*”. Trans. Shazar Z. (1978), Shazar Center, Jerusalem. Pg. 13-15.

⁵²⁶ Galatowski J. (1669): “*The True Messiah Jesus Christ, the Son of God*”. Typography of Kiev-Pechersk Lavra, Kiev. Text reproduced in Shpirt A. (2008): “*The True Messiah of Johannes Galatowski*”. Institute of Slavic Studies, Moscow. Slavic studies No. 4, Pg. 37-45.

⁵²⁷ Ibid., Pg. 39.

⁵²⁸ Jerlicz J. (1853): “*A Chronicle*”. Ed. Wojciecki I., Wienhoeber, Warsaw. Pg. 99-102.

⁵²⁹ The Rabbis of Lvov, Lublin, Krakow, Grodno, Zolkiew, Podhajce, and elsewhere in Eastern Europe continued to practice and disseminate Sabbatian ideology. In Galas, M. (2010) “*Sabbatianism*”. YIVO Encyclopedia of Jews in Eastern Europe. <http://www.yivoencyclopedia.org/article.aspx/Sabbatianism>

⁵³⁰ Galas, M. (2001): “*Sabbatianism in the Seventeenth-Century Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth: A Review of the Sources*”. In “*The Sabbatian Movement and Its Aftermath: Messianism, Sabbatianism and Frankism*”. Ed. Rachel Elijor, Hebrew University of Jerusalem. Jerusalem Studies In Jewish Thought, vol. 2, Pg. 62.

Nonetheless, the unfulfillment of the Messianic prophecy, coupled with Zevi's conversion, engendered a major disappointment and bewilderment across the Jewish masses. Perceptibly, driven by the feelings of doubt and frustration, numerous Jews across Europe left the fold of Judaism in the first few decades after Sabbatai's conversion. Thus, an estimated 300 Jewish families (1000-1500 people) of Salonika converted to Islam following Zevi's example⁵³¹, while a group of former Sabbatai supporters, numbering at least 20 people, converted to Lutheranism in Germany⁵³². In a similar vein, Rabbi Moses ben Aaron of Krakow, a devoted Sabbatian who expected Sabbatai's second coming in 1695, converted to Lutheranism a year after that date, and as Dole puts it, "transferred from the Messiah Sabbatai to the Messiah Jesus"⁵³³. Although the examined sources do not explicate the instances of Jews in Ruthenian lands having converted to Orthodox Christianity due to their hopes of redemption being shattered, Sabbatai's failure as a Messiah was likely to have pushed certain Jewish individuals towards the Orthodox Church. In Galatowski's aforementioned tractate, for instance, in light of Sabbatai's demise, the priest urged the Orthodox Christians of Ukraine to "show Christ, the true Messiah to the unbelieving Jews"⁵³⁴. This notion of leveraging the argument of the Messianic status of Jesus for the attraction of Jews to Orthodoxy was echoed in the ideology of the Theological Academy of Kiev⁵³⁵, and in the aftermath of the Sabbatian momentum, such agitation was most appropriate.

According to Gershom Scholem, the emergence of movements like Sabbatianism represented a new phase in the European Jewish history, and initiated the beginning of the transition to 'modernity'⁵³⁶. From the second half of the 17th century, the constantly increasing number of observant Jews, infected by the belief in the imminent coming of the Messiah, freed themselves from the traditional percepts of the Jewish society to varying degrees. The subsequent unprecedented escalation in the number of Ruthenian Jews choosing to baptize into Orthodoxy, as well as the upsurge of the mystical currents within Judaism such as Frankism and Hassidism, can be rationalized by this covert tendency – that is the spiritual quest of the Polish-Lithuanian Jewry, which constituted

⁵³¹ Baer M. (2009): *"The Dönme: Jewish Converts, Muslim Revolutionaries, and Secular Turks"*. Stanford University Press, CA. Pg. 4.

⁵³² Doktor J. (2004): *"Conversions within Sabbatianism"*. Institute of Jewish History, Warsaw. *Jewish History Quarterly*, No. 1 (209). P. 43.

⁵³³ Dole G. (1990): *"Philosemitism in the Seventeenth Century"*. Studia Swedenborgiana Press, CA. *Studia Swedenborgiana* Vol. 7, No. 1. Pg. 17.

⁵³⁴ Galatowski J. (1669): *"The True Messiah Jesus Christ, the Son of God"*. Typography of Kiev-Pechersk Lavra, Kiev. Fol. 15.

⁵³⁵ As per the outline of the core principles of Orthodoxy, the understanding of which, according to Archbishop Feofan Prokopovich, were essential for the converts coming from Judaism.

⁵³⁶ Scholem G. (1971): *"Redemption Through Sin" // The Messianic Idea in Judaism and Other Essays on Jewish Spirituality"*. Schocken Books, New York. Pg. 78-141.

the expansion of boundaries and means for understanding the world, as well as the redefinition of the forms of interaction with the surrounding population.

Chapter 3: Between Martyrdom and Conversion: The Baptism of Jews During the Cossack Uprising (1648-1656)

The Jewish sources of the mid-17th century Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, known as the “Khmelnitsky era chronicles”, focus on depicting the relations between the region’s Orthodox Ruthenians, Jews and Poles during the 1648-1656 Cossack uprising against the Polish crown. For the purpose of this study, the most important aspect addressed in these chronicles is the manifestation of forced baptisms, practiced by the Cossacks towards the region’s numerous Jewish communities, and the considerations given to the act of conversion to Christianity by the Jews of the eastern Commonwealth. While the analysis of the question of the forced conversion phenomenon explicates both the social and the religious motives of the rebels in relation to their nemeses, and concurrently highlights the conventional Jewish stance towards the conversion to Christianity, the traditional contexts, or genres, employed by the authors of the chronicles, as well as the motives behind creating and publishing these texts, must be taken into consideration. The primary context synchronously featured in all of the chronicles – martyrdom in the name of the faith (“*kiddush ha-shem*”) - is one of the most common methods of memorialization and historiography, through the use of which the Early Modern Jewish authors constructed the desired portrayal of the pogroms committed against the Jewish communities. From the time of the First Crusade, when the Jewish communities on the Rhine were devastated and many Jews chose to commit suicide rather than accept baptism, “*kiddush ha-shem*” came to symbolize the righteousness and martyrdom of those who expressed the will to die over forsaking the faith of their forefathers⁵³⁷. Correspondingly, Jewish texts describing the pogroms implemented by the followers of hetman Bogdan Khmelnytsky label the uprising as one of the most traumatic events in the Jewish history, thereby demonstrating the tendency to express contemporary dramatic events through an established model of old and well know tragedies.

Yet, the exacerbation of the Jewish-Christian relations and the categorical intolerance of the Cossacks towards the adherents of Judaism is not just a literary allegory employed by the Jewish chroniclers to memorialize the pogroms. The depictions of the events in the chronicles and the military correspondence of Cossack origin are marked by a vivid anti-Jewish rhetoric, and by and large correspond to the Jewish accounts of their systematic practice of forced conversions. In that context, the Jews were characterized as the “irreconcilable enemies of Christianity”, who cursed the Orthodox faith in their synagogues and enjoyed every opportunity to trample upon and oppress the Ukrainians⁵³⁸. Perceiving themselves as the defenders of the Orthodox faith, the Cossack leadership accordingly made it their mission to cleanse the Ruthenian lands of Judaism. The practice of forced baptisms, however, indicates that the most optimal method for the implementation of this mission was deemed not murder or expulsion, but rather the eradication of the Jewish faith through the conversion of its adherents to Christianity.

⁵³⁷ Grosman A. (1991): “*The Sources of Kiddush Hashem in Early Ashkenaz*”, in “*Sanctity of Life and Martyrdom: Studies in Memory of Amyr Yekutiel*”. Edited by Gagni I. and Ravitzky A. Hebrew University, Jerusalem. Pg. 99-130.

⁵³⁸ Konisskij G. (1846): “*History of Ruthenians*”. University Typography, Moscow. Pg. 40.

Whilst the Early Modern Orthodox Church did not conduct active missionary activity, the ‘Khmelnitsky era chronicles’ indicate that for the Jewish communities of the eastern parts of the Commonwealth, the Cossack uprising epitomized, first and foremost, a campaign aimed at the systematic eradication of the Jewish faith and their conversion to the belief in Christ. Concurrently, the practice of forced baptisms and the acceptance of converted Jews into their fold by the Cossacks signify that for the Orthodox Ukrainians, the Jews principally represented a religious, rather than an ethnic group. Through a detailed examination of the Jewish, Ukrainian and Polish accounts of forced baptisms, implemented by the Cossacks during the pogroms of 1648-1656, this chapter will question the motives behind the employment of such practice by the rebels, inquire into the perception and the symbolization of the act of conversion to Christianity by the Jews of the 17th century Ruthenian lands, and assess their sentiment towards Orthodox Christianity and the acceptance thereof by their fellow tribesmen.

The Chronicles, Author’s Sources and Jewish Contacts with the ‘Other’

The earliest Jewish chronicle of the Khmelnitsky era – “*Tsok Haitim*” (“*The Stress of the Times*”) - was written by Rabbi Meir ben Shmuel from Shebreshin (Szczepreszyn), Poland, and published in Krakow in 1649/50⁵³⁹. The original text appeared in Hebrew, with parts of the chronicle presented in a poetic form. All that is known of the author is that he served as a Rabbi in Shebreshin, a town on the Polish-Ukrainian border, which was part of the Ruthenian voivodeship (province) in the Kingdom of Poland. His only other known work is a Sabbath hymn written in the Aramaic language and published in Venice in 1639. At the beginning of the uprising in 1649, Meir was most likely in Zamosc, a town that was unsuccessfully besieged by the Cossacks. While the author did not himself experience the violence of the pogroms, his sources, for the most part, were tales conveyed by the Jews from other towns to the east, displaced by the Cossack attacks.

In 1651, a chronicle describing the Cossack uprising in Belarus entitled “*Megillat Eifah*” (“*The Scroll of Darkness*”) was published in Amsterdam as an appendix to a *Selichot* (prayers in the form of poetry)⁵⁴⁰. The text’s author, Rabbi Shabbetai ha-Kohen of Vilnius, was one of the major Halachic authorities of the time. In 1646, he published “*Sifteï Kohen*” (“*The Lips of the Priest*”) in Krakow, a commentary on the most widely accepted code of Jewish law “*Shulhan Aruch*” (“*Set Table*”), which came to be regarded by the majority of the Commonwealth’s Talmudists as of the highest authority. Like Meir, Shabbetai did not witness the events of the uprising firsthand, yet found himself in possession of, according to him, “absolutely reliable information”. Also written in a poetic form and featuring an avid liturgical character, Shabbetai’s chronicle primarily

⁵³⁹ Rabbi Meir ben Shmuel of Shebreshin (1650): “*The Stress of the Times*”. The first edition (Krakow 1649/1650) was published by Hebrew University, Department of the History of the Jewish people Jerusalem, 1968.

⁵⁴⁰ Rabbi Shebbetai ben Meir Katz ha-Kohen (1651): “*The Scroll of Darkness*”. Amsterdam, A.M. 5411. Published in “*The Jewish Community of Poland*”. Youth Department of Zionist Organization, Jerusalem. Vol. 2. 1953 Pg. 252.

depicts the unfolding of events in Belarus and the destruction of Gomel's Jewish community.

Finally, in 1652/53 a chronicle written by Rabbi Nathan Nata ben Moses Hanover of Iziaslav entitled "*Yaven Metsula*" ("*The Deep Mire*") was published in Venice⁵⁴¹. The title features a play on words, as the first word, *Yaven* (יָבֵן), can also mean Greece in Hebrew, thereby symbolizing Orthodox Christianity – a major identifier of Khmelnitsky's army⁵⁴². "*The Deep Mire*" is the most detailed and widely referenced chronicle depicting the Cossack uprising. Hanover was residing in Iziaslav in western Ukraine when the pogroms erupted, however managed to flee before the Cossack army reached the town. Having left the Polish kingdom, Hanover traveled across western Europe collecting accounts from the Jews escaping the pogroms in the east, as well as using information from already published chronicles, such as those of Meir and Shabbetai. By publishing his work in Venice, Hanover addressed the Jewish readership in Italy, hoping to attract attention and financial assistance for the Jewish refugees and the devastated communities in the Ruthenian lands of the Commonwealth⁵⁴³.

All three chronicles concurrently portray the thin line between insularity and openness of the Jewish life in the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth. Along with the traditional motives of Jewish liturgical literature, the contents of the chronicles suggest that the authors were well informed of the events and the political history of the region, articulating the impact of the uprising on the surrounding population and the Polish crown. Interestingly, the chronicles also provide a rich array of commentary on the social customs of the varied populations of the Polish-Lithuanian state. Even Shabbetai ha-Kohen, the writer least informed with the course of events, gave not only a Jewish but also a Christian dating of the uprising: "All of this happened not long before the holiday of Shavuot (Jewish holiday), three days before the Christian holiday of the Trinity, on Thursday..."⁵⁴⁴. Unlike Hanover and Meir, Shabbetai was aware of the place of death of Wladislaw IV, the King of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth who died in 1648 "far from Ukraine, in Lithuania, close by the capital city of Vilnius"⁵⁴⁵. However just like Meir, Shabbetai wrongly dated the beginning of the uprising to immediately after the king's death in May 1648⁵⁴⁶, a possible explanation for which could be that the Jews associated their safety with royal protection.

⁵⁴¹ Rabbi Nathan Nata ben Moses Hanover (1652/53): "*The Deep Mire*". Venice, A.M. 5413. Ed. and rev. Israel Halpern. The United Kibbutz, Tel-Aviv, 1966. Pg. 37-40, 44-45, 78.

⁵⁴² Jewish Electronic Encyclopedia (2009): *Hanover Nathan Nata*. Vol. 9. Pg. 615-616. <http://www.eleven.co.il/article/11054>.

⁵⁴³ Bacon G. (2003): "*The House of Hanover: Gezeirot Tah in Modern Jewish Historical Writing*". Springer publishing, New York. Jewish History. Vol. 17. No 2. Pg. 179-206.

⁵⁴⁴ Shabbetai ha-Kohen (1651): "*The Scroll of Darkness*"...Pg. 186.

⁵⁴⁵ Ibid., Pg. 187.

⁵⁴⁶ Khmelnitsky's army had already begun its operations in January of 1648 as described in Chirovsky, N. (1984): "*The Lithuanian-Rus' Commonwealth, the Polish Domination, and the Cossack-Hetman State*". Philosophical Library, New York. Pg. 176.

The chronicles describe that not all Jews were passive observers of the Cossack uprising, but at times rather active participants in the events. Both Meir and Hanover noted close ties between the Jews and Poles, the participation of Jewish soldiers in putting down the rebellion, as well as the various communication patterns between the Jews and the local Orthodox population. In *“The Deep Mire”*, Hanover writes: “And so it became known of Khmelnytsky’s intentions to the Jews from their Orthodox friends and neighbors. In all of the Orthodox settlements, Jews had their own spies, and the Orthodox informed their pans (landowners) and their lords, with the gathered information, sending daily letters with horsed messengers. Therefore the pans became very close with the Jews and they – the pans and the Jews – became almost like one union, one soul, for the Almighty sends medicine before the illness”⁵⁴⁷. Hanover also notes that during their flight from Iziaslav, Jews stayed in the homes of the welcoming Orthodox peasants.

The Christian sources are particularly evident in Hanover’s *“The Deep Mire”*. In his work, Hanover combines a mystical predetermination with a narrative of the political and socio-religious disagreements that existed between the Cossacks and the Poles on the dawn of the uprising. He writes: “In the days of Sigmund III, the faith of the Pope strengthened in Poland, meanwhile most of the magnates and the top gentry belonged to the Greek faith, and both Churches had an equal status. That was before the reign of Sigmund. The King began to elevate the magnates and the gentry of the Pope’s faith and humiliate the magnates and the gentry of the Greek faith to such an extent, that nearly all of the Orthodox magnates and the gentry abandoned their faith and switched over to that of the Pope. Meanwhile, the Orthodox peasantry grew poorer and more despised, and turned into the serfs of the magnates, and even of the Jews”⁵⁴⁸. While a Christian origin of this statement is unquestionable, such a narrative expresses a vivid local character that eventually became common across the Commonwealth. Hanover, a resident of a small Volyn town, reflects the historic memory of the Orthodox residents of his province by writing about the ‘good old times’ when almost all of the elite professed Orthodoxy and both Churches enjoyed equal rights.

Meir’s *“The Stress of the Times”* and Hanover’s *“The Deep Mire”* tell not only of the Jewish suffering at the hands of the Cossacks, but also of the calamities faced by the Christian population. Accordingly, Hanover describes the Cossack attack on Zaslav: “And the Księża (name for Roman Catholic priests in Poland) of the church of Zaslav were skinned alive, while the graves of the Dukes were desecrated, their bodies dug up and thrown out, and silver and gold was taken from their graves. The churches and synagogues were destroyed and turned into stables”⁵⁴⁹. The letters written by Polish negotiators to Moscow in 1653 confirm Hanover’s account: “And the same Cossacks desecrated the altars in God’s churches, trampled the holy Eucharist and crosses, robbed all that was valuable, while the monks and priests were beaten and tortured, not abiding by the Greek law of theirs. Furthermore, to spread fear, the Cossacks dug up dead bodies

⁵⁴⁷ Nathan Hanover (1653): *“The Deep Mire”*... Pg. 97.

⁵⁴⁸ Ibid., Pg. 85.

⁵⁴⁹ Ibid., Pg. 109.

and mocked them, ripped off holy icons of the Virgin Mary and looted their coffins”⁵⁵⁰. It weren’t just the Catholic Poles that encountered persecution as a consequence of the uprising, but according to Meir and Hanover, also certain Orthodox populations. Both authors describe instances of the Cossack violence and robbery committed against the Orthodox residents in Nemirov and Komarno, who fought alongside the Jews⁵⁵¹.

Elsewhere in the text, Hanover associated the situation of the Orthodox population in the Commonwealth with that of the Jewish slaves in Egypt: “the poverty of the Orthodox people was enthralled by the magnates and pans, who burdened their life by heavy work in the fields. And the pans imposed bigger taxes, while some pans subjected their surfs to a severe torture, in an attempt to force the Pope’s faith onto them. And they were so humiliated, that almost all the peoples reigned over them, even those peoples that stand below them”⁵⁵² (the last reference directed at the Jews). According to Plokhii, Hanover’s description of the burdened situation of the peasantry has its origin in “Christian propaganda”, or in other words in an Orthodox sermon⁵⁵³. In that context, Hanover was able to relate to the moral traditions of the rabbinical literature. By stating that the rental of the gentry-owned real estate by the Jews was one of the main causes for the troubles fallen on to them, Hanover stood by the cautionary regulations of the Jewish institutions, forbidding such activity⁵⁵⁴. The Council of the Four Lands issued the first of such restrictions in 1581, prohibiting the collection of taxes, and the rental of monetary yards and customs offices on the territories of Greater and Lesser Poland and Mazowia, under the threat of excommunication and a fine of 200 zloty. This prohibition was issued due to a concern that such activity caused “a great danger”⁵⁵⁵. Through an empirical example, Hanover attested to the sagacity of the prohibition: “One Jew rented the entire town from a pan in Ruthenia, and the Jews gained the control of the magistrate. And that was the cause of the great catastrophe, as with their privileged position, the Jews triggered jealousy from the rest of the population”⁵⁵⁶. Similarly, in a rabbinical statement, a Krakow Rabbi Yoel Sirkes stated: “the communities are codifying various punishments,

⁵⁵⁰ Zaborowsky L. (1998): *Catholics, Orthodox, Uniates: Issues of Religion in Russian-Polish-Ukrainian Relations in 1640s-1680s. Documents*. Institute of Slavonic Studies, Moscow. Pg. 307-308.

⁵⁵¹ Nathan Hanover (1653): *“The Deep Mire”*... Pg. 126; Meir Shebreshin (1650): *“The Stress of the Times”*...Pg. 174.

⁵⁵² Nathan Hanover (1653): *“The Deep Mire”*... Pg. 85.

⁵⁵³ Plokhii S. (2001): *“The Cossacks and Religion in Early Modern Ukraine”*. Oxford University press, Oxford. Pg. 205.

⁵⁵⁴ Nathan Hanover (1653): *“The Deep Mire”*... Pg. 90.

⁵⁵⁵ Weinryb D. (1973). *The Jews of Poland. A Social and Economic History of the Jewish Community in Poland From 1100 to 1800*. Jewish Publication Society of America, Philadelphia. Pg. 372. The Prohibition of the Council of the Four Lands did not include the territory of Ukrainian lands.

⁵⁵⁶ Nathan Hanover (1653): *“The Deep Mire”*... Pg. 90.

so that the Jews would not collect taxes, as there is a great danger from the Christian complaints that the Jews rule over them as kings and dukes”⁵⁵⁷.

The Jewish historians of the 19th and 20th century (Weinreich⁵⁵⁸, Grayzel⁵⁵⁹, Graetz⁵⁶⁰, Dubnow⁵⁶¹) differently analyzed the causes for the uprising, however the analysis of its scope and results was similar⁵⁶². Most of the historians of that time, be it Jewish, Polish or Ukrainian, primarily focused their attention not on the causes of the uprising, but on identifying its perpetrators. Two governing viewpoints developed in the Jewish historiography, differently assessing the “responsibility” of the Jews for the pogroms of 1648. According to Graetz’s radical viewpoint, for instance, all of the Commonwealth’s Jews were guilty for causing the pogroms, being the victims of justifiable anger that accumulated during the decades of deceit and extortion. On the other hand, according to Grayzel and Weinreich, the Jews were not to be blamed for the pogroms - they became victims of the circumstances, caught between the two warring sides⁵⁶³. According to Dubnow - the entire Jewish population of Poland paid the price for the mistakes made by the Jewish landlords-leaseholders⁵⁶⁴.

⁵⁵⁷ Fram E. (1996): *“Between 1096-1548 – A New Analysis”*. The Historical Society of Israel, Jerusalem. Zion, Vol. 61, No. 2. Pg. 164.

⁵⁵⁸ Weinreich M. (1927): *“Shturemvint: Bilder fun der Yiddisher Geshikhte in 17tn Yorhundert”*. Vilnius, Pg. 10; Cited in Bacon G. (2003): *“The House of Hanover: Gezeirot Tah in Modern Jewish Historical Writing”*. Springer publishing, New York. Jewish History. Vol. 17. No 2. Pg. 179.

⁵⁵⁹ Grayzel S. (1968): *“A History of the Jews”*. Revised Ed. Signet, New York. Pg. 40-41; Cited in Bacon G. (2003): *“The House of Hanover: Gezeirot Tah in Modern Jewish Historical Writing”*. Springer publishing, New York. Jewish History. Vol. 17. No 2. Pg. 188.

⁵⁶⁰ Graetz H. (1897): *“Geschichte der Juden von den ?ltesten Zeiten bis auf die Gegenwart”*, Leiner. Leipzig. Pg. 10, note 2; Cited in Bacon G. (2003): *“The House of Hanover: Gezeirot Tah in Modern Jewish Historical Writing”*. Springer publishing, New York. Jewish History. Vol. 17. No 2. Pg. 183.

⁵⁶¹ Dubnow S. (1916): *“History of the Jews in Russia and Poland From the Earliest Times Until the Present Day”*. Jewish publication Society, Philadelphia. Vol. 1. Pg. 146-148.

⁵⁶² Kohut Z. (2003): *“The Khmelnitsky Uprising, the Image of Jews and the Shaping of Ukrainian Historical Memory”*. Springer publishing, New York. Jewish History Vol. 17, No. 2, Pg. 141-163

⁵⁶³ Bacon G. (2003): *“The House of Hanover: Gezeirot Tah in Modern Jewish Historical Writing”*. Springer publishing, New York. Jewish History. Vol. 17. No 2. Pg. 179-206.

⁵⁶⁴ Dubnow S. (1916): *“History of the Jews in Russia and Poland From the Earliest Times Until the Present Day”*. Jewish publication Society, Philadelphia. Vol. 1. Pg. 146-148.

For Dubnow, 1648 was the watershed year in the history of Polish Jewry. According to the historian, that time marked the beginning of an economic decline and a deep social and cultural crisis for the previously prosperous and world's largest Jewish community. The Jews no longer felt safe, and became the object of pogroms and persecution⁵⁶⁵. The period of 1648-1656 can be regarded as critical not only for the Polish Jews, but for Jewry worldwide. The vector of Jewish immigration, previously moving from west to east, began to shift back to the west⁵⁶⁶.

Forced Conversion and Martyrdom in the Name of the Faith

Virtually all of the Jewish authors writing about the Cossack pogroms stressed that the Jews of the Commonwealth were targeted because of their faith and not due to their social status. In the introduction of *"The Deep Mire"*, Hanover stated that Khmelnitsky's followers intended to destroy the people of Israel, offering the Jews the choice between Christianity and death. In Hanover's words: "And so stated the Orthodox folks according to their tradition: those Jews who want to stay alive must betray their faith, and write on a bull's horn that they renounce Israel and refuse to obey their God, and the sons of Israel did not listen to these words and stretched their necks to be slaughtered for the Holy Name, the gaons (sages) and the rest of the men alike, as well as women and small children"⁵⁶⁷. This account fosters Hanover's intention to place the Cossack uprising within the grand narrative of Jewish history, as according to Borovoy, Hanover's report noticeably reflects an account in *"Megillat Taanit"* (*"The Scroll of Fasts"*), a Jewish text authored in ancient Judea around 7 CE, which describes the Maccabee war against the Greeks⁵⁶⁸. A similar theme is found in Meir's *"The Stress of the Times"*, where the author accounted that "the thieves, the Cossacks and the villagers, had one intention – to annihilate the Jewish people"⁵⁶⁹. Likewise in *"The Scroll of Darkness"*, Shabbetai wrote: "Many of the Cossack rebels and masses of Tatars, living close to those towns, got together and proclaimed: let's destroy the people of Israel and not leave even a trace"⁵⁷⁰.

According to Rabbi Shabbetai's interpretation of *"Yoreh De'ah"* (*"The Teacher of Knowledge"*), an authoritative text of Jewish law from c. 1300s, published in Krakow in

⁵⁶⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁶⁶ Shulvass M. (1971): *"From East to West: The Westward Migration of Jews from Eastern Europe During the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Century."* West State University press, Detroit.

⁵⁶⁷ Nathan Hanover (1653): *"The Deep Mire"* ... Pg. 86.

⁵⁶⁸ Borovoy S. (1997): *"The Class Struggle in Ukraine in 17th Century Hebrew Chronicles of the 17th Century – Khmelnitsky Era"*. Gesharim, Jerusalem. Pg. 81.

⁵⁶⁹ Meir Shebreshin (1650): *"The Stress of the Times"*...Pg. 157.

⁵⁷⁰ Shabbetai ha-Kohen (1651): *"The Scroll of Darkness"*...Pg. 190.

1650, in cases where anti-Semitism is not the only motive for the violence committed against Jews, and many non-Jews are murdered concurrently, such situations do not implicate the biblical concept of “*ha-shmad*” (persecution) and therefore do not oblige a Jew to perform the act of “*kiddush ha-shem*” (martyrdom)⁵⁷¹. In other words, according to the Ashkenazi Halakhic regulations, only in cases of religious hatred are Jews obliged to sacrifice themselves and their families. In 1650, the central body of Jewish authority in Poland, the Council of the Four Lands, declared a fast mourning the Cossack pogroms to be the 20th of Sivan (in the Jewish calendar); a date which coincided with a fast commemorating the Jews burned at the stake in Blois, France in 1171 for refusing to accept Christianity. Hence, there is little doubt that the Polish-Lithuanian Jewry saw the victims of the Cossack pogroms as righteous martyrs who gave their lives for Judaism, having performed the act of “*kiddush ha-shem*”⁵⁷².

The enumeration of the acts of religious devotion and righteousness of the martyrs, the demonstration of an honorable behavior worthy of imitation takes central place, above all, in Shabbetai ha-Kohen’s “*The Scroll of Darkness*”. The narrative of the classic “*kiddush ha-shem*” act is exemplified in his description of the pogrom of Gomel’s Jewish community of June 24, 1648. The Lithuanian Rabbi describes how the Jews, betrayed by the Poles, were given over to the Cossacks, who then tried to force them to accept Christianity. If they were to convert, not only did the Cossacks promise them their lives, but also that they would enjoy power and wealth. The answer was unequivocal. Not only did the Jews refuse to betray their faith, but also, in the uttered prayers, they proved their faithfulness to the one God, the verity of their religion and consequently recognized their death sentence as just⁵⁷³.

The martyrdom of Gomel’s Jews was also narrated by Meir Shebreshin in “*The Stress of the Times*”. The author mentioned the spiritual leader of Gomel’s community, Rabbi Eliezer, who persuaded his fellow tribesmen to adhere to their faith and die in the name of righteousness, and acted upon his words: “Brethren, just like our brothers, let’s give our lives for the holiness of the name, and with our deaths we will gain eternal life.” And he himself, setting the example, was first to give himself over to be killed⁵⁷⁴. Narrative of the Jews being given over to the Cossacks and betrayed by the Poles, the promises of becoming “lords” in exchange for accepting Orthodoxy, and the depiction of the situations where God, having chosen the Jews but did not manifest himself to save his people – are all also present in Meir’s chronicle.

Writing two years after Shabbetai and three years after Meir, Hanover described a nearly identical account of martyrdom, however not in Gomel but in Ukrainian Tulchin,

⁵⁷¹ Rosman M. (2002): “*A Prolegomenon to the Study of Jewish Cultural History*”. Jewish Studies, Internet Journal. Ramat Gan. Vol. 1. Pg. 116.

⁵⁷² Teller A. (2008): “*Jewish Literary Responses to the Events of 1648-49 and the Creation of a Polish-Jewish Consciousness*”. In: B. Nathans, G. Safran (eds.), *Culture Front: Eastern European Jews and their Culture*. University of Pennsylvania press, Philadelphia. Pg. 25.

⁵⁷³ Shabbetai ha-Kohen (1651): “*The Scroll of Darkness*”...Pg. 187-188.

⁵⁷⁴ Meir Shebreshin (1650): “*The Stress of the Times*”...Pg. 164.

some 600 kilometers to the south. Other authors also wrote of Tulchin as a place of the devastation of the Jewish community, however in the case of “*The Stress of the Times*”, Meir stated that only the children of the Tulchin community were given the choice to baptize into Orthodoxy, while all of the adults were killed in front of their children’s eyes. In Hanover’s chronicle, the Tulchin pogrom narrative features a story about how Rabbi Eliezer, and his disciples Solomon and Chaim, called on their fellow tribesmen to stay faithful to their religion and die for the sake of the Holy Name⁵⁷⁵. Fram has shown how Hanover, influenced by Shabbetai’s and Meir’s texts, created the story of martyrdom in Tulchin. In Fram’s opinion, Rabbi Eliezer in Hanover – is the Rabbi Eliezer from Meir’s Gomel account, while Solomon and Chaim match the “three righteous men and heads of the yeshivas” (Jewish schools), murdered in Nemirov and mentioned in the eulogy of Ephraim ben Joseph from Vzheshin (1652)⁵⁷⁶. Rabbi Eliezer, then, is one of the central figures of Meir’s, Shabbetai’s and Hanover’s chronicles, albeit placed in different towns in each of the individual accounts.

Borovoy noted that the similarity between Shabbetai’s and Hanover’s texts, apparent in the triple structure of the narrative – the offer of the conversion to Christianity, a speech given by the spiritual authority calling to remain faithful to the religion of their forefathers, followed by the brutal murder of the Jews who refused to convert – can be explained by the “commonly employed, standard schemes and the use of literal-ideological methods of reworking texts”⁵⁷⁷. Furthermore, Fram pointed out that the Cossack’s lure to Orthodoxy through the use of Christian symbolism, described by Hanover, reflects the legendary Jewish story of Hanna and her seven sons, narrated in the second book of the Maccabees. In Shabbetai’s text, according to which the Cossacks proclaimed to their victims: “would it not be better for you to switch to the side of our God, of our holy images and crosses, and unite into one tribe with us?” – also resembles the story of Hanna and the lure to Greek Hellenism. The Jewish answer, “If you don’t kill us, enough emissaries will be found in the skies. Does God not have enough lions and bears?” is evidently taken from the Midrash on Lamentations (1:7) (published in Venice in 1545), where the story of Hanna is also recounted⁵⁷⁸.

The Christian sources confirm that Gomel was in fact a site of a mass murder of Jews, however they do not mention anything about the Cossack offer of baptism. In a letter dating April 23, 1649, the Polish nobleman Albert Radziwill wrote that while Jews were seeking protection within the city walls, the mayor of Gomel gave the Jews over to

⁵⁷⁵ Nathan Hanover (1653): “*The Deep Mire*”... Pg. 101-103.

⁵⁷⁶ Fram E. (1998): “*Creating a Tale of Martyrdom in Tulczyn, 1648*”. In “*Jewish History and Jewish Memory: Essays in Honor of Y. H. Yerushalmi*”. Edited by Carlebach E. Brandeis publishing, Boston. Pg. 101.

⁵⁷⁷ Borovoy S. (1997): “*Hebrew Chronicles of the 17th Century – Khmelnitsky Era..* Gesharim, Jerusalem. Pg. 79.

⁵⁷⁸ Fram E. (1998): “*Creating a Tale of Martyrdom in Tulczyn, 1648*”, in “*Jewish History and Jewish Memory: Essays in Honor of Y. H. Yerushalmi*”. Edited by Carlebach E. Brandeis publishing, Boston. Pg.100.

the Cossacks⁵⁷⁹. In another case, Ukrainian hetman Vzyakin reported to the Cossack leadership of the Gomel capture that “in that town they’ve killed about eight hundred Jews, women and children over two thousand, and right after one hundred Poles were killed, while the Belarusians were not hurt nor robbed”⁵⁸⁰. Of that event, Wisner wrote that after the attack on Gomel, the town’s mayor and gentry were accused of treason, theft and murder of the Jews and the Poles⁵⁸¹. Although the Polish sources, for the most part, confirm the Jewish accounts of the Tulchin massacre, not a single one of them mentions the Jews having been presented with the choice to convert. On June 24, 1648, the date on which, according to Shabbetai, Tulchin was attacked, a Polish member of Lviv’s magistrate Samuil Kushevich wrote to Warsaw stating that the Cossacks unmercifully killed everyone in sight, regardless of gender, age or religion⁵⁸².

On August 6, 1648, a witness to the Tulchin massacre named Hanan ben Mikhael gave testimony at Lviv’s Rabbinical court, stating that the Poles gave the Jews over to the Cossacks and that the event occurred on a Saturday, or Shabbat. Hanan does not mention the Jews having been given the choice to save their lives by converting to Christianity, nor the religious leaders of the community calling on their people to sacrifice their lives in an act of martyrdom. During the pogrom, panic reigned in Tulchin: “I ran from there together with the others and saw how the Cossacks began to kill everyone there right away. Who ever tried to escape, was killed. No one escaped the massacre, except for those who very physically fit and very fast. I was the first who escaped through the cemetery”⁵⁸³. Hanan was not the only one who escaped from Tulchin; the testimony given by him the next day (August 7) describes how he ran away with a friend and hid together with him in the forest. There, they were found by Orthodox peasants, who came to their calls for help, and he reported seeing how: “they hit his head a few times and he fell to the ground and called for help, but I ran away in order to escape”. Hanan’s testimony suggests that although the acts of “*kiddush ha-shem*” could have occurred in Tulchin, survivors did not necessarily have recollection of them.

The Anti-Christian Themes in Jewish Chronicles and Jewish-Christian Sentiments

The Early Modern Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth contained the world’s largest Jewish diaspora within its borders, renowned for its strict adherence to the tenets of Judaism. In the conclusion of his chronicle, Hanover presented an exalted image of the

⁵⁷⁹ Kaczmarczyk J. (1988): “*Bohdan Chmielnicki*”. Ossolineum, Wroclaw. Pg. 59.

⁵⁸⁰ Archive of South-Western Ruthenia (1911). Volume 3. Pg. 227.

⁵⁸¹ Wisner H. (2002): “*Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth of Vasa The Times of Sigismund III and Władysław IV*”. Volume 1. Pan History Institute, Warsaw. Pg. 187.

⁵⁸² Fram E. (1998): “*Creating a Tale of Martyrdom in Tulczyn, 1648*”, in “*Jewish History and Jewish Memory: Essays in Honor of Y. H. Yerushalmi*”. Edited by Carlebach E. Brandeis publishing, Boston. Pg. 93-94.

⁵⁸³ Ibid.

Polish Jewry, based on “righteousness and justice”⁵⁸⁴. He portrayed Poland as the world’s center for the study of the Torah, and maintained that the Jewish communities of other countries also revered the special status of the Polish Jews. The survivors of the uprising, therefore, generally saw the destruction of the Polish Jewry as an attempt to destroy the ‘chosen’ status of the community, while the choice to sacrifice their lives over the conversion to another faith – as an indicator of their extraordinary holiness.

The correlation of martyrdom with sacrifice, however, is a common theme found in the Jewish chronicles from the earlier periods. In “*The Scroll of Darkness*”, Shabbetai ha-Kohen wrote: “on the spot where the Jews gave up their lives, there the righteous martyrs offered up themselves just like lamb and sheep in a redemptive sacrifice to the Lord”⁵⁸⁵. The tradition of this correlation goes back to the Jewish chronicles describing the tragedy of the German Jews during the time of the First Crusade. Then, Eliezer ben Nathan rhetorically demonstrated how the martyrs of the Rhine region behaved more decisively than Abraham himself during the sacrifice of Isaac⁵⁸⁶. Even though the authors’ dependency on biblical verses complicates the comprehension of the actual events, this dependency does not necessarily suggest a literary or an imagined nature of the chronicles. Coming across biblical quotations, the reader comprehends the imagery of devastation in a hyperbolized form.

Following earlier traditions of the Jewish historiography, authors of the ‘Khmelnitsky era chronicles’ wrote of the pogroms with the intent of creating a policy of group solidarity with the gruesome events. The idea of righteousness, based on the willingness to die in the name of the faith, was directed against the surrounding Christian pressure and the Orthodox claims on the verity of their religion. In that sense, the problem of forced conversions can also be exemplified in the context of the anti-Christian motives of the Jewish chronicles.

In a vehement speech leading his people to slaughter, Rabbi Eliezer of Gomel spoke about the emptiness, baseness and absurdity of the Christian faith, and portrayed Orthodoxy as nothing other than paganism. The Cossacks, offering the Jews to convert to Christianity, asked them to cross over to the side of their God, sacred images and crosses. The categorical refusal of the Jews symbolizes their faithfulness to the commandment forbidding any alternative spiritual practice (Deuteronomy 18:10-14), as well as the resistance to the temptation of material gain, as the Cossacks promised to the Jews that after their baptism, they would become “very rich and noble gentry”⁵⁸⁷. Shabbetai was adamant in relation to Christianity, the words, symbols and rituals of which lack transcendence: “They tested them every day with words and offers to participate in their religious rituals, temptations, threats, and hideous exaggerations”⁵⁸⁸. The author of “*The*

⁵⁸⁴ Nathan Hanover (1653): “*The Deep Mire*”... Pg. 130-137.

⁵⁸⁵ Shabbetai ha-Kohen (1651): “*The Scroll of Darkness*”...Pg. 186.

⁵⁸⁶ Marcus I. (2002): “*A Jewish-Christian Symbiosis: The Culture of Early Ashkenaz*. In *Cultures of Jews. A New History*”. Edited by Biale D. Schocken Books, New York. Pg. 464.

⁵⁸⁷ Shabbetai ha-Kohen (1651): “*The Scroll of Darkness*”...Pg. 187-188.

⁵⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, Pg. 188.

Scroll of Darkness” maintained: “No one will be saved by their lies”, and that the hopes of those who were deprived of their property will be fulfilled, as “God rises up for the suffering and sighing of the poor” (Psalms 11:6). “God does not lie” (Habakkuk 2:3) – maintained Shabbetai, thus emphasizing not only the verity of his own faith, but also the confidence in the correct interpretation of the divine will, through which God takes the Jews away from the material world to the spiritual, to greet the evening of the Holy Shabbat⁵⁸⁹.

The narratives of Meir and Hanover are structured according to slightly different schemes. Both “*The Stress of the Times*” and “*The Deep Mire*” do not contain any mention of the Cossack promises of material rewards for the acceptance of baptism, and also do not include any mention of the adherence to specific Christian symbols in their demands. Furthermore, the Christians in Meir’s chronicle question the idea of the “chosen people” status of the Jews, as God allowed for them to be killed, while Hanover’s Tulchin narrative does not contain any kind of attacks against the Christian *sacra*.

The chronicles dealing with the First Crusade and the liturgical texts of those times also contain a substantial number of assaults on Christianity, the Christian dogmas and symbols. They feature a sharp ridicule of the Christians seeking to forcefully convert the Jews into their faith, a mockery of the Christian religion and holy places, as well as insults of Christ and the Virgin Mary⁵⁹⁰.

The authors of the eulogies, poems and historic chronicles, sought not only to preserve the memory of their co-religionists killed by the Cossacks. These texts feature questions of a religious significance, the answers to which might be able to explain why God, having selected the Jews as his chosen people, gave the victory to the Christians. Did He then not betray the previously established contract and, accordingly, point to the legitimacy of the New Testament⁵⁹¹? While the Christians in Meir’s text explicitly questioned the “chosen” prominence of the Jews, whom God had forsaken and allowed to be killed, the author countered by proclaiming the act of “*kiddush ha-shem*” as the ultimate test of one’s sincerity in his faith⁵⁹².

The anti-Christian motives were also expressed via other methods, namely through the use of the rhetoric of desecration. A conduct typical for the Christians, described in the Jewish chronicles of 1096, was attacking the Jews with knives and swords, throwing them out of their houses onto the dirty streets where they were

⁵⁸⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁹⁰ Marcus I. (2002): “*A Jewish-Christian Symbiosis: The Culture of Early Ashkenaz*”. In “*Cultures of Jews. A New History*”. Edited by Biale D. Schocken Books, New York. Pg. 471-472.

⁵⁹¹ Bacon G., Rosman M. (1991): “*A Chosen Community in Danger: Polish Jews after the Pogroms of 1648-1649*”, in “*The Concept of Chosenness in Jewish and General History*.” Edited by Almog S. and Heyd M. Jerusalem. Pg. 219.

⁵⁹² Meir Shebreshin (1650): “*The Stress of the Times*”...Pg. 167.

undressed and trampled⁵⁹³. In the same manner the Christians acted towards the Torah scrolls: unfolding and trampling them into dirt. All these examples testify that the Christians were aware of the *sacrum* of the other culture, which had to be desecrated, destroyed or humiliated. The Jewish chronicles of the Khmel'nitsky era are replete with similar examples of the ruthless treatment of the Jews and their *sacra* at the hands of the Cossacks⁵⁹⁴.

Another method for the expression of the anti-Christian rhetoric was the polemic comparison of the purity of the Jewish family with the impious Cossacks. A wide social, age and gender range of the martyrs transmits the brutality of the murderers, who did not spare anyone. Analogous to the First Crusade era chronicles, the Early Modern Jewish texts speak of the numerous cases of violence and rape against women, with the intention to convey the ruin of the pure image of the Jewish family. The analogous examples of Jewish girls choosing to commit suicide over being raped by the Crusaders are expressed in the Khmel'nitsky era chronicles: the legend of two Jewish girls from Nemirov are mentioned in Meir's "*The Stress of the Times*" and Hanover's "*The Deep Mire*"⁵⁹⁵. A Cossack, her forced husband, shot one of the girls after she convinced him that she placed a spell on the bullet and that it can't harm her, while the other girl jumped off a bridge on the way to the wedding and drowned. Marcus pointed to hypothetical and typological connections between the female characters of the Jewish chronicles and the image of the Virgin Mary formed in Christian Europe at the time. A Jewish mother killed her children in the name of "*kiddush ha-shem*", while it is not Mary that killed Jesus, but God, which is presented as an absurdity. In that sense, the actions of Jewish mothers are considered holier than Mary's relationship with her son⁵⁹⁶.

The accounts of Jewish mothers being forced to eat their own children was yet another method related to the 'pious Jewish family' image, that can be regarded as anti-Christian. According to Hanover and Meir, in Ukrainian Polonne and Kremenets the Cossacks roasted Jewish children on a spit and forcefully compelled their mothers to eat the meat⁵⁹⁷. This motive is equally paralleled in the book of Jeremiah (10:25) where it is stated that the tribes "ate Jacob", as well as in the book of Lamentations (2:20; 4:10):

⁵⁹³ Marcus I. (2002): "*A Jewish-Christian Symbiosis: The Culture of Early Ashkenaz*". In "*Cultures of Jews. A New History*". Edited by Biale D. Schocken Books, New York. Pg. 481-482.

⁵⁹⁴ Nathan Hanover (1653): "*The Deep Mire*"... p 94, 95, 99, 118; Meir Shebreshin (1650): "*The Stress of the Times*"...Pg. 159, 162, 165, 166, 171, 172; Shabbetai ha-Kohen (1651): "*The Scroll of Darkness*"...Pg. 186, 188, 189.

⁵⁹⁵ Nathan Hanover: "*The Deep Mire*" (1653)...Pg. 99-100; Meir Shebreshin (1650): "*The Stress of the Times*"...Pg. 158.

⁵⁹⁶ Marcus I. (2002): "*A Jewish-Christian Symbiosis: The Culture of Early Ashkenaz*". In "*Cultures of Jews. A New History*". Edited by Biale D. Schocken Books, New York. Pg. 470-471.

⁵⁹⁷ Nathan Hanover: "*The Deep Mire*" (1653)...Pg. 94, 99, 118., ; Meir Shebreshin (1650): "*The Stress of the Times*"...Pg. 163, 170.

“Should the women eat the fruit of their womb, the children of their tender care?”. As demonstrated by Yuval, the Old Testament prophecies of cannibalism amongst the enemies of Israel gained a new meaning in the Middle Ages. In that context, the Jews blamed for ritual murder, in their counter-argument blame the Christians for cannibalism – it is not the Jews that drink the blood of Christian babies as a ritual but it is the Christians, killing the Jews and professing the dogma of the Eucharist, who are the cannibals⁵⁹⁸.

Through the use of anti-Christian rhetoric, the authors of the chronicles portrayed the Jewish sentiment towards the surrounding Ruthenian population. Most commonly, the authors wrote of the hypocritical treatment of the Jews by the Orthodox. Thus, the authors maintained that when the Orthodox manifested love for their neighbors – that was just outward, false behavior. This behavior, despite its apparent virtuousness, was fake, while the true righteousness can be expressed only through the act of martyrdom for the sake of the faith.

Meir calls the Christians “hypocrites and two-faced”, as they “pretend to love the Jews, just like childhood friends, but deep within their soul conspire to shed their blood and seize all their possessions”⁵⁹⁹. In the same manner, Hanover asserted a similar consideration of the Ruthenians: “Khmelnitsky plotted evil, which is a customary habit of the Orthodox, as they present themselves to love the Jews, maintaining friendly relations with them, comforting and exhorting soft words, but avenging them with their mouth and lying with their tongues in front of them, and theirs hearts are unjust and they are not faithful to their covenant”⁶⁰⁰. In this context, Rosman pointed out the use of a reverse motive, branded from the anti-Judaic rhetoric, where by the means of gifts, bribery and even sorcery, the hypocritical Jews charm the Christians - the gentry in particular. Accordingly, in a letter dated February 21, 1647, a Pinsk tradesmen Zhdan Babic complained against a Jew named Movsha and his wife, who bribed the town’s magistrate with “silver, gold and fancy dresses”⁶⁰¹.

Both Meir and Hanover give examples of how in 1649, the residents of the Ukrainian Ostrog sent letters to the Jews hiding in the region from the approaching Cossacks, inviting them to return home. Once the Jews returned, the Orthodox called the Cossacks into the town, who then attacked and killed all the Jews. According to Hanover, only three Jews and one Polish military commander with 80 soldiers were able to escape⁶⁰². This motive can be explained by the commentary of the biblical story of Esau

⁵⁹⁸ Yuval. I. (2002): “*They Tell Lies: You Ate the Man*”: Jewish Reactions to the Ritual Murder Accusations. In “*Religious Violence Between Christians and the Jews. Medieval Roots and Modern Perspectives*”. Edited by Abulafia A. Palgrave Macmillan, New York.

⁵⁹⁹ Meir Shebreshin (1650): “*The Stress of the Times*”...Pg. 156.

⁶⁰⁰ Nathan Hanover: “*The Deep Mire*” (1653)...Pg. 89.

⁶⁰¹ Rosman M. (2002). “*Innovative Tradition: Jewish Culture in the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth*”. In “*Cultures of Jews: A New History*”. Edited by Biale D. Schocken, New York. Pg. 523

⁶⁰² Nathan Hanover: “*The Deep Mire*” (1653)...Pg. 109.

and Jacob, when Esau, kissing his brother, is really trying to kill him (Genesis 33:4). In the Jewish literature, Esau came to represent Edom, the Christian world, and based on the relations between the two biblical brothers, both the anti-Christian and the anti-Judaic discourses are constructed. The hypocrisy and the duplicity of the Orthodox is predominantly counteracted by the righteousness of martyrs, who unanimously chose death.

A dialogue recorded in "*Sefer Hassidim*" ("*The Book of the Pious*"), a famous 13th century liturgical text, written by Rabbi Judah ben Samuel of Regensburg, sheds light on the possible sources of the anti-Christian sentiment in the Jewish chronicles of the 17th century. The tractate features a story of a Jew who wanted to destroy a Christian icon, however his companion was able to convince him not to do so: "He said to him: they can kill you if you do this. The other replied: It is for the sanctity of the divine name". The other answered "you will not be rewarded but will commit a sin, because you are endangering your life, and the lives of your children and the other Jewish residents of the town. As it says, "Do not profane my Holy Name, so that I will be hallowed among the sons of Israel" (Leviticus 22:32); "only be careful and watch your self closely..." (Deuteronomy 4:9)⁶⁰³. Therefore, the practice of violence towards the dominating part of the society was considered harmful not only because it put the lives of the Jews at risk, but also because it desecrated God's name (a concept known as "*hilul ha'shem*").

It is worth noting that Shusberg's "*The Path to Salvation*" features motives that are rather different from the traditional representation of the righteous Jewish community of Poland. The chronicler repeatedly stated that the suffering of the Jews was caused by their numerous "sins"⁶⁰⁴. In that manner, Shusberg accused the Jews of neglecting the study of the Torah, with adhering to non-Jewish authorities, as well as heavily criticized the Ukrainian Jews for running drinking establishments. In his opinion, the production and distribution of vodka brings about "non-Jewish behavior" – drunkenness, perversion and debauchery. Accordingly, as in Nemirov the Cossacks boiled alive the local Jewish bar leaseholders in an iron pot - the iron pot in this story symbolizes the leasing of drinking establishments. In turn, the desecration of the Torah scrolls and other religious symbols by the Cossacks represents the neglect of the religious observance. Furthermore, the persecution of the Jews in this case is also related to their status as the chosen people. Although the sins of the Jews are lesser than those of the Polish gentry, their suffering is incomparably greater⁶⁰⁵.

The authors of the Jewish chronicles, Meir and Hanover in particular, portray the vivid hatred of the Christians towards the Jews. Accordingly, the residents of Nemirov

⁶⁰³ Marcus I. (2002): "*A Jewish-Christian Symbiosis: The Culture of Early Ashkenaz*". In "*Cultures of Jews. A New History*". Edited by Biale D. Schocken Books, New York. Pg. 483.

⁶⁰⁴ Shusberg G. (1651): "*The Path to Salvation*". Amsterdam. Hayim Polack addition Budapest-Krakow. 1903. Pg. 107-108.

⁶⁰⁵ Bacon G., Rosman M. (1991): "*A Chosen Community in Danger: Polish Jews after the Pogroms of 1648-1649*", in "*The Concept of Chosenness in Jewish and General History*." Edited by Almog S. and Heyd M. Jerusalem. Pg. 216.

assisted the Cossacks “not for the purpose of sharing their faith, but due to their hatred of the Jews”⁶⁰⁶. “At the sight of the Jews being murdered”, Meir wrote, “the Christians rejoiced and triumphed, while the Jews were forced to bury their dead by night, so that the Christians could not gloat by looking at the Jewish graves”⁶⁰⁷. Both Hanover and Meir also describe how after the Cossacks left the Belorussian town of Bykhaw, leaving behind many injured Jews, the local population not only refused to help them, but buried them alive⁶⁰⁸. Through these accounts, the authors underlined that the reason for the Cossack pogroms was not just ethnic hatred, but also religious intolerance.

On the Acceptance of Baptism

The investigation into the question of the baptism of Jews into Orthodoxy during the Khmelnytsky uprising is central for the analysis of the issues of religious and social motives of the anti-Jewish pogroms of 1648-1656. Already in mid 20th century, Mises challenged the opinion of the Cossack pogroms having been a consequence of the economic and social conflicts. According to the historian, the acts of devastation bestowed by the Cossacks on the Jews, as well as on the Poles, were based solely on religious ideology: “factually the Cossack pogroms of 1648 were massacres of all non-Orthodox populace, regardless whether they were Jewish or Catholic, privileged gentry, simple tradesmen or peasants; the religious difference served as basis for the violence”⁶⁰⁹. As evidence of his rather arguable position, Mises emphasized the fact that the Cossacks did not kill the Jews who accepted Orthodoxy. Were it social hatred, he argued, it would be logical to assume that the change of one’s religious affiliation, but not of the social status, would not have played a decisive role for the Cossack rebels. In turn, Fram⁶¹⁰, debating with Katz⁶¹¹, maintained that for the rebels, social, economic and political motives prevailed over the religious, and the Jews, being aware of the causes of the rebellion, accepted Orthodoxy “by their own free will”, thus saving their lives. In a given situation, the Halakhah allegedly allowed for doing so, as neither the commanders nor the soldiers involved in the rebellion were concerned with the task of converting the Jews to Christianity. According to Yakovenko, however, such an approach could be disputed based on the lack of a clear statement of social and religious discourses in the minds of

⁶⁰⁶ Nathan Hanover (1653): *“The Deep Mire”*...Pg. 98.

⁶⁰⁷ Meir Shebreshin (1650): *“The Stress of the Times”*...Pg. 161.

⁶⁰⁸ Nathan Hanover (1653): *“The Deep Mire”*...Pg. 107; Meir Shebreshin (1650): *“The Stress of the Times”*...Pg. 165.

⁶⁰⁹ Mises M. (1939): *“Participation of Polish Jews in the Wars of Pre-Partition”*. Maor publishing, Warsaw. Pg. 80.

⁶¹⁰ Fram E. (1996): *“Between 1096-1548 – A New Analysis”*. The Historical Society of Israel, Jerusalem. Zion, Vol. 61, No. 2. Pg. 23-29.

⁶¹¹ Katz J. (1997): *“On the Events of 1096 and 1648”*. The Historical Society of Israel, Jerusalem. Zion Vol. 62.

the rebels⁶¹².

Despite the calls by the majority of the rabbinical authorities to abide by the act of “*kiddush ha-shem*”, both Jewish and non-Jewish sources attest that a significant number of Jews converted to Orthodoxy during the Cossack uprising, out of fear. In “*Tit ha-Yaven*” (“*The Miry Clay*”), a chronicle published in Venice by Rabbi Shmuel Feivish between 1655-1658, the author states that in the Ukrainian communities of Gussyatin, Greater Mezherich and Polonne, there were Jews who betrayed their faith during the pogroms, and came back to Judaism after the situation had calmed down⁶¹³. Likewise, in a 1649 eulogy commemorating the pogrom in Kremenetz, Joseph ben Eliezer Lipman wrote that scores of Jews, primarily women and girls, betrayed their faith⁶¹⁴. Correspondingly, in a Ukrainian chronicle of a Christian origin, “*Litopis Samovidtza*” (“*The Chronicle of a Witness*”), the anonymous author maintained that “at that hour, a lot of Jews accepted the Christian faith out of fear for their lives, but when they ran away to Poland, they became Jews again”⁶¹⁵.

In June 1648, Grigorii Klimov, a Russian envoy to the last Orthodox senator of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth Adam Kisiel, was intercepted by Khmelnitsky’s camp but was eventually able to return to Russia. At the border town of Starodub, Klimov reported to the Russian military commanders that the Cossacks spared the lives of those Jews who accepted baptism, while the Poles were killed even if they expressed the will to convert to Orthodoxy: “the Jews baptize in large numbers and join the army of the Zaporozhye Cossacks, while the Poles who want to baptize are not accepted and are killed. They even say that they want to kill all the Poles in Poland and Lithuania”⁶¹⁶. While the reliability of this source can be questioned, Raba had demonstrated that the Moscow government did not approve of the Cossack rebellion at the beginning, and often relied on information from unverified sources, that had the intention to discredit the Cossacks. In that context, Klimov reported that the rebels, in whose ranks Jews were allegedly enlisted, massacred the Polish government officials, the authority of which was considered legitimate by Moscow⁶¹⁷. There are also Polish and Ukrainian sources that reported the Jewish presence in the Cossack army; for instance in the description of the siege of Zbarazh, the Polish author mentions that a baptized Jew from the Cossack camp

⁶¹² Yakovenko N. (2002): “*A Parallel World. Research on the History of Imagery and Ideas*”. Kritika, Kiev. Pg. 192-208.

⁶¹³ Shmuel Feivish (1655-1658): “*The Miry Clay*”. Venice. Edited by Gurland I. Odessa, 1892. Pg. 11-13.

⁶¹⁴ Fram E. (1996): “*Between 1096-1548 – A New Analysis*”. The Historical Society of Israel, Jerusalem. Zion, Vol. 61, No. 2. Pg. 175.

⁶¹⁵ “*The Chronicle of a Witness*” (1670s). Prepared for publishing by Dzira Y. 1971. Scholarly Thought, Kiev. Pg. 52.

⁶¹⁶ Archive of South-Western Ruthenia (1869-1914). Volume 4. Kiev Pg. 214-215.

⁶¹⁷ Raba J. (1997): “*Pogroms of 1648-1649: Events and Their Meanings*”. Edited by Bartal I. and Gurman I. Vol. 1. Zalman Shazaer Center, Jerusalem. Pg. 187.

informed a Jew from the Polish camp of an upcoming attack⁶¹⁸. While claims of Jewish presence in the ranks of the Cossack army have been doubted ever since they first appeared, the military enlistment of baptized Jews was arguably the easiest path for their social adaptation and the deprivation of their former status. Accordingly, during the Russian-Polish war of 1654-1667, when a significant number of Jews were displaced from Poland onto the territory of the Moscow state, a Jew named Hamin expressed the will to accept Orthodoxy and was enlisted into the ranks of Nizhny Novgorod musketeers⁶¹⁹. The same fund in the *“Acts of the Moscow State”*, contains a report to the Russian Tsar, dated January 19, 1654, which states that at Yablonov, a town on the Ukrainian-Russian border, during the questioning of the passing merchants by the Russian border guards, a merchant named Afonka Grigorev stated that he was born near the Ukrainian Kamenetz-Podolsk, from where he “followed hetman Bogdan Khmelnytsky to the Cherkassy town Nezhin, where he left the Jewish faith and baptized into in the Orthodox faith about 8 years prior, and his wife and children currently live in Nezhin, while he came to Yablonov for merchandise”⁶²⁰. Hence, all of these examples attest to the tolerant attitude of the Cossacks and the Russians towards baptized Jews and their acceptance into the Orthodox society.

Various Western European sources also confirm the rather comfortable position of baptized Jews in the Ruthenian lands. According to a German pastor named Conrad Jacob Hildebrandt, who visited Ukraine in 1657 and published the memories of his travels in 1668, “...the Cossacks killed thousands of Jews. The survivors converted to Orthodoxy and now in the country of the Cossacks they are treated tolerably”. Likewise, in 1672 another German traveler to Ukraine, Ulrich von Verdun, wrote about meeting baptized Jews⁶²¹. A Venetian traveler named Alberto Vinimo, who visited Ukraine in May 1650, recorded perhaps the most detailed of such testimonies. Vinimo wrote: “I saw two beautiful girls, married to two rugged men, who forced them to wear holy symbols on their necks and visit the church, although the Jewish girls were not baptized and were given the freedom to keep all of their own customs”⁶²². The Venetian cited this observation as an example of the Cossacks not abiding by the rules of the Christian law in relation to marriage. He further writes: “I can not say exactly what is the Cossack’s view on marriage”, reaching a conclusion that “they tolerate divorce and polygamy. As

⁶¹⁸ Documents on the War of Liberation of the Ukrainian People 1648-1654 (1965). Scientific Thought, Kiev. No. 96, Pg. 256.

⁶¹⁹ Acts of the Moscow state (1894). Typography of the Imperial Academy of Sciences, Saint Petersburg. Vol. 2, Pg. 428-229. Note of a Nizhny Novgorod military commander Baturin about sending Jews and Lithuanians to Kazan, dated June 11, 1655.

⁶²⁰ Ibid., Pg. 369. A note of commander Sheremetev.

⁶²¹ Sichinski V. (1992): *“Foreigners on Ukraine: A Selection of Narratives About Travels in Ukraine over 10 Centuries”*. Dovira, Kiev. Pg. 95.

⁶²² Molchanovski N. (1900): *“The Report of Venetian Alberto Vimina About the Cossacks and Khmelnytsky”*. Kiev Antiquity. No. 1. Pg. 73.

amongst them there are many who left their ugly and elderly wives and married young and beautiful girls”⁶²³. Vinimo’s testimony indicates that while “rough men” forced Jewish girls to attend sermons, Orthodox priests would have been aware of such circumstances. On the other hand, in a chronicle compiled in 1670s in the form of memoirs by a Polish Orthodox nobleman Joachim Jerlicz during his stay at the Pechersk Lavra Monastery in Kiev, the author described how a Kiev archbishop named Kosov saved many Jews during the Cossack uprising⁶²⁴. Plokhii used Jerlicz’s testimony to suggest that while the upper Orthodox clergy harbored anti-Jewish sentiments and favored Jewish conversions, it disfavored the committed violence and regretted the harshness of the mob towards the Jews⁶²⁵.

According to Hanover’s report, the baptized Jews who returned to Judaism after the pogroms of 1648 encountered resistance from the Orthodox Church. The chronicler wrote that the Jews, who remained on the territories of Kiev, Chernigov and Braslav provinces, were forced to flee, while on the territories that remained under the control of the Polish administration, the Jews publicly returned to Judaism. He further stated that the Jews used force to take away the baptized boys and girls from the Christians⁶²⁶. The Ukrainian chronicle, “*Litopis Samovidtza*” (“*The Chronicle of a Witness*”), confirms Hanover’s report that baptized Jews fled to Poland⁶²⁷.

Arguing that the Cossacks did not have a deliberate program for the conversion of the Jews, Fram referred to a story narrated in a 1649 response of Rabbi Nathan Nata Kahana⁶²⁸. The Rabbi described how in Sasov, the Cossacks captured a Jew and “wanted to kill him, but he asked to stay alive and said that he wanted to become a Christian”. They offered the Jew to eat non-kosher food, however after he had fulfilled their wish, the Cossacks killed him anyway. On the other hand, a trial held at the Dubno magistrate court, which reviewed a murder case of a Jewish landlord named Meir, indicates that voluntary baptisms had in fact occurred at the time⁶²⁹. Amongst the accused were two Jews – Leibe and Yazko. While both confessed to the “voluntary” participation in the murder of their fellow tribesman, they told the court that many Jews, them including,

⁶²³ Ibid., Pg. 72-73.

⁶²⁴ “*The Chronicle of Joachim Jerlicz*”. Edited by Wojcicki K. (1853). Wienhoeber, Warsaw. Vol. 1. Pg. 96.

⁶²⁵ Plokhii S. (2001): “*The Cossacks and Religion in Early Modern Ukraine*”. Oxford University press, Oxford. Pg. 192.

⁶²⁶ Nathan Hanover (1653): “*The Deep Mire*”... Pg. 127.

⁶²⁷ “*The Chronicle of the Witness*” (1670s). Prepared for publishing by Dzira Y. 1971. Scholarly Thought, Kiev. Pg. 52.

⁶²⁸ Fram E. (1996): “*Between 1096-1548 – A New Analysis*”. The Historical Society of Israel, Jerusalem. Zion, Vol. 61, No. 2. Pg. 176.

⁶²⁹ Horn M. (1978): “*The Responsibilities of the Jews in Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth in XVI and XVII centuries*”. Sciences, Warsaw. Pg. 89-91.

converted to Orthodoxy. Before their execution, however, they asked to return to the faith of their forefathers.

The sources relating to the history of Nemirov and Pinsk, shed further light on the question of the Cossack practice of forced baptisms. Describing the events that occurred in Ukraine in 1648, the Polish military man Boguslaw Maskevitch recounted in his diary that after the Poles captured the nearly deserted Nemirov, about 2 miles away from the town they met a group of Jewish men and women who were hiding in the woods from the pursuing Cossacks. With the support of the Polish army, the Jews were saved and, as suggested by Nadav, most likely led to Prikuli, a small town near Tulchin⁶³⁰. While Maskevitch did not mention anything about the Cossacks actually massacring the Nemirov Jews, he stated that the Jews told the encountered Poles that they took an oath in front of the Cossacks that they will not leave the town⁶³¹. While the Jewish sources do not mention the oath of the Nemirov Jews, Meir noted that some of the town's Jews saved their lives by converting to Orthodoxy⁶³². According to Nadav, although an oath of such sort was a formal expression of loyalty to the city magistrate and therefore had political and legal contexts, only baptized Jews were able to take such oaths, as the Ruthenian residents would have considered them as nearly equal tradesmen, who received a new status. Hence, Nadav suggested that the oath of loyalty would have been accompanied by baptisms⁶³³. Maskevitch, however, did not mention that the encountered Jews were baptized. A possible explanation for this could be that while the Jews told the Poles of the taken oath, they purposefully did not mention anything about their baptisms.

Fram's argument of the Cossacks lacking a program for the conversion of the non-Orthodox residents of the Commonwealth can be simultaneously confirmed and refuted by the various Ukrainian sources. Judging by the words of Khmel'nitsky himself, his intention was to kill everyone who refused to baptize into Orthodoxy: "if a Pole wants to live – he must baptize..., and those who won't baptize – shall not stay alive"⁶³⁴.

On May 2, 1650, Jan Kazimierz, the King of Poland and the Grand Duke of Lithuania, issued a decree that allowed the Jews who had been forcefully converted to Orthodoxy to return to their previous faith if they wished to do, as well as required for all

⁶³⁰ Nadav M. (1984): *"The Jewish Community of Nemyriv in 1648: Their Massacre and Loyalty Oath to the Cossacks"*. Harvard Ukrainian Research Institute, Cambridge. Harvard Ukrainian Studies, Vol. VIII. No3/4. Pg. 376-387.

⁶³¹ Sajkowski A. (1961): *"The Diary of Samuel Maskiewicz. 17th Century"*. Ossolinskich, Wroclaw. Pg. 247.

⁶³² Meir Shebreshin (1650): *"The Stress of the Times"*...Pg. 159.

⁶³³ Nadav M. (1984): *"The Jewish Community of Nemyriv in 1648: Their Massacre and Loyalty Oath to the Cossacks"*. Harvard Ukrainian Research Institute, Cambridge. Harvard Ukrainian Studies, Vol. VIII. No3/4. Pg. 385-386.

⁶³⁴ *"The Reunification of Ukraine and Russia. Documents and Materials in Three Volumes"*. (1953). Publishing house of the USSR, Moscow-Leningrad. Vol. 2, No. 1447, Pg. 111.

of the property stolen from the Jews during the rebellion to be returned⁶³⁵. According to Nadav, the decree was influenced by an intervention of the Vaad, Lithuania's principal Jewish authoritative body. The first resolution issued by the Vaad after the pogroms of 1648, proclaimed it their "duty to redeem the souls of Israel, captured and converted to non-Jews"⁶³⁶, which indicates the desire of the Jewish authorities to solve the problem of their forcefully baptized tribesmen. In Pinsk, a copy of the royal decree was composed on August 5, 1650, and was addressed to "the town and the fortress officials and all others holding an official post". King Kazimierz, likely quoting an appeal he would have received from the Jewish authorities, stated in the document that "during the Cossack war, many Jews, men, women and children stayed in your faith, some of them due to torture, some out of fear for their health, saving themselves, were forced into the Russian faith and not released up until now, and even those Jews who escaped such dangers, you don't release them..."⁶³⁷. Although the town of Pinsk is not mentioned in the document, Katz⁶³⁸ and Nadav⁶³⁹ were of the opinion that the decree is related primarily to the situation of the Jews in Pinsk, considering the presence of the document's copy at the town's magistrate. While the decree serves as vivid evidence that entire families of Jews accepted Christianity under the threat of torture or death, at least a year and a half passed between the time of their baptisms and the issue of the decree. During this time, for the purpose of the adaptation to the Christian dogmas, the new Christians were virtually isolated and kept under a rigorous oversight by the town's administrative and Church officials. They were forbidden to contact other Jews and practice their old rites, since baptized Jews were regarded as Christians under the juridical authority of the Church, and the act of returning to Judaism was evaluated as an act of apostasy of a Christian to an infidel faith.

Fram had pointed out that the King's decree distinguished between the two groups of Jews who converted to Christianity – the first under torture, the other – "out of fear for their health". Accordingly, it can be assumed that the Jews of the second group had converted by their own initiative, notwithstanding the violence of the rebellion⁶⁴⁰. If some of the Jews had in fact accepted baptism by their own initiative, then could Meir's narrative of "the kind Orthodox residents of Pinsk" taking the Jews to their homes during the rebellion be interpreted as the seclusion of the baptized Jews by the Christian

⁶³⁵ Nadav M. (2003): *"The Jewish Community of Pinsk in 1648-1677"*. Tel Aviv. Pg. 44.

⁶³⁶ Ibid.

⁶³⁷ Acts, published by the Vilnius Archeographic commission. (1902). Vol. 28 (The Acts About the Jews). Vilnius. Pg. 8.

⁶³⁸ Katz J. (1997): *"On the Events of 1096 and 1648"*. The Historical Society of Israel, Jerusalem. Zion Vol. 62, Pg. 25.

⁶³⁹ Nadav M. (2003): *"Jewish Community of Pinsk in 1648-1677"*. Tel Aviv. Pg. 45.

⁶⁴⁰ Fram E. (1997): *"One More Time on the Question of Jewish Martyrdom in 1096 and 1648"*. The Historical Society of Israel, Jerusalem. Zion No. 62. Pg. 31-46.

authorities?

Employing the motive of martyrdom, the Jewish chroniclers depicted the Orthodox Cossacks as a stereotypical enemy, who threatened their way of life not due to their social status, but because of their holiness and a genuine commitment to the faith of their ancestors. The idea of holiness, based on the willingness to die for the faith, was directed against the Christian pressure and claims to the historical truth. The destruction of the Jewry, therefore, was evaluated as nothing less than an attempt to eradicate the virtuousness of the Polish community, while their choice to die rather than abandon Judaism – proved their extraordinary holiness. The utilization of the concept of “*kiddush ha-shem*”, therefore, achieved at least two purposes – the demonstration of the group solidarity and the memorization of the event in a specific way. The faith of the forefathers was subjected to the ultimate test not because their generation was unworthy, but on the contrary, because of their distinction, and a special mission that was bestowed upon them. The strategy of their behavior, proposed by the Jewish elites, reveals their relationship with the outside world. In their highly conflictual relationship with the Christian world, an understanding of the social, economic and political reasons for the rebellion can nonetheless be spotted. Accordingly, some of the authors – Nathan Hanover, Gabriel Shusberg and Meir Shebreshin were aware that the uprising was not driven exclusively by a religious hatred, and demonstrated that even in tense situations, Jews and Christians maintained rather close relations.

The Religious Motives of the Pogroms

The correspondence of the Cossack leadership contains a vivid Judaeophobia: in a letter to Tsar Mikhail Alekseevich dated 1649, Bogdan Khmelnytsky wrote: “We request that the Poles and the Jews no longer dominate the Orthodox Christians, inasmuch as they are cunning, and for a long time have been extorting and spilling the Christian blood...”⁶⁴¹. Accordingly, in a letter to the Polish prince Dominik Zaslawski, Khmelnytsky’s close aide Maksim Krivonosov wrote that the Jews were “the main cause” of the uprising⁶⁴². While Krivonosov’s statement does not diminish the anti-Polish sentiment that was present amongst the insurgent forces, it demonstrates that for the Cossack leadership, the Jews represented no less of an adversary group as did the Poles. The economic and social conditions of the Ukrainians certainly incited such animosity: the allegation that the Polish government granted more rights to the Jews than to the Orthodox was a widespread notion in the Ukrainian writings of the time⁶⁴³. Nonetheless, the religious contention of the rebels, expressed in relation to the Jews, cannot be

⁶⁴¹ The Documents of Bohdan Khmelnytsky 1648-1657. Prepared by Kripyatkevich I. and Butich I. Scholarly Thought, Kiev. 1961. Pg. 625.

⁶⁴² Raba J. (1997): “*The Pogroms of 1648-1649: Events and Their Meanings*”. Edited by Bartal I. and Gurman I. Vol. 1. Zalman Shazaer Center, Jerusalem. Pg. 181.

⁶⁴³ Sysyn F. (1990): “*The Jewish Factor in the Khmelnytsky Uprising*” in “*Ukrainian-Jewish Relations in Historical Perspective*”. Edited by Aster H. and Potichnyj P. Canadian Institute of Ukrainian Studies Press, Edmonton. Pg. 48.

underestimated. The religious tensions in the multi-confessional Ruthenian lands were exacerbated by the convocation of the Union of Brest in 1596, when the majority of the Metropolitans of Ukraine and Belarus broke relations with the Patriarch of Constantinople and entered into the communion with the Pope of Rome. The Union was bitterly opposed by the nascent Cossack movement, which began to perceive itself as the defender of the Orthodox faith. As far as the Orthodox Ukrainians were concerned, upon the convocation of the Union of Brest, their religious rights and freedoms became lesser than even of the neighboring Jews, whose social and economic conditions under the Polish rule also appeared to be more favorable than theirs. In the middle of the 17th century, the accounts of Poles leasing the churches of the parishioners who did not accept the Union to the Jews, who kept the keys in their possession and thereby required the priests to pay a fee in order to conduct ceremonies, became widespread⁶⁴⁴. The Cossack chronicler Grigory Grabyanka presented the account as follows: "...and the infants were baptized with the Jews' permission, and the various religious customs of the pious (Christians) were at the mercy of the Jewish leaseholders"⁶⁴⁵. In that context, the Jews were characterized as "the irreconcilable enemies of Christianity", who cursed the Orthodox faith in their synagogues and enjoyed the opportunity to trample upon and oppress the Ukrainians⁶⁴⁶. Paul of Aleppo, who visited Ukraine in 1654, reported his observations in a similar vein. According to the archdeacon, "the wicked Jews" invaded the spiritual and personal life of the Orthodox Christians: they "obstructed the construction of churches", "eliminated the priests who knew the mysteries of the faith", and even "raped their pious and chaste wives and daughters"⁶⁴⁷.

The practice of forced baptisms of the Jews during the rebellion indicates that the central aim of the pogroms was not the extermination of the Jews of Ukraine and Belarus per se, but rather the eradication of the Jewish faith from these lands. The conversion of the Jews to Orthodoxy under the threat of death represented the most satisfying method for the vengeance, and served as the demonstration of the superiority of Christianity over Judaism. Correspondingly, there is evidence to suggest that the ruling elite of the Hetmanate endorsed the practice of forced baptism of the Jews. The Cossack view of the conversion of the Jews to Orthodoxy as one of the goals of the rebellion was reflected in *"The Chronicle of a Witness"*, written by an unnamed highly ranking member of Khmel'nitsky's army. According to the author, the Cossack leadership was particularly discontent with the Jews who, having accepted baptism, eventually fled to Poland and

⁶⁴⁴ Hrushevski M. (1922): *"History of Ukraine-Ruthenia"*. Scientific Partnership named after T. G. Shevchenko. Vol. 8, Pt. 2. Pg. 124.

⁶⁴⁵ Kohut Z. (1998): *"The Image of Jews in Ukraine's Intellectual Tradition: The Role of "Istoriia Rusov"*. Harvard Ukrainian Research Institute, Cambridge. Harvard Ukrainian Studies, Vol. 22. Pg. 346.

⁶⁴⁶ Konisskij G. (1846): *"The History of Ruthenians"*. University Typography, Moscow. Pg. 40.

⁶⁴⁷ Paul of Aleppo (1660s): *"The Travels of Macarius, Patriarch of Antioch to Russia in the Middle of XVII Century, Depicted by His Son Archimandrite Paul of Alepo"*. Edited by Murkos G. 1896-1900. Typography of the University, Moscow. Vol. 2. Pg. 3, 7, 40.

returned to Judaism⁶⁴⁸. In that context, the author reported that while many of the Jews, fearing death, accepted the Christian faith, ‘there was not a single Jew remaining in Ukraine...’⁶⁴⁹. This statement testifies to the chronicler’s view of the Jews as a purely religious grouping. According to this perspective, it sufficed to change one’s religion to cease being Jewish and gain acceptance by the rebels as an equal. Thus, the Cossack register of 1649 contains 24 names, derived from the term ‘convert’ (‘перехрист’), as well as other names such as Zhydenko and Zhydovkin, which have the root of a ‘Jew’ (жид – zhyd)⁶⁵⁰.

Although the sources contain very little information on the attitude of the Orthodox ecclesiastical authorities towards the Jews during the time of the uprising, it is most probable that the Church was in favor of the conversion of Jews to Christianity. At the same time, the clergy condemned the violence caused by the pogroms: although the upper Orthodox hierarchy harbored anti-Jewish sentiments on par with the Cossack officers and noblemen, they regretted the harshness of the mob-violence⁶⁵¹. In that regard, Ettinger proposed that the Cossacks pursued the policy of Jewish baptisms in part due to the growing political influence of Moscow, with its enduring tradition of intolerance of Judaism and the restriction of Jewish residence on its territories⁶⁵².

There can be little doubt that the authors of the Jewish chronicles, depicting the pogroms, downplayed the scale of Jewish conversions to Christianity, emphasizing instead the martyrdom and the devotion of the Jews of Ruthenia to their faith. Nonetheless, Rabbi Meir of Shebreshin noted that “many women denied their religion and married the Greeks (Orthodox) they had chosen; many Jews broke the covenant”, adding however that those Jews who converted “did not obey God’s commandments and transgressed them, while those who were honest did not escape the destruction”⁶⁵³. Hanover, in turn, maintained that “hundreds” of forced convers, including Jewish women married to the Cossacks, and “hundreds of Jewish children” returned to Judaism after 1649⁶⁵⁴. The reports of Jewish and Ukrainian chronicles of the mass conversions of Jews

⁶⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁶⁴⁹ “*The Chronicle of a Witness*” (1670s). Prepared for publishing by Dzira Y. 1971. Scholarly Thought, Kiev. Pg. 52.

⁶⁵⁰ Plokhii S. (2001): “*The Cossacks and Religion in Early Modern Ukraine*”. Oxford University press, Oxford. Pg. 201.

⁶⁵¹ Ibid.

⁶⁵² Ettinger S. (1988): “*Jewish Participation in the Settlement of Ukraine in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries*”. In “*Ukrainian-Jewish Relations in Historical Perspective*”. Edited by Potichnyj P. and Aster H. Canadian Institute of Ukrainian Studies Press, Edmonton. Pg. 30.

⁶⁵³ Meir Shebreshin (1650): “*The Stress of the Times*”...Pg. 162.

⁶⁵⁴ Nathan Hanover (1653): “*The Deep Mire*” ... Pg. 103.

to Orthodoxy are corroborated by the 1650 proclamation of King Jan Kazimierz, which allowed the Jews who had been forcibly converted to return to Judaism⁶⁵⁵.

⁶⁵⁵ Plokhii S. (2001): *"The Cossacks and Religion in Early Modern Ukraine"*. Oxford University press, Oxford. Pg. 201.

Chapter 4: Christian Apostasy and Jewish Proselytism in Imperial Russia: The Case of Alexander Voznitsyn and Boruch Leibov

In mid-1738, a public auto-da-fe was implemented in Saint Petersburg: a Russian man convicted of apostasy from Christianity to Judaism was burned at the stake along with his Jewish seducer. This event, in its essence, was analogous to the inquisitional processes of the Russian state at the end of 15th – beginning of the 16th centuries, aimed at the eradication of the infamous ‘Judaizer heresy’, which enveloped an influential part of the Russian nobility and clergy. The first of the two victims was a retired Navy captain-lieutenant Alexander Artemiev Voznitsyn of Moscow, and the second – a Jewish tax farmer from Smolensk named Boruch Leibov. Notably, their death sentences were the last in the history of the Russian judicial system that involved a punishment by burning at the stake pertaining to a religious crime – subsequently, the executions by the means of burning were issued only on the charges of witchcraft.

The multi-volume *Jewish Encyclopedia*, published in the beginning of the 20th century by Brockhaus and Efron in Saint Petersburg, devoted to Alexander Voznitsyn only 4 lines: “...a captain-lieutenant of the Russian fleet, burned at the stake in Saint Petersburg in 1739 for the apostasy from Orthodoxy and the adoption of the Jewish faith”⁶⁵⁶. In the contemporary *Encyclopedia of the Russian Jewry*, Voznitsyn is denoted as a first lieutenant of the Russian fleet, who “apostatized from Orthodoxy to Judaism by the efforts of his mentor Boruch”⁶⁵⁷, without indicating the family name of the later. The most well known source of the case is the 1913 publication of the proceedings in “*Re-lived*”, Russia’s first scientific journal that published original materials related to the history of the Russian Jewry⁶⁵⁸. For the publication, Markon extracted the documents from the archive of the highest governing authority of the Russian Orthodox Church - the Most Holy Governing Synod. Presently, further sources related to the case have been identified in the collection of the Russian State Archive of Early Acts in Moscow, including materials of an additional investigation, conducted predominantly after the execution of the convicted men⁶⁵⁹. The persona of Boruch Leibov had been mentioned in the Judeo-Masonic conspiracy theories as a proselytizer of the Jewish faith amongst

⁶⁵⁶ Brockhaus F. and Efron I. (1908-1913): “*Jewish Encyclopedia*”. Society of Scholarly Jewish Publications, Saint Petersburg. Vol. 5, Section 688.

⁶⁵⁷ *Encyclopedia of the Russian Jewry* (1994). Edited by Branover G. Epos publishing, Moscow. Vol. 1, Pg. 236-237.

⁶⁵⁸ Markon I. (1913): “*The Case of the Burning at the Stake of Captain-Lieutenant Alexander Voznitsyn for Apostasy into the Jewish Faith and Boruch Leib for Enticement*”. In “*Re-lived: A Journal Dedicated to the Social and Cultural History of Jews in Russia*”. Typography of Fleitman I., Saint Petersburg. Vol. 4. Appendix, Pg. 81-112.

⁶⁵⁹ The archival sources pertaining to the case were published in Feldman D. (2005): “*The Last Inquisitional Fire in Russia: The Moscow Investigation of the Case of Alexander Voznitsyn and Boruch Leibov 1738-1740*”. Parallels, No. 6-7, Appendix Pg. 1-82. Moscow.

Orthodox Christians, and being involved in the ritual murder and the extraction of blood from Christian adolescents⁶⁶⁰.

This chapter presents a detailed examination of the sources pertaining to the Voznitsyn-Leibov case, as well as of the analogous criminal investigation of the 'Judaizing sect' in Kazan, which transpired in the aftermath of the execution in Saint Petersburg. The objectives of the analysis include the assessment of the potentiality of the proselytization of Judaism in Imperial Russia, the inquiry into the prejudice of the Russian Church and State authorities in relation to the apostasy from and the safeguarding of the Orthodox faith, and the construction of the models of perception of Jews in Russia in relation to the anxieties of burgeoning 'Judaizing'.

Policies on Jews and Judaism in Imperial Russia

For the analysis of the case materials, Russia's policies towards the Jews in the examined time period must be taken into consideration. At the time of Voznitsyn's and Leibov's execution, the Empress of the Russian Empire was Anna Ioannovna Romanova (1730-1740), and that period was generally marked by an anti-Judaic predisposition. On the Jewish question, Anna largely followed the policies of Empress Catherine I (1725-1727), who became the first Russian monarch in the post-Peter I era to manifest religious and social intolerance, and implement legislature limiting Jewish presence in the Russian Empire.

By the beginning of the 18th century, scarce Jewish communities existed in Left-bank Ukraine (Little Russia) and in the Smolensk province, the lands that came under the Russian control in 1667 following the Truce of Andrusovo with the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth⁶⁶¹. The truce agreement stipulated for the Jews taken captive to Russia during the war to be able to freely return to the Commonwealth, except for those who baptized into Orthodoxy while in captivity, as well as for Jewish women who married Russian men⁶⁶². Correspondingly, those Jews wishing to remain "in the domain of His Majesty the Tsar" were to be permitted to settle in the territory of the Russian state upon their baptism. Thus, the 1670 population census of the Meshanskaya sloboda, a suburb of Moscow settled by the Polish-Lithuanian natives, cited two baptized Jews living there "in their own courtyards", meaning that they owned the land⁶⁶³.

⁶⁶⁰ Platonov O. (2005): *"Gregory Rasputin and "the Children of the Devil"*". Eksmo publishing, Moscow. Pg. 33-34.

⁶⁶¹ Boguslavski V., Kuksina E. (2001): *"The Truce of Andrusovo// Kievan Rus-Muscovy"* in *"Slavic Encyclopedia"*. Olma Press, Moscow. Vol. 2, pg. 56.

⁶⁶² The Complete Collection of Laws of the Russian Empire, from 1649 to 1675 (1830). Typography of the Chancellery of His Imperial Majesty, Saint Petersburg. First edition. Vol. 1, Pg. 662.

⁶⁶³ Kandel F. (1988): *"Essays of Times and Events from the History of the Russian Jews (Till the 2nd Half of the 18th century)"*. Tarbut Association, Jerusalem. Vol. 1, Pg. 173.

Although a decree issued by Tsar Feodor III in 1676 explicitly prohibited Jews to enter Moscow⁶⁶⁴, in the newly acquired Ukrainian and Belarusian territories (Smolensk), formerly of the Commonwealth, the Jews were able to sell merchandise at markets, operate taverns and lease inns. In January 1725, two days before his death, Peter I issued a decree not only reaffirming the governmental permission for the Jews to sell merchandise and operate taverns in these regions of the Russian Empire, but also to practice revenue leasing at the country's borders⁶⁶⁵ - a livelihood pursued by the aforementioned Boruch Leibov. Two years later, the Emperor's immediate successor Catherine I reversed the ruling - in March 1727 she issued an edict which prohibited the leasing of inns and customs duties to the Jews in Smolensk, and ordered the deportation of Leibov and his associates from the territory of Russia⁶⁶⁶. Catherine did not stop at Smolensk - a month later she promulgated another ruling ordering the expulsion of all Jews from Russia, and henceforth for the Jews "not to be allowed to enter Russia under any circumstances"⁶⁶⁷. The texts of either of the two edicts did not state the reasons for the enactment of such measures. Baptism remained the only option for the Jewish individuals, who wished to remain in the domain of the Russian Empire.

As it turned out, the enactment of such policies substantively contradicted the economic interests of the local Christian population, as the volume of trade declined drastically after the banishment of Jewish merchants. Thus, within a year from the implementation of Catherine's orders, the Hetman of Left-Bank Ukraine Daniil Apostol appealed to Saint Petersburg to allow Jewish merchants to trade fairs in Little Russia on par with other foreigners⁶⁶⁸. The Supreme Privy Council of the Russian Empire approved Apostol's request in August 1728, although with a reservation that the Jews were to be allowed to enter Ukraine only on a temporary basis⁶⁶⁹. The affirmations on the ban of permanent residence of the Jews in the country, which the Saint Petersburg government was forced to reissue over the next ten years, indicates that the landowners and the local authorities ignored this ruling and continued to permit the extended residence of the Jews on their territories, primarily out of financial interests.

⁶⁶⁴ The Complete Collection of Laws of the Russian Empire, from 1649 to 1675 (1830). Typography of the Chancellery of His Imperial Majesty, Saint Petersburg. First edition. Vol. 2, Pg. 76.

⁶⁶⁵ Shugurov M. (1894): *"The History of Jews in Russia"*. Russian Archive. Book 1. Vol. 1. Pg. 69.

⁶⁶⁶ Ryvkin H. (1910): *"The Jews in Smolensk: Outline of the History of Jewish Settlements in Smolensk from the Ancient Times as Related to the Social Status of the Jews in Ancient Ruthenia"*. Typography of S. Bussel, Saint Petersburg. Pg. 61.

⁶⁶⁷ Golytsyn N. (1886): *"History of Russian Legislation Related to the Jews 1649-1825"*. Typography of the Ministry of Internal Affairs, Saint Petersburg. Vol. 1, Pg. 284.

⁶⁶⁸ The Complete Collection of Laws of the Russian Empire, from 1728 to 1732 (1830). First edition. Saint Petersburg. Vol. 8, Pg. 14.

⁶⁶⁹ Ibid.

It is important to note that during the reign of Empress Anna Ioannovna, strict measures were implemented to suppress schismatic movements, as well as to prevent the proliferation of the Catholic and the Protestant Christian faiths in the country. In response to the increasingly frequent cases of missionary activity by the non-Orthodox Christian priests, in 1735 the Senate issued a manifest which ordered for these friars to “immediately cease converting our subjects into their law, otherwise they will be dealt with in accordance with our governmental regulations and decrees”⁶⁷⁰. Since Judaism was not mentioned in the manifest, the Russian government apparently did not expect a similar tendency of proselytism to surface from a religion that had been virtually outlawed in the country. The investigation into the case of Alexander Voznytsyn and Boruch Leibov would not begin for another two years.

Nonetheless, in 1738 the Senate conducted an inquiry into the actual number of Jews in Ukraine. According to the report of the General Army Chancellery, despite the edict of 1727 forbidding the presence of Jews in the region, 140 Jewish individuals were residing in Ukraine, all of them having come from the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth⁶⁷¹. In response, the Senate ordered their immediate deportation⁶⁷². The Chancellery replied that their deportation presented a strategic danger due to the ongoing Russo-Turkish war: “so that spying does not occur along with their expulsion”⁶⁷³. The Ministerial Council of Her Imperial Majesty agreed, and in 1739 it was ruled that the expulsion of the Jews was not to be implemented until the end of the war with Turkey⁶⁷⁴.

With that ruling, however, the Ministers ordered the Chancellery of the Ukrainian army to affirm the exact number of illegally settled Jews in the region and the nature of their livelihood, and to concurrently “oversee and strictly prohibit, so that in all of Little Russia no one would take Jews into their houses, nor sell or rent property to them”⁶⁷⁵. Soon after, the requested census was issued to the Council, and according to that document, the number of the Jews in Ukraine substantially exceeded the initial figure: 292 men and 281 women resided across 130 manors⁶⁷⁶. It was noted that these Jews “did not live in their own houses”, “did not process any land, factories or fisheries”, while the

⁶⁷⁰ Soloviev S. (1993): *“The History of Russia from the Ancient Times”*. Golos Publishing, Moscow. Essays, Vol. 20. Pg. 561-562.

⁶⁷¹ Golytsyn N. (1886): *“History of Russian Legislation Related to the Jews 1649-1825”*. Typography of the Ministry of Internal Affairs, Saint Petersburg. Vol. 1, Pg. 288.

⁶⁷² Ibid.

⁶⁷³ Ibid., Pg. 289.

⁶⁷⁴ The Complete Collection of Laws of the Russian Empire, from 1737 to 1739 (1830). First edition. Saint Petersburg. Vol. 10, Pg. 662.

⁶⁷⁵ Ibid.

⁶⁷⁶ Ryvkin H. (1910): *“The Jews in Smolensk: Outline of the History of Jewish Settlements in Smolensk from the Ancient Times as Related to the Social Status of the Jews in Ancient Ruthenia”*. Typography of S. Bussel, Saint Petersburg. Pg. 63.

landlords leased to them shops, where they sold “wine, beer and honey”. Baffled by this information, the authorities immediately issued a decree, signed by Empress Anna Ioannovna, which once again banned the rental of land and property to the Jews in Ukraine⁶⁷⁷.

Consequently, at the end of the war with Turkey in 1740, the Empress issued a resolution for the approval of the Senate and the Cabinet of Ministers, in which she demanded for the immediate expulsion of the Jews living in Ukraine: “Based upon the previous accords, the said Jews are to be deported abroad”⁶⁷⁸. This included the renunciation of the permission for temporary visits of Jewish merchants to markets, which was formally in place. Such a transition from the policy of necessary concessions and the toleration of a limited Jewish presence, which was followed out of the economic interests for the development of the region, was therefore superseded by the implementation of discriminatory policies, principally due to the inquisitional process of Alexander Voznytsyn’s apostasy from Christianity under the guidance of Boruch Leibov.

Not only did this event amplify the anxieties of the spread of Judaism from the Empire’s sole (practicing) Jewish community in the former Polish-Lithuanian lands, but the hostility of the Russian government towards the Jews, namely of the Empress herself, increased accordingly. The fears of the influx of the proselytizing Judaic elements were taken very seriously – when a threat to the Christian faith manifested, all pragmatic considerations came to an end. Nonetheless, due to the unwillingness of landowners, far from all of the Jewish residents were expelled from Russia and hence the law was never fully implemented.

Nevertheless, the Judaeophobia of Empresses Catherine I and Anna Ioannovna did not prevent them and their dignitaries to use the services of the Jews in financial and other matters, for whom exceptions were made to be able to reside in the capital. These individuals visited and lived in Saint Petersburg under the personal protection of the Empress, thereby factually violating the existing legislation. A prime example was Levi Lipman – a prominent financier, who in 1727 became a financial agent at the Royal court of Peter II, and later functioned as a personal agent of Ernst Johann von Biron, the regent of the Russian Empire and the Duke of Courland and Semigallia⁶⁷⁹. Lipman, who had business ties with Boruch Leibov as evidenced by the correspondence between them⁶⁸⁰ was engaged in the resale of state owned property and merchandise, holding the title of

⁶⁷⁷ The Complete Collection of Laws of the Russian Empire, from 1737 to 1739 (1830). First edition. Saint Petersburg. Vol. 10, No 7869.

⁶⁷⁸ The Complete Collection of Laws of the Russian Empire, from 1740 to 1743 (1830). First edition. Saint Petersburg. Vol. 11, No 8169.

⁶⁷⁹ Stroev V. (1910): *“Bironovshina and the Cabinet of Ministers: Essays on Internal Politics of Empress Anna”*. Typography of the Imperial Academy of Sciences, Saint Petersburg. Part 2, pg. 26.

⁶⁸⁰ Brednikov L. (2003): *“Anna Ioannovna and the Jews: Bironovshina or Lipmanovshina?”*. Neva publishing, Saint Petersburg. Number 10, pg. 246.

Chief State Commissioner from 1734 and Chief Financial Agent from 1736⁶⁸¹. Notably, there is no indication that Levi Lipman had ever converted to Christianity, although it is most likely that his affiliation with Judaism was also inexistent.

While the country's legislation explicitly forbade the entitlement of Jews with governmental ranks, a likely explanation for Lipman's extraordinary succession is a personal connection to Anna Ioannovna – in the early 1720's both Lipman and the future Empress resided in the Duchy of Courland and Semigallia, and already then Lipman provided her with financial services⁶⁸². Upon her ascension to the throne, Anna generously endowed her creditors, of which Lipman was the principal⁶⁸³. In 1727, for instance, Lipman was issued six thousand rubles for the sale of three diamonds to the Royal Treasury, and in 1733 Anna Ioannovna ordered for 160 thousand rubles to be paid out to Lipman as a payment for the purchase of "various merchandise" from him, as well as an additional one thousand rubles for the invitation of "a foreign Jewish doctor" to Russia⁶⁸⁴. A contemporary wrote of Lipman: "In Saint Petersburg there is one Jew at the court, who deals with financial matters. He can keep under his domain as many Jews as he wishes"⁶⁸⁵. Lipman's exceptional connections at the court is evidenced by an edict signed by the Cabinet of Ministers, which called for Lipman to assist in the return of a son of a Jew from Shklov, abducted by a lieutenant of the Russian army⁶⁸⁶.

Of the influence of Lipman, the French ambassador at the Russian court marquis de la Chétardie wrote that "Biron consults the banker Lipman on all matters and acts only upon his approval, and it is Lipman who really rules Russia"⁶⁸⁷. The members of the Russian nobility expressed an avid displeasure with the Jewish financier, as for instance an article published in the Bayreuther Zeitung in January 1740 depicted "the greed of Biron's favorite banker, who enriched himself at the expense of the country"⁶⁸⁸. Even

⁶⁸¹ Gessen V. (2000): *"Of the History of the Saint Petersburg Religious Jewish Community: From the First Jews to the XX century"*. Theme, Saint Petersburg, Pg. 17.

⁶⁸² Shubinski S. (1893): *"Historic Essays and Stories"*. Typography of Suvorin S., Saint Petersburg, Pg. 114.

⁶⁸³ Ibid., Pg. 116-117.

⁶⁸⁴ Golytsyn N. (1886): *"History of Russian Legislation Related to the Jews 1649-1825"*. Typography of the Ministry of Internal Affairs, Saint Petersburg. Vol. 1, Pg. 61, 67-68.

⁶⁸⁵ Stroev V. (1910): *"Bironovshina and the Cabinet of Ministers: Essays on Internal Politics of Empress Anna"*. Typography of the Imperial Academy of Sciences, Saint Petersburg. Part 2, pg. 26.

⁶⁸⁶ Golytsyn N. (1886): *"History of Russian Legislation Related to the Jews 1649-1825"*. Typography of the Ministry of Internal Affairs, Saint Petersburg. Vol. 1, Pg. 68.

⁶⁸⁷ Korsakov D. (1877): *"Ancient and New Russia"*. Typography of Grazinsky V., Saint Petersburg. Vol. 7, pg. 219.

⁶⁸⁸ Soloviev S. (1993): *"History of Russia from the Ancient times"*. Essays, Vol. 20. Golos Publishing, Moscow. Pg. 641.

after the removal of Duke Biron from power and his subsequent arrest in 1740, Lipman continued to serve at the court. To refute the rumors of him having been discharged along with Biron, in January 1741 the “Saint Petersburg bulletin” officially reported that “the Chief State Commissioner Lipman continues to perform his duties and is present at the Imperial Court on all public occasions”⁶⁸⁹. It is most likely that Lipman’s stable position at the court even under the new government of Anna Leopoldovna was due to his compliance with the authorities and a detailed testimony about Biron’s finances known to him⁶⁹⁰. Only after the fall of Anna Leopoldovna and the ascendance to the throne of Elizaveta Petrovna did Lipman’s commercial activity end in the capital of Russia.

It is worth noting that at the court of Anna Ioannovna living out his days was a court jester of Peter the Great, a Marrano of Sephardic origin named Yan d’Akosta, whom the Tsar kept not so much for his amusement, but rather as “a weapon for ridiculing the gross prejudice and ignorance amongst the Russian society of the time”⁶⁹¹. D’Akosta came from a prominent Portuguese Jewish-Marrano family, who escaped the inquisition by fleeing to Amsterdam, London and Hamburg in the 17th century. While working at a Hamburg brokerage house in the early 18th century, d’Akosta met a Russian nobleman and soon after came with him to Russia. His proficiency in a number of European languages, an attic wit, resourcefulness and a cheerful character earned him a favorable disposition at the imperial court, and in 1714 Peter I awarded him with the title of a court jester⁶⁹². The Tsar enjoyed debating with d’Akosta on the questions pertaining to religion and theology, as the Marrano had an excellent knowledge of the Bible. Despite being a Catholic by faith, at the court he was referred to as “the Portuguese Jew Dakosta”⁶⁹³. For his loyal service, Peter I endowed d’Acosta with the title of a “Samoyedic king”, and awarded him an uninhabited sandy island Sommera in the Finish Gulf⁶⁹⁴. In the same role, Yan d’Akosta served at the court of Anna Ioannovna.

Boruch Leibov, the Jewish Philanthropist

In the early 1720s, Boruch Leibov, a Jewish merchant from Poland, settled in Smolensk, taking advantage of Peter the Great’s edict that permitted Jewish settlement in

⁶⁸⁹ Stroev V. (1910): *“Bironovshina and the Cabinet of Ministers: Essays on Internal Politics of Empress Anna”*. Typography of the Imperial Academy of Sciences, Saint Petersburg. Part 2, pg. 27.

⁶⁹⁰ Brednikov L. (2003): *“Anna Ioannovna and The Jews: Bironovshina or Lipmanovshina?”*. Neva publishing, Saint Petersburg. Number 10, pg. 248.

⁶⁹¹ Shubinsky S. (1893): *“Historic Essays and Stories”*. Typography of Suvorin A., Saint Petersburg. Fourth Edition. Pg. 114.

⁶⁹² Ibid., Pg. 116-117.

⁶⁹³ Ibid.

⁶⁹⁴ Ibid., Pg. 118.

the region. By the beginning of the 18th century, the Smolensk province became a key point for the trans-shipment of goods between the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth and the Russian Empire. The Jewish community grew in numbers during the last years of the rule of Peter I, with many of its members having been involved in the merchant trade. Leibov was one of the most active members of this community: in a village called Zverovichi in the Smolensk region he built a synagogue in 1721, funding the construction out of his own pocket⁶⁹⁵. Not only did Leibov's philanthropic activity cause the vehemence of the local Orthodox population, but it also caught the attention of Russia's highest governmental institutions. In 1722, a group of Smolensk merchants filed a formal complaint against Leibov to the Most Holy Governing Synod, the highest governing body of the Russian Orthodox Church, claiming that not only did Leibov build a "Jewish school" near a church, in which "he proselytizes his infidel faith", but also avowing that he "blasphemed against the Christian faith" and "had beaten to death" a priest of Zverovichi named Avraamiy, who "caused him, the Jew, much trouble in building the Jewish school"⁶⁹⁶. The complainants went on to emphasize that the Jews who settled in the province "seduce the Orthodox into the Jewish faith" and have a wide-ranging corrupting effect on the Christians: "on Saturdays they rest, while during the Christian holidays "they sell goods and by that distract the Orthodox from attending church services"⁶⁹⁷. More likely than not, the complaining merchants were driven not by pious intentions, but rather by a desire to get rid of competitors.

Having reviewed the complaint, the Synod ordered to have the synagogue demolished and for the books found inside to be burnt. Regarding the rest of the accusations brought against Leibov, a separate investigation was to be conducted, which was started in 1723 by the archbishop of Smolensk Filofei⁶⁹⁸. This investigation, however, was drastically protracted, as in 1727, at the time of the issue of the edict ordering the expulsion of Jews from the Smolensk province, it was still not completed. Simultaneously followed a decree to confiscate from the Jews their tax farming businesses. As a result of the protests from the local Orthodox clergy, the authorities ordered for Leibov and his associates to be expelled to Poland, although stipulating that they were to receive all money owed to them before being deported⁶⁹⁹.

The documentation of the Saint Petersburg Publishing Office, the highest governmental publishing institution in Russia at the time, contains information on the

⁶⁹⁵ Gessen Y. (1925): *"History of the Jewish People in Russia"*. Typography of the Co-operative Society, Leningrad. Vol. 1. Pg. 12.

⁶⁹⁶ Brockhaus F. and Efron I. (1908-1913): *"Jewish Encyclopedia"*. Society of Scholarly Jewish Publications, Saint Petersburg. Vol. 2, Section 593.

⁶⁹⁷ Ibid.

⁶⁹⁸ Ibid.

⁶⁹⁹ Ryvkin H. (1910): *"The Jews in Smolensk: Outline of the History of Jewish Settlements in Smolensk from the Ancient Times as Related to the Social Status of the Jews in Ancient Ruthenia"*. Typography of S. Bussel, Saint Petersburg. Pg. 61.

activities of Boruch Leibov and his companions in the 1720s. Leibov's name appears in the administrative receipt books, stating the sums of money collected as fees for the sealing of imperial decrees and other letters from the various institutions and entities. Thus, from a 1724 report of the Chamber-board to the Senate it becomes known that in July of that year the board assessed a complaint of Leibov, who requested the return of the customs fees confiscated from him and his partners in the Smolensk province under the pretense that the money was collected "with ill intentions"⁷⁰⁰. In the same letter, the Chamber-board expressed an opinion that although the customs fees do belong to the Jews, returning the money is not desirable, as according to the edit of the Holy Synod, "the Jews are hostile to the Orthodox faith"⁷⁰¹. Hence, the letter concludes that the board does not have the authority to make a decision on Leibov's request without the approval of the Senate.

From another document in the fund it becomes known that in January 1725, still under the rule of Peter I, the Chamber-board sent a report to the Saint Petersburg central police department in response to Boruch Leibov's request to issue to his companion Mikhail Davydov "a passport" for the transport of "tavern supplies from Saint Petersburg to his house in Zverovichi village"⁷⁰². According to the report, the request was granted.

Almost concurrently to the previous document, in January 1725, the Senate issued a decree in response to the report received from the Chamber-board in regards to the confiscated customs fees of Boruch Leibov and companions. The decree stipulated for all fees to be paid out to the Jewish tax-farmers as per the contractual regulations "for all the years"⁷⁰³. After the settlement of the financial dispute, Leibov and his partners were to be deported from Russia, and their tax-farming business to be sold at a public auction to "others, but not to Jews"⁷⁰⁴. Consequently, these demands were repeated almost word for word in the royal rescript of 1727, which prohibited Jewish residence in the Smolensk region⁷⁰⁵.

In the pursuance of the Senate's decree, the Chamber-board ordered the Smolensk vice-governor to make a settlement with Leibov and his companions for the tax farming

⁷⁰⁰ Feldman D. (2005): *"The Last Inquisitional Fire in Russia: The Moscow Investigation of the Case of Alexander Voznitsyn and Borocho Leibov 1738-1740"*. Parallels, No. 6-7, Appendix, Moscow. Pg. 13; The Russian State Archive of Early Acts. Fund 265 - Saint Petersburg Printing Office. Book 1, Case 30, pg. 22. Moscow.

⁷⁰¹ Ibid.; Ibid.

⁷⁰² Ibid., Pg. 14; Ibid., Book 1, Case 34, pg. 20.

⁷⁰³ Ibid., Pg. 15; Ibid., Pg. 153-154.

⁷⁰⁴ Ibid.; Ibid.

⁷⁰⁵ Ryvkin H. (1910): *"Jews in Smolensk: Outline of the History of Jewish Settlements in Smolensk from the Ancient Times as Related to the Social Status of the Jews in Ancient Ruthenia"*. Typography of S. Bussel, Saint Petersburg. Pg. 61.

conducted by them between 1720 and 1724⁷⁰⁶. However, the document also postulated that the allegations that were previously brought against Leibov by the residents of Zverovichi village were to be investigated and considered against the settlement. The allegations being of a local merchant named Skryp who claimed that Leibov did not pay him for tax farming his windmill; a cohort of Zverovichi residents attesting to paying fees to Leibov for his purchase of bread and alcohol for them under the pretense of being cheated; and an accusation by a former village commissioner stating that Leibov concealed a shipment of kettles⁷⁰⁷. Simultaneously, the Chamber-board sent memos reporting the event to the Justice-board, and to the Chief Magistrate, Russia's central institution that regulated commerce and industry in the country. In August 1725, the Justice-board responded by sending an edict to the Smolensk central court to immediately resolve the dispute between Leibov and Skryp regarding the windmill⁷⁰⁸, while the Chief Magistrate concurrently ordered the Smolensk Magistrate to investigate and resolve the dispute between Leibov and the local merchants on the tax-farming fees⁷⁰⁹.

In June 1726, however, the Royal Chancellery sent an edit to the Smolensk regional government to institute criminal proceedings, if necessary, against the Smolensk merchants for their "debts owed to the Jews"⁷¹⁰. The text also mentions that the Royal Chancellery sent a corresponding resolution, addressed personally to the steward of the Smolensk region Shagin. Therefore, these documents depict a very complicated relationship between the Jews of Smolensk and Russia's central government in Saint Petersburg: while ordering to expel the Jews from the country, the central authorities simultaneously demanded for a just resolution of the financial disputes between the said Jews and the Russian merchants.

From a 1734 book of receipts of the Saint Petersburg Publishing Office, it becomes known that the financial disputes between Leibov and Smolensk merchants went on. On July 11th of that year, the Senate issued a decree ordering the vice-governor of the Smolensk region to investigate and reach a decision on a complaint made against Leibov by two local merchants, claiming that he owed them 700 rubles⁷¹¹. Simultaneously, Leibov sent a plea of his own to the Holy Synod, writing that the claims of the Smolensk merchants named Shila and Paskin, who asserted that he "corrupted the Orthodox

⁷⁰⁶ Feldman D. (2005): *"The Last Inquisitional Fire in Russia: The Moscow Investigation of the Case of Alexander Voznitsyn and Boroch Leibov 1738-1740"*. Parallels, No. 6-7, Moscow. Appendix, Pg. 16; The Russian State Archive of Early Acts. Fund 265 - Saint Petersburg Printing Office. Book 1, Case 38, pg. 11. Moscow.

⁷⁰⁷ Ibid., Ibid.

⁷⁰⁸ Ibid. Pg 18; Ibid. Book 1, Case 42, Pg. 15.

⁷⁰⁹ Ibid. Pg 19; Ibid. Pg. 41.

⁷¹⁰ Ibid. Pg 21; The Russian State Archive of Early Acts. Fund 265 - Saint Petersburg Printing Office. Book 1, Case 42, pg. 305. Moscow.

⁷¹¹ Ibid. Pg. 22; Ibid. Case 46, Pg. 13.

Christians with his teachings and performed many other vile deeds” was slander⁷¹². The Synod ordered for the complaint to be investigated by the local authorities. It wasn’t the first time Leibov was charged with proselytizing Judaism – in 1725 the Synod ordered for the Smolensk bishop Filofei to investigate an allegation made by the same Smolensk merchants mentioned above, accusing Leibov with undermining the foundations of Orthodoxy with Jewish teachings⁷¹³. Unfortunately, the results of these two investigations are unknown.

A manuscript book of the central governmental institution monitoring the expenditure of state funds contains a record of a 1736 case, mentioning that 217 rubles were levied from Boruch Leibov as a penalty for operating a tavern in Zverovichi village in 1723⁷¹⁴. Accordingly, the fine was collected from Leibov’s account at the Stats-office. Leibov responded by pleading to the office of the Ruling Senate in Moscow that the money was levied from him unjustly, as during that period in 1723 he did not operate the taverns⁷¹⁵. This was confirmed by a report of the administration of the Smolensk region, which stated that during that time Leibov’s taverns “stood empty” and the sales of wine did not occur⁷¹⁶. Concurrently, Leibov sent a plea to the Smolensk administration, requesting them to investigate who operated the sales of alcohol at the time and accordingly was to be taxed⁷¹⁷. The ruling of the Senate favored Leibov: it was ordered for 217 rubles to be returned to him in full amount and for the Chamber-board to identify the actual debtor⁷¹⁸. Hence just a few years before Leibov’s burning at the stake, the Russian authorities made rulings in favor of the Jewish tax-farmer, despite the numerous accusations of his engrossment in the proselytization of Judaism.

Proceedings of the Investigation of Voznitsyn’s Apostasy to Judaism

A decade after the initial investigation proceedings against Boruch Leibov, a far more serious accusation was put forward against the Jewish merchant – he was charged with luring a retired navy captain-lieutenant Alexander Voznitsyn into the Jewish faith, subjecting him to the ritual of circumcision, and accordingly to apostate from Christianity and blaspheme against the Church. The two men met in 1736 in Moscow, when Leibov

⁷¹² Ibid., Pg. 23; Ibid., Case 76, Pg. 75.

⁷¹³ Ibid.; Ibid., Case 41, Pg. 12.

⁷¹⁴ Ibid., Pg. 25; The Russian State Archive of Early Acts. Fund 265 – Stats office. Book 1, Case 187. Pg. 217-220.

⁷¹⁵ Ibid.; Ibid., Pg. 218.

⁷¹⁶ Ibid.; Ibid.

⁷¹⁷ Ibid.; Ibid.

⁷¹⁸ Ibid.; Ibid., Pg. 219.

was temporarily residing in the German quarter of the city along with a few other Jews⁷¹⁹. Of Voznitsyn it is known that he enrolled at Moscow's Navy academy in 1717 and served with the Russian fleet until 1728, when he quit⁷²⁰. In 1732, Voznitsyn once again entered the Navy service, working with various commissions, although the following year he was discharged by the Admiralty-chamber for "not meeting the standards of the service"⁷²¹.

The proceedings of the investigation are contained in a record in the collection of the Russian State Archive of Early Acts in Moscow entitled "The anagraph of a case, which began on 4th of May 1737 based on a report of the retired captain-lieutenant Alexander Voznitsyn's wife Alena Ivanovna, who pleaded that her husband had apostated from Orthodoxy into the Jewish law"⁷²². Although this document was compiled after the execution of Voznitsyn and Leibov, this record is extremely valuable for the study of this event, as it contains a list of practically all of the written materials of the investigation of 1737-1738. The document was drawn with legal punctuality: stated are the numbers of sheets and pages of each of its components, noted are the authors of each of the documents, and even the marginal notes made in the documents. Containing a total of 90 documents related to the case of Voznitsyn and Leibov, not only does the anagraph thereby allow to comprehend the mechanism of the investigation in great detail, but also uncovers all of its immediate participants – the private individuals involved such as the witnesses and the accused, as well as the institutions – central and local.

On May 4th 1737, the Synodal Chancellery launched the investigation into Voznitsyn's apostasy to Judaism, prompted by the report of the fact by the captain's wife Alena Ivanovna. For making the "honorable report" that exposed her husband's apostasy, by a 1739 royal decree of Empress Anna Ioannovna issued after the execution, Voznitsyn's widow received the full ownership of the captain's land and property, and on top of that was awarded with "100 serfs"⁷²³. Alena Ivanovna's report had an immediate response – the same day the Synodal Chancellery issued an arrest warrant for Voznitsyn, and the next day the captain was apprehended⁷²⁴. During his arrest, the first tangible

⁷¹⁹ Markon I. (1913): *"The Case Concerning the Burning at the Stake of Captain-Lieutenant Alexander Voznitsyn for Apostasy into the Jewish Faith and Boruch Leib for Proselytism"*. In *"Re-lived: A Journal Dedicated to the Social and Cultural History of Jews in Russia"*. Typography of Fleitman I., Saint Petersburg. Vol. 4. Appendix, Pg. 83.

⁷²⁰ Ibid., Pg. 85.

⁷²¹ Ibid.

⁷²² Feldman D. (2005): *"The Last Inquisitional Fire in Russia: The Moscow Investigation of the Case of Alexander Voznitsyn and Boroch Leibov 1738-1740"*. Parallels, No. 6-7, Moscow. Appendix Pg. 49; The Russian State Archive of Early Acts. Fund 1183. Book 1, case 86. Pg. 9.

⁷²³ The Complete Collection of Laws of the Russian Empire, from 1737 to 1739 (1830). First edition, Saint Petersburg. Vol. 10, No 7725.

⁷²⁴ Feldman D. (2005): *"The Last Inquisitional Fire in Russia: The Moscow Investigation of the Case of Alexander Voznitsyn and Boroch Leibov 1738-1740"*. Parallels, No. 6-7, Moscow.

evidence of Voznitsyn's conversion was discovered in his house – “a tattered note, pasted on a sheet of paper, with Russian letters but Jewish syllables”⁷²⁵. The day after the captain's first interrogation, which took place on the 6th of May, a clerk of the Synod was sent to Voznitsyn's household “to search for a Jewish dress”⁷²⁶. Consequently, Voznitsyn's serfs were also questioned⁷²⁷. Meanwhile, the Synodal Chancellery was accumulating objects attesting to the retired sailor's guilt: on the 10th of May the clerk presented a Jewish dress, a tattered book with the Psalms, and two letters written in Hebrew from a Jew named Shmerl⁷²⁸. On May 11, the Synod issued a warrant for the arrest of Shmerl and in another day's time he was apprehended⁷²⁹. For the translation of Shmerl's letters found in Voznitsyn's house, they Synod requested the services of a baptized Jew named Vasili Alekseev, who was proficient in Hebrew⁷³⁰. At the Chancellery, Shmerl was interrogated, and after having spent the night in detention, he was released into the custody of his landlord, a Jew named Abraham Samoilov⁷³¹.

On the 16th of May, the interrogation of Voznitsyn was resumed⁷³². The captain's claims denying his conversion to Judaism were presented to his wife, with a demand to provide additional support to her accusations. A week later, Alena Ivanovna presented the investigators with a substantial piece of evidence – a letter addressed to her by Voznitsyn, sent in December 1736 from Smolensk⁷³³, the region where his alleged Jewish patron Boruch Leibov resided at the time. Consequently, Voznitsyn was interrogated once again against the evidence presented by his wife⁷³⁴. In about a month's time, Alena Ivanovna submitted yet another report to the Synodal Chancellery, to which she attached Orthodox icons, which Voznitsyn “tossed into the water”⁷³⁵. The results of the examination of the icons were logged in the protocol of the investigation.

Appendix Pg. 55; The Russian State Archive of Early Acts. Fund 1183. Book 1, case 86. Pg. 19.

⁷²⁵ Ibid., Ibid.

⁷²⁶ Ibid. Pg. 56; Ibid., Pg. 22.

⁷²⁷ Ibid.; Ibid.

⁷²⁸ Ibid., Pg. 57; Ibid., Pg. 25.

⁷²⁹ Ibid., Pg. 58; Ibid., Pg. 26-27.

⁷³⁰ Ibid.

⁷³¹ Ibid.

⁷³² Ibid. Pg. 59; Ibid., Pg. 31.

⁷³³ Ibid.; Ibid.

⁷³⁴ Ibid.; Ibid.

⁷³⁵ Ibid., Pg. 60; Ibid., Pg. 32.

In June 1737, Moscow's Central Court got involved in the case: according to its report, Alexander Voznitsyn was being sued by the state councilor Brylkin, who claimed that the captain owed him money, and Voznitsyn was requested to appear in court⁷³⁶. However, the Synodal Chancellery responded to the Court that a trial on Voznitsyn on that matter was "not possible" at this stage of the investigation of his apostasy⁷³⁷. Concurrently, the Chancellery expanded the list of witnesses to be questioned regarding the case. Within a few weeks, a number of priests from Moscow and Smolensk, as well as the elders of the regions in Russia where Voznitsyn had served were questioned on the captain's religious convictions and his association with Boruch Leibov and other Jews⁷³⁸. The archdeacon of the Kremlin's Annunciation Cathedral Evpal was even questioned about Voznitsyn's serf Andrei Konstantinov, who was a parishioner at his congregation⁷³⁹. In light of a new round of allegations by Voznitsyn's wife, who reported to the Chancellery claiming that her husband refused to eat pork, the captain was once again interrogated⁷⁴⁰. Consequently, the Chancellery submitted a report to the Holy Synod, telling of the results of the initial stage of the investigation⁷⁴¹.

Having received the report from the Chancellery, on the 12th of July 1737 the Synod issued an edict ordering for Voznitsyn to be incarcerated, shackled and kept isolated⁷⁴². This edict attests to the exceptional importance that the authorities placed on the case. Two days later, when Voznitsyn was placed in shackles, the soldiers on guard of the prison were forced to sign a document, which stated that they were to keep the apostate separately from the other prisoners, as was stipulated in the Synodal edict⁷⁴³. Moreover, the copyists of the Synodal Chancellery also signed a document, commanding them to keep the soldiers on guard in check, in order to make sure that the edict was thoroughly implemented⁷⁴⁴. Hence, there was a clearly defined chain of command, overseeing this 'state criminal'. Against this background, the questioning of the various witnesses pertaining to the case continued, including the merchants, serfs and farmers that Voznitsyn had been in contact with over the previous few years⁷⁴⁵.

⁷³⁶ Ibid., Pg. 57; Ibid., Pg. 25.

⁷³⁷ Ibid.; Ibid.

⁷³⁸ Ibid., Pg. 61; Ibid., Pg. 32.

⁷³⁹ Ibid.; Ibid.

⁷⁴⁰ Ibid., Pg. 62; Ibid., Pg. 45.

⁷⁴¹ Ibid., Pg. 63; Ibid., Pg. 46.

⁷⁴² Ibid.; Ibid.

⁷⁴³ Ibid.; Ibid.

⁷⁴⁴ Ibid.; Ibid.

⁷⁴⁵ Ibid., Pg. 63-65; Ibid., Pg. 46-48.

About two months after the launch of the investigation, the authorities directed their attention to the persona of the Smolensk Jewish tax-farmer Boruch Leibov. As followed from a Synodal Chancellery record dated July 18th, 1737, the Holy Synod ordered the Smolensk governor's office to apprehend "the Jew Boruch" and to send him to Moscow, which took about two weeks⁷⁴⁶. Along with Leibov in person, to Moscow were sent various books and documents belonging to the tax-farmer, as well as a copy of the Smolensk governor's office record of the issue to Voznitsyn a "passport for travel to Poland"⁷⁴⁷. The same day, a clerk at the Synodal Chancellery made a list with all of Leibov's possessions that were delivered to Moscow⁷⁴⁸, and issued an order to the soldier guards specifying the terms of Leibov's incarceration: like Voznitsyn, he was to be kept in isolation⁷⁴⁹. On the 5th of August began the interrogation of the Jewish tax-farmer, which produced a lengthy report signed "from his hand" in Hebrew⁷⁵⁰.

The interrogations of the principal figurant Alexander Voznitsyn continued over the span of the next few months: the reports with their proceedings were produced on August 24th⁷⁵¹, and on October 5th of 1737⁷⁵². During this time, on the 2nd of September a report was received by the Synodal Chancellery from archbishop Aaron of the Solovetsky monastery in Archangelsk, a city on the White Sea where Voznitsyn had done navy service, in which the archbishop attested to Voznitsyn's "lack of faith"⁷⁵³. The testimony of archbishop Aaron was particularly important, as from the 16th century the Solovetsky monastery, the greatest citadel of Orthodoxy in the Russian north, was the place of the imprisonment of the clergy and nobility found guilty of religious and political crimes⁷⁵⁴. Concurrently, the Chancellery requested the Smolensk governor's office to send to Moscow the extracts from the investigation that had been conducted on "the enticement of Christians to Judaism" in the town of Zverovichi by Boruch Leibov⁷⁵⁵. Once the

⁷⁴⁶ Ibid., Pg. 65; Ibid., Pg. 48.

⁷⁴⁷ Ibid.; Ibid.

⁷⁴⁸ Ibid.; Ibid.

⁷⁴⁹ Ibid.; Ibid.

⁷⁵⁰ Ibid., Ibid.

⁷⁵¹ Ibid., Pg. 66; Ibid., Pg. 49.

⁷⁵² Ibid., Pg. 67; Ibid., Pg. 50

⁷⁵³ Ibid.; Ibid.

⁷⁵⁴ Frumenkov G. (1968): *"The Inmates of the Solovetsky Monastery"*. North-West publishing, Archangelsk. Vol. 2, Pg. 21-22.

⁷⁵⁵ Feldman D. (2005): *"The Last Inquisitional Fire in Russia: The Moscow Investigation of the Case of Alexander Voznitsyn and Boroch Leibov 1738-1740"*. Parallels, No. 6-7, Moscow.

record from Smolensk was received, the investigation took a few months break for the analysis of all of the documents and data. The activity was resumed on December 27, when Voznitsyn's serf Andrei Konstantinov was questioned once again, this time on a rather intimate matter – his knowledge of the “secret circumcision” of his master⁷⁵⁶.

In January 1738, the Synodal Chancellery requested information on Alexander Voznitsyn from the Holy Consistory of Moscow, an ecclesiastical institution responsible for overseeing worship procedures and the identification of the violation thereof⁷⁵⁷. The reply indicated that as far it was known to them, no violation of worship had been noted in relation to the retired captain-lieutenant in question⁷⁵⁸. About a month later, the Chancellery received an edict from the Holy Synod, ordering to transfer the “convicts Voznitsyn and Leibov” to the authority of the general-adjutant of Her Imperial Majesty and ober-hofmeister Count Simon Andreevich Saltykov⁷⁵⁹, a blood relative of Empress Anna Ioannovna who had the jurisdiction over the Office of Secret Investigations and factually acted as her representative in Moscow⁷⁶⁰. The following day, the Synodal Chancellery reported to the Holy Synod of the transfer of Voznitsyn and Leibov to the central Office of Secret Investigations in Moscow⁷⁶¹.

All of the documents and materials of the investigation were transferred to the Office of Secret Investigations, and the Voznitsyn-Leibov case was assigned personally to the head of Moscow's branch of the institution, general-adjutant Count Andrei Ivanovich Ushakov. According to his contemporaries, Count Ushakov had resounding inquisitorial inclinations; Bantysh-Manenskyi wrote of him: “As the head of the Office of Secret Investigations, Ushakov directed the most severe torture practices, and had an

Appendix Pg. 67; The Russian State Archive of Early Acts. Fund 1183. Book 1, case 86. Pg. 79.

⁷⁵⁶ Ibid.; Ibid.

⁷⁵⁷ Olevskaya V. (2009): “*On the Question of the Formation of the Diocesan Administration in Moscow in the Early Synodal Period*”. Bulletin of the Saint Tikhon's Orthodox University, Vol. 11. Pg. 10.

⁷⁵⁸ Feldman D. (2005): “*The Last Inquisitional Fire in Russia: The Moscow Investigation of the Case of Alexander Voznitsyn and Boroch Leibov 1738-1740*”. Parallels, No. 6-7, Moscow. Appendix Pg. 69; The Russian State Archive of Early Acts. Fund 1183. Book 1, case 86. Pg. 88.

⁷⁵⁹ Ibid., Pg. 70; Ibid., Pg. 91.

⁷⁶⁰ Solovev S. (2002): “*History of Russia From the Ancient Times // Rule of Empress Anna Ioannovna*”. AST Folio publishing, Moscow. Vol. 20, Pg. 137.

⁷⁶¹ Feldman D. (2005): “*The Last Inquisitional Fire in Russia: The Moscow Investigation of the Case of Alexander Voznitsyn and Boroch Leibov 1738-1740*”. Parallels, No. 6-7, Moscow. Appendix Pg. 69; The Russian State Archive of Early Acts. Fund 1183. Book 1, case 86. Pg. 88.

outstanding ability for ferreting out the mindset of his interlocutors”⁷⁶². Count Ushakov had a substantial investigative experience, starting his career as a crime detective in 1709 and making his way up to the position of the country’s head inquisitor, which he held until his death. The ‘invincible’ general was one of Anna’s most trusted patricians, and regularly reported to her about the most important investigations under his jurisdiction. Bantysh-Manenskiy noted that the Empress actively influenced the course of the investigations, giving Ushakov instructions and making adjustments to the procedures. Moreover, Anna had the last word in all final decisions and sentencing, with her recommendations apparently often being harsher than that of count Ushakov and the Cabinet of Ministers⁷⁶³.

During the reign of Empress Anna Ioannovna, the Office of Secret Investigations was engaged in the investigations of the most heinous crimes against the state: assassination attempts and hazards to the health of the monarch; treason, plots against the authorities and coup attempts; defamation of the Empress’s honor and slander against the actions and intentions of the authorities; false accusations, deviations from the oath of allegiance to the Empress, as well as other serious political crimes as determined by the “word of the sovereign”⁷⁶⁴. Guarded around-the-clock by soldiers, the building in which this penal institution was located also served as a penitentiary for political prisoners, while the interrogators, judges and executioners worked in the main complex of the building. The principal methods employed by the institution were interrogations and torture, however the arrested noblemen were normally given a more temperate treatment⁷⁶⁵, as was in the case of the captain-lieutenant in retirement Alexander Voznitsyn. Despite the cruel methods employed in the course of the investigations and the severity of the judicial sentencing, during the reign of Anna Ioannovna relatively few death sentences were handed out – a few dozen, with all of them having been approved by the Empress⁷⁶⁶. More often than not, the executions were implemented publicly and carried a distinctive educative character – so as to deter others from committing such crimes. The locations for the executions were chosen amongst muddy wastelands or ruins. Although beheading (by the use of a sword or an axe) is mentioned most frequently in the materials of the Office of Secret investigation as the method of execution, other, more barbaric methods were also applied: hanging (by the neck, legs, or rib),

⁷⁶² Bantysh-Kamenskiy (1847): *“Dictionary of Memorable Individuals of the Russian Land”*. Typography of Avgust Simon, Saint Petersburg. Vol. 3, pg. 445.

⁷⁶³ Ibid.

⁷⁶⁴ Volkov L. (1999): *“The Office of Secret Investigations in Moscow//Statehood in Russia (End of 15th Century-February 1917): Vocabulary-Directory”*. Home of Books Publishing, Moscow. Book 2, Pg. 233-234.

⁷⁶⁵ Ibid., Pg. 406.

⁷⁶⁶ Anisimov E. (1994): *“Russia Without Peter”*. Lenizdat publishing, Saint Petersburg. Pg. 344.

impalement, quartering, breaking on the wheel, and burning alive, etc.⁷⁶⁷. The death sentence by burning was predominantly handed out for the crimes pertaining to religion, namely to heretics, apostates, blasphemers, witches and sorcerers⁷⁶⁸. Nonetheless, the group burning of Boruch Leibov and Alexander Voznitsyn, a nobleman, was unprecedented in the 18th century, and their religious deviations without a doubt were considered by the authorities to have been severe crimes against the State.

On the 14th of March 1738, the Holy Synod issued an edit to the Synodal Chancellery ordering the arrest of Leibov's son-in-law Shmerl and Voznitsyn's head serf Alexander Konstantinov⁷⁶⁹. Both men were pronounced "to have been involved" in the case of Voznitsyn's conversion to Judaism: the investigation showed that Shmerl and Konstantinov accompanied Voznitsyn and Leibov to Poland, where the captain was circumcised in accordance with the Jewish law. On March 19th, the Chancellery held a meeting to discuss the status of the men's capture, during which a report compiled by a copyist of the Chancellery was examined. The copyist was sent along with soldiers to the German quarter, a neighborhood in Moscow reserved for foreigners, to search for Shmerl and Konstantinov⁷⁷⁰. Upon visiting the house where Shmerl resided along with two other Jews, the copyist found out from the landlord that about a week earlier, the three men departed to Saint Petersburg to their owner, a banker and financial advisor at the Royal court Levi Lipman. Although Konstantinov also did not turn up at Voznitsyn's residence in the German quarter, another one of Voznitsyn's servants was taken in for questioning and stated that Konstantinov was absent from Moscow, for he was held under guard at the Kashirskaya Provincial Office due to his master's nonpayment of the capitation fees for his estates in the town of Kashir. Accordingly, on the 20th of March the Synodal Chancellery sent soldiers to Kashir, along with the fees that Voznitsyn owed to the local treasury, with the instructions to deliver Konstantinov to Moscow. A highly ranking bishop Venyamin of the Holy Synod, involved in the investigation of the Voznitsyn-Leibov case, signed the order⁷⁷¹.

Meanwhile, the Office of Secret Investigations was trying to expedite the case, and on the 28th of March sent a letter to the Synodal Chancellery with a request to have Shmerl and Konstantinov detained immediately, and to have the two men transferred

⁷⁶⁷ Volkov L. (1999): *"The Office of Secret Investigations in Moscow//Statehood in Russia (End of 15th Century-February 1917): Vocabulary-Directory"*. Home of Books Publishing, Moscow. Book 2, Pg. 406.

⁷⁶⁸ Ibid.

⁷⁶⁹ Feldman D. (2005): *"The Last Inquisitional Fire in Russia: The Moscow Investigation of the Case of Alexander Voznitsyn and Boroch Leibov 1738-1740"*. Parallels, No. 6-7, Moscow. Appendix Pg. 69-70; The Russian State Archive of Early Acts. Fund 1183. Book 1, case 86. Pg. 88-89.

⁷⁷⁰ Ibid., Pg. 70; Ibid., Pg. 89.

⁷⁷¹ Ibid.; Ibid.

under their jurisdiction right away⁷⁷². The Synodal Chancellery replied the very next day, stating that Konstantinov had been located in Kashir and that soldiers had been sent to deliver him to Moscow, while Shmerl fled to Saint Petersburg with two other Jews, and the measures for their detention were being undertaken⁷⁷³. Accordingly, on the 31st of March Konstantinov was delivered to Moscow and immediately sent to the Office of Secret Investigations, of which the Synodal Chancellery reported to the Holy Synod on April 4th⁷⁷⁴. In turn, Shmerl was also detained at some point before April 20th, as on that day he was sent to face the civil court along with Voznitsyn and Leibov⁷⁷⁵.

As stated in the reports of both the Chancellery of Justice and the Holy Synod to the Empress regarding the case of Voznitsyn and Leibov, the retired captain was incarcerated at the Office of Secret Investigations on March 22, 1738, where he admitted, having been hung upside down, to “keeping the Jewish law”, blaspheming against Christianity and to his circumcision, which was done in at the Polish town Dubrovna at the house of Boruch Leibov’s son Meir⁷⁷⁶. During Leibov’s interrogation, the Jewish tax-farmer recounted that at Voznitsyn’s will, he brought to him a Dubrovna Rabbi who then performed the circumcision ritual on the captain for a fee⁷⁷⁷. While Voznitsyn’s apostasy clearly violated “the rules of the Canons of the Apostles”, the “spiritual punishment” that the canonical rule stipulated, as stated in the report of the Holy Synod to the Empress, was deemed to be insufficient for the severity of the captain’s crime. Accordingly, the report concluded that Voznitsyn’s crime fell under the first paragraph of the first clause of the first section of the Council Code of 1649, which stipulated: “If a person of another faith, which ever that faith may be, or a Russian person, blasphemes against God and our savior Jesus Christ, or against Our Lady the Virgin Mary who gave birth to him, or against the Honest Cross, or against his Holy Saints, an investigation against this person must be launched promptly. If the investigation exposes the blasphemer, he is to be executed by burning”⁷⁷⁸. In turn, the crime prescribed to Boruch Leibov fell under the 24th clause of the 22nd chapter of the Council Code: “If an infidel successfully conveys his infidel faith onto a Russian person by any means, forcefully or by deceit, and converts a Russian person into his infidel faith, this infidel is to be found immediately and to be executed by the means of burning without any mercy”⁷⁷⁹.

⁷⁷² Ibid., Pg. 71; Ibid., Pg. 90.

⁷⁷³ Ibid., Pg. 72-73; Ibid., Pg. 90-91.

⁷⁷⁴ Ibid., Pg. 73; Ibid., Pg. 91.

⁷⁷⁵ Ibid., Pg. 74; Ibid., Pg. 92.

⁷⁷⁶ The Complete Collection of Laws of the Russian Empire, from 1737 to 1739 (1830). First edition. Saint Petersburg. Vol. 10, Pg. 557-559.

⁷⁷⁷ Ibid.

⁷⁷⁸ Abramovich G., Mankov A. (1987): *“The Council Code of 1649: Text, Commentaries”*. Institute of History of USSR, Leningrad. Pg. 15.

⁷⁷⁹ Ibid., Pg. 37.

Seeing in this case a perceptible danger for the Church, Empress Anna Ioannovna ordered for both of the detainees, along with “another Jew Shmerl, Boruch’s son-in-law”, to be transferred from the Office of Secret Investigations to the Senate on April 20, 1738 “to be tried at the civil court”⁷⁸⁰. The next day, the Senate issued a resolution for the three men, along with the materials of the investigation, to be sent to the Chancellery of Justice, which was assigned to “examine and review the case according to the laws and statutes, sign the sentence and submit it to the Senate for approbation”⁷⁸¹. A week later, according to a resolution of the Senate, the original materials of the following cases against Boruch Leibov were to be sent to the Chancellery of Justice: the case of the murder of priest Avrami of Zverovichi village in the Smolensk region by the Jewish tax-farmer, the case of Boruch Leibov’s “proselytization of Judaism, along with other Jews, amongst the common people of Smolensk and of building a Jewish school”, as well as the case of “the torment of a Russian peasant girl from the Smolensk region who was at his service” – in which Leibov was accused of ritual torture of his Orthodox servant with the purpose of extracting blood⁷⁸².

The Chancellery of Justice was required to “immediately conclude the investigation” of these cases, and taking into consideration the principal case of “the conversion of Voznitsyn from Orthodoxy to Judaism, his circumcision, and blasphemy”, to issue a sentence. However on the 2nd of May, the Chancellery reported to the Senate that it could not issue or sign any sentences, as according to the stipulations of the 1649 Council Code, “seeking out the sheer truth requires a solid investigation”, and as far as the Chancellery was concerned, in all of the given cases proper investigations had not been conducted, while the confessions of the accused were obtained under torture and hence did not serve as the unquestionable evidence of their guilt⁷⁸³. However, as early as the 10th of May, count Ushakov announced in the Senate the Empress’s determination for a prompt decision to be made on the Voznitsyn case⁷⁸⁴. In response to Ushakov’s assertions that “Voznitsyn and Leibov must be sentenced without any further investigation” and that “they deserve to be brutally executed”, the Senators carefully objected, making the following statement: “Would not a further investigation on this Boruch expose his collaborators on converting Christians from the Greek faith into the Jewish law and other deeds harmful for the Eastern Church? While if they are to be executed without further inquiry into their proselytizing activity, then others who may be

⁷⁸⁰ Feldman D. (2005): *“The Last Inquisitional Fire in Russia: The Moscow Investigation of the Case of Alexander Voznitsyn and Boroch Leibov 1738-1740”*. Parallels, No. 6-7, Moscow. Appendix Pg. 25; The Russian State Archive of Early Acts. Fund 1183. Book 1, case 86. Pg. 111.

⁷⁸¹ Ibid., Pg. 26; Ibid.

⁷⁸² Ibid.; Ibid., Pg. 112.

⁷⁸³ Ibid.; Ibid., Pg. 121.

⁷⁸⁴ Ibid.; Ibid., Pg. 125.

guilty of committing such crimes will go unpunished”⁷⁸⁵. Nonetheless, not daring to contradict the will of the Monarch and the influential count Ushakov, a few days later the Senate issued another edict, repeatedly ordering the Chancellery of Justice to “sign the sentence” on Voznitsyn, Leibov and Shmerl “without any further questioning or investigating, as their guilt had been proven sufficiently”⁷⁸⁶. This act clearly pointed to the determination and the dedication of the authorities to this case, and this time around, the Chancellery officials were also tractable with the will of the Sovereign: both Alexander Voznitsyn and Boruch Leibov were found guilty of violating the various sections of the Council Code of 1649, and sentenced accordingly – “death by burning”⁷⁸⁷. The third person held under arrest, “the Jew Shmerl”, was to be released, as no criminal activity had been proven on his part in the given case.

The bureaucratic process of the sentencing did not end there: having received the signed sentence from the Chancellery of Justice, the Senate predictably upheld the Chancellery’s decision, and submitted a report with the sentence verdict to the Empress for her approval, as per the required protocol. On July 3, 1738, Anna Ioannovna issued the following resolution: “Voznitsyn’s blasphemy against our Savior Christ, the rejection of the true Christian law and the adoption of the Jewish faith, and his conversion to Judaism by the Jew Boruch Leibov by the use of deceit, to which both have admitted, no further investigation is necessary. And so that these ungodly acts do not continue, and those like the blasphemers Voznitsyn and the proselytizer Boruch would not dare to tempt others – by the authority of the State, both men are to be executed by burning, so that ignorant and impious people would be deterred from apostating from the Christian law, and proselytizers such as Boruch would not dare to convert others from the Christian law to their laws; while the Jew Shmerl is to be freed, if he is not guilty in any way in the given case”⁷⁸⁸.

On the 15th of July 1738, Alexander Voznitsyn and Boruch Leibov were publicly executed by burning on the Admiralteyski Island in Saint Petersburg. Due to the efforts of Moscow’s Synodal Chancellery, however, the investigation into the case did not conclude with the punishment of the religious criminals. A few months after the implementation of the Empress’s order to brutally execute the two men in a public auto-da-fe, the cause of the renewed investigation became the fate of the personal items that belonged to the condemned, which remained at the Synodal Chancellery after their deaths. A report written by a senior clerk, read at the Chancellery’s meeting on September 6th, listed these items: “Belonging to Alexander Voznitsyn – a blue amulet made from Chinese material (in Russian "повраска синяя китайческая"), a Psalter with handwritten notes, a printed Bible in German; belonging to the Jew Boruch – three books in the Jewish print, a quadrangular Talas, Jewish prayer belts, a knife in a case, a pocket

⁷⁸⁵ Ibid., Pg. 27; Ibid., Pg. 128.

⁷⁸⁶ Ibid.; Ibid., Pg. 131.

⁷⁸⁷ Ibid., Pg. 28; Ibid., Pg. 133-135.

⁷⁸⁸ The Complete Collection of Laws of the Russian Empire, from 1737 to 1739 (1830). First edition. Saint Petersburg. Vol. 10, Pg. 560.

size copper inkwell⁷⁸⁹. The clerk requested from the Chancellery directorate for a decision to be made on what was to be done with these objects. Only seven weeks later, on the 25th of October, a request for the resolution of the given matter was sent to the Holy Synod, where it was to be decided “how these items and books were to be utilized”⁷⁹⁰. Peculiarly, in the text of the given protocol, of Voznitsyn and Leibov it was stated that “the Moscow Synodal Chancellery does not have information on what was done with the convicted”, although the public execution of the two men happened over four months prior.

The Most Holy Governing Synod reacted on the 2nd of December 1738, ordering the Synodal Chancellery to transfer Voznitsyn’s and Leibov’s personal items to the Chancellery of Justice in Saint Petersburg⁷⁹¹. According to the protocol of the Synodal Chancellery, however, the items were to be transferred to the Moscow office of the Chancellery of Justice and not to the headquarters in Saint Petersburg⁷⁹², likely due to the convenience of proximity. Yet, in the sluggish bureaucratic machine, with its red tape and confusion, the time for the implementation of orders increased drastically, when the matter was not related personally to State criminals. Accordingly, only a year and a half later, on May 31, 1740 the Synodal Chancellery sent the edict to the office of the Moscow office of the Chancellery of Justice⁷⁹³. However, the Moscow office categorically refused to receive the belongings of the executed heretics, as according to the order of the Holy Synod, the items were to be transferred specifically to the Chancellery of Justice headquarters in Saint Petersburg⁷⁹⁴. The Holy Synod resolved the issue rather quickly: since the Chancellery of Justice refused to receive the items, it was ordered for Voznitsyn’s Psalter to be stored at the Synodal sacristy; for his Bible in German and Leibov’s three books in “Jewish print” to be given over to the library of Moscow’s Synodal typography; for Voznitsyn’s “blue amulet made from Chinese material”, and Leibov’s “quadrangular Talas” and “Jewish prayer belts” to be burnt in the presence of the parliamentarians of the Synodal Chancellery who were also “members of the clergy” and for the ashes to be scattered; while for the rest of the items, unrelated to the Jewish religious rites – namely Leibov’s knife and copper inkwell – it was decided to

⁷⁸⁹ Feldman D. (2005): *“The Last Inquisitional Fire in Russia: The Moscow Investigation of the Case of Alexander Voznitsyn and Boroch Leibov 1738-1740”*. Parallels, No. 6-7, Moscow. Appendix Pg. 76-77; The Russian State Archive of Early Acts. Fund 1181. Book 1, case 86. Pg. 28.

⁷⁹⁰ Ibid., Pg. 77; Ibid., Pg. 29.

⁷⁹¹ Ibid., Pg. 79; Ibid., Pg. 31.

⁷⁹² Ibid., Pg. 80; Ibid., Pg. 32

⁷⁹³ Ibid., Pg. 81; Ibid., Pg. 34.

⁷⁹⁴ Ibid., Pg. 82; Ibid., Pg. 35.

leave them at the Chancellery: for the inkwell to be given to the copyist “for writing”, and the knife – to the Chancellery’s boiler-man⁷⁹⁵.

It is clear that Leibov’s “quadrangular Talas” mentioned in the documents referred to a traditional Jewish prayer shawl, also called a ‘*Tallit*’, worn by men. The “prayer belts” most certainly referred to a ‘*Tefillin*’, a set of two leather boxes containing the scrolls of parchment inscribed with the verses from the books of Exodus and Deuteronomy, which symbolize the connection between the physical body and the spiritual self, and are worn by men during weekday morning prayers. As for the description of the destroyed item that belonged to Voznitsyn, the word “повраз” has two meanings in the Russian language: 1) a membrane gland liver, used as a sacrifice in ancient Judea, and 2) a pole, on which the table of the oblation was carried⁷⁹⁶. The amulet was said to be made from “Chinese material”, which meant cotton. For the Synodal authorities, all of these objects were associated with a conflicting faith, therefore it is not surprising that it was decided to have them burned, just as it was done with their owners. This act of the extermination of ‘foul’ infidel property can be considered in terms of the phenomenon, which was characteristic of the Medieval and Early Modern culture of the Russian Orthodox Church – for instance, Jewish ritualistic objects were destroyed en masse during the 1648 – 1656 Cossack uprising in Ukraine and Belarus. On the other hand, the transfer of Voznitsyn’s German Bible and Psalter, as well as Leibov’s books “in Jewish print” to the Synodal library for practical usage signified that printed material, including Jewish, apparently did not pose a danger for the Church authorities.

Justifiably, the act of the conversion to Judaism of a Russian nobleman by the efforts of a prominent figure of the Jewish community could not have been perceived by the Russian Church and State authorities as anything less than disturbing. Reminiscent of the Judaizer heresy that beleaguered Moscow and Novgorod in the 15th-16th centuries, the decisive actions taken by the Empress and her companions to punish the “apostate Voznitsyn” and the “proselytizer Leibov” publicly by the cruelest means possible, demonstrated that the anxieties of Judaization remained rampant in Imperial Russia. Without a doubt, the repeated decrees of 1740⁷⁹⁷ and 1742⁷⁹⁸ banishing the Jews from the Russian Empire, except for those “who wished to accept the Christian faith of the Greek rite”, were undertaken in light of the tangible threat of proselytism, stemming from the Jewish communities in the west of the Empire, of which the Voznitsyn-Leibov case connoted for the authorities. Despite the stratagem of the Jewish population’s expulsion being economically maleficent for Ukraine and Belarus, as per the result of the communities’ banishment over the previous decades⁷⁹⁹, the religious predisposition

⁷⁹⁵ Ibid.; Ibid.

⁷⁹⁶ Yandex dictionary: <http://slovari.yandex.ru>

⁷⁹⁷ The Complete Collection of Laws of the Russian Empire, from 1740 to 1743 (1830). First edition. Saint Petersburg. Vol. 11, No 8169.

⁷⁹⁸ Ibid., No 8673.

⁷⁹⁹ Within a year from the implementation of the royal edict ordering for the banishment of the Jews from Ukraine in 1728, Hetman of Left-Bank Ukraine Daniil Apostol appealed to

prevailed over pragmatic considerations when a threat to the Orthodox faith emerged, even through an isolated incident.

Investigation of the Judaizer Sect in Kazan 1748-1749

The question of heretical movements practicing Judaism or professing elements of the Jewish law, such as the “Judaizers” and the “Sabbatarians”, sprung up periodically in the markedly Christian Orthodox Russian state throughout the 15th-19th centuries. This period of Russian history saw a number of judicial processes aimed at persecuting Jewish individuals for proselytizing their faith and Russians for apostating from Orthodoxy. In 1748, when the gruesome conclusion of the Voznitsyn-Leibov case was still fresh in the public consciousness, yet another investigation aimed at exposing an alleged Judaizing sect was launched in the city of Kazan. Without a doubt, the echoes of the preceding high-profile investigation, which exposed a retired Navy captain’s apostasy to Judaism, were manifested in the course of the judicial proceedings ten years later.

The documents pertaining to the case of the Kazan Judaizers were initially archived at the Secret Expedition of the first department of the Governing Senate in Saint Petersburg, and are currently stored at the Russian State Archive of Early Acts in Moscow⁸⁰⁰. As follows, the investigation was launched in February 1748 based on the testimony of Timofei Nesterov, a man convicted for tax evasion, to the Kazan Provincial Office, who during questioning made a claim that the ratmann of the Kazan Magistrate Grigory Kaftannikov and a retired soldier of the Kazan Admiralty Makar Sergeev with their wives “practiced the Jewish law in secret”. Nesterov claimed that the men were circumcised, kept Jewish religious literature in their homes and enticed Christians to Judaism, including his acquaintance Nikita Ivanov with his wife and two sons, and himself⁸⁰¹. The declarant asserted that while he was initially attracted to their teachings, he rejected their “heresy” and “remained in the Christian law”. Ivanov and family, however, were successfully lured into the Judaizing circle by the efforts of the mentioned individuals. Appropriately, the Kazan Provincial Office immediately sent a report based on Nesterov’s testimony to the Chancellery of the Governing Senate in Moscow⁸⁰². The highest administrative body of the Russian government reacted with a predictable

Saint Petersburg to allow Jewish merchants to trade fairs in Little Russia on par with other foreigners. In *The Complete Collection of Laws of the Russian Empire, from 1728 to 1732 (1830)*. First edition. Saint Petersburg. Vol. 8, Pg. 14.

⁸⁰⁰ The archival documents pertaining to the case were published in Feldman D. (1999): *“The Unknown Investigation of the Kazan Judaizer Sect”*. Publications of the Hebrew University: History. Culture. Civilization. No. 2 (20). Moscow. Pg. 296-323.

⁸⁰¹ Feldman D. (1999): *“The Unknown Investigation of the Kazan Judaizer Sect”*. Publications of the Hebrew University: History. Culture. Civilization. No. 2 (20). Moscow. Pg. 306-307; The Russian State Archive of Early Acts. Fund 248, Anagraph 113, Case 169: *“Of the Sect of Judaizers in Kazan”*. Document 1, Pg. 1-2.

⁸⁰² Ibid.; Ibid.

perseverance: it ordered to apprehend the 8 offenders immediately (each listed by name) and have them delivered to Moscow “shackled and guarded by solders”, which was implemented a few weeks later⁸⁰³. It is interesting to note that Kaftannikov, far from a low ranking official of the town’s administration was being charged with apostasy - according to the regulations of the Kazan magistrate, the ratmann was elected from the city’s oldest families⁸⁰⁴.

Once the suspected apostates were delivered to Moscow, the Chancellery physician inspected the men of the group, in order to determine whether they were circumcised. The result of the inspection was reported as negative⁸⁰⁵. Following the examination of the report, the Senate determined that further inquiry into the case was required, because “the detainees had not been cross examined on the nature of the charges and the relationship to each other”⁸⁰⁶. Moreover, missing was the information from the local priests on whether the Kaftannikov and Sergeev families had conducted the “Communion of the Holy Mysteries and confessions during all the years”⁸⁰⁷. Hence, the Senate ruled to have the accused sent back to the authority of the Kazan Provincial Office, along with the documented materials of the investigation, in order to have the case investigated further, conjointly with “a member of the clergy”⁸⁰⁸. As follows, for a definite resolution to the cases involving apostasy from Christianity, the participation of the representatives from the Russian Orthodox Church was mandatory.

Before the transfer of the suspected apostates back to Kazan had been implemented, in March 1748 the Senate reported on the development of the investigation to the Most Holy Governing Synod⁸⁰⁹. The report requested of the Synod to issue an edict to the bishop of Kazan, requiring the appointment to the case of a “spiritual persona”, or a clergy member. From the consequent report of the Chancellery notifying the Senate of the transfer of Kaftannikov and Sergeev families to Kazan, it becomes known that a number of Moscow’s governmental institutions had been consigned to the case: the Military Chancellery was required to send 12 soldiers under the command of a “renowned officer”, who was to be instructed by the Senate Chancellery on the proper conduct of the conservation of prisoners on the road; the Chamber of Agronomy was to

⁸⁰³ Ibid., Pg. 208; Ibid., Document 2, Pg. 1.

⁸⁰⁴ Soloviev S. (1873): *“The History of Russia from the Ancient Times”*. Public Benefit Fellowship, Saint Petersburg. Vol. 16, Pg.

⁸⁰⁵ Feldman D. (1999): *“The Unknown Investigation of the Kazan Judaizer Sect”*. Publications of the Hebrew University: History. Culture. Civilization. No. 2 (20). Moscow. Pg. 306-307; The Russian State Archive of Early Acts. Fund 248, Anagraph 113, Case 169: *“Of the Sect of Judaizers in Kazan”*. Document 3, Pg. 1-2.

⁸⁰⁶ Ibid.; Ibid.

⁸⁰⁷ Ibid.; Ibid.

⁸⁰⁸ Ibid.; Ibid.

⁸⁰⁹ Ibid. Pg. 306; Ibid., Document 3, Pg. 1.

provide 8 horses for the transfer; the Office of the Treasury was to allocate the funds for the travel supplies for the 6 prisoners, while the remaining supplies were to be paid by ratmann Kaftannikov⁸¹⁰. In this document, the profession of Timofei Nesterov is revealed – he was a merchant, engaged in salt trade. Likewise, the professions of the accused were also stated: the retired soldier Sergeev was engaged in carpentry, while ratmann Kaftannikov also owned a clothing shop in the center of Kazan⁸¹¹.

The next stage of the investigation lasted from April 1748 to January 1749, and was concluded by a detailed report by the Kazan Provincial Office to the Chancellery of the Governing Senate in Moscow, written by abbot Ioannikii, whom the Diocese of Kazan assigned to lead the investigation⁸¹². The lengthy duration indicates the rigor applied to the investigative activities, involving the participation of the numerous clergymen of various posts and ranks. The report opens by stating the results of the search for “Jewish literature” – in the homes of Kaftannikov, Sergeev and Ivanov such literature was not discovered. The inspection of the men by a member of the clergy, conducted to determine whether they were circumcised “in accordance with the Jewish law”, produced the same result as the inspection of the physician in Moscow – negative. Furthermore, during the cross-examinations, none of the suspected apostates admitted to having practiced Judaism, keeping Jewish literature or luring Christians to Judaism. The three men, their wives and children did admit to knowing each other and to have visited each other’s homes, yet claimed to have nothing to do with Judaism. Moreover, each of the accused professed to be law abiding Christians and swore to have conducted the Communion of the Holy Mysteries and the confessions with their priests, stating the churches they visited and the names of their priests as proof. Consequently, all of the named priests of the Kazan churches did in fact confirm the truthfulness of these statements⁸¹³.

In respect of the findings, Timofei Nesterov was questioned by abbot Ioannikii in order to determine how, when and from whom did he find out that Kaftannikov and the group kept the Jewish law. Nesterov declared that three years had passed since he visited Ivanov’s home, who in front of his wife and two children conveyed to him that ratmann Kaftannikov and soldier Sergeev, along with their wives and children, practiced the Jewish law⁸¹⁴. For the purpose of “knowledge”, Nesterov agreed to visit the homes of Kaftannikov and Sergeev, both of whom “revered the Jewish law over the Christian law” and taught him how to read a Hebrew prayer. Kaftannikov wrote down the prayer in Russian letters and gave it to Nesterov, and although he could not produce this paper to the examiner because “he lost it”, Nesterov recounted the prayer from memory: “Barug, ata, adanai, elyugenu, melon, allan, asher, kidashenu, bemits, vitiv, vedevatu, at”. It must be said that the given passage, stated by Nesterov, does in fact entail the beginning of a

⁸¹⁰ Ibid., Pg. 311; Ibid., Document 4, Pg. 1-2.

⁸¹¹ Ibid; Ibid.

⁸¹² Ibid., Pg 313; Ibid., Document 6.

⁸¹³ Ibid., Pg. 314-315; Ibid., Pg. 2-5.

⁸¹⁴ Ibid., Pg. 315; Ibid., Pg. 3.

Jewish prayer, with the exception of some of the words being wrong or incomplete. The segment of the prayer translates to English in the following manner: “Blessed are you, Lord, our God, the king of the universe, who hallows us through the commandments and commands us...”⁸¹⁵. Nonetheless, Nesterov maintained that he rejected the heretical teachings of Kaftannikov and Sergeev and remained a practicing Christian. To the question of why he did not report on the Judaizers for so long (3 years), Nesterov replied that after his meeting with them, he left to the Ural Mountains for business to purchase salt, where he was arrested for tax evasion and brought back to Kazan. Finally, Nesterov was asked if he could provide any additional evidence to his claims, to which he replied that he could not, for when Kaftannikov and Sergeev taught him the Jewish law and compelled him to get circumcised just as they were, no witnesses were present⁸¹⁶.

In another round of the interrogation of the accused by abbot Ioannikii, each of the three men repeatedly swore against Nesterov’s allegations, stating that they do not keep the Jewish law, nor did they try to convey it onto Nesterov. According to Kaftannikov, Sergeev and Ivanov, Nesterov’s claims against them were “unjustified slander”. Moreover, they stated unanimously that Nesterov had never been a guest in their homes. Nonetheless, Nesterov firmly maintained his position, claiming in response that Ivanov did in fact bring him to Sergeev’s home for instruction in the Jewish law, and that Kaftannikov had kept the Jewish law for at least the past three years⁸¹⁷.

Upon the consideration of the questioning versus the evidence unraveled by the investigation, abbot Ioannikii’s found Nesterov’s accusations of Kaftannikov, Sergeev and Ivanov families of the apostasy from Christianity and Judaic practice to be “false and dark slander”⁸¹⁸. Accordingly, the Kazan Provincial Office dropped all of the charges against the wrongfully accused, ordered for their immediate release and permitted Kaftannikov to retain his position as the ratmann of the Kazan magistrate. Abbot Ioannikii went so far as to suggest that Nesterov slandered against Kaftannikov out of “spite” for being on the board of the magistrate, the institution that charged him with tax evasion. By accusing Kaftannikov of apostasy, Ioannikii continued, Nesterov tried to “ruin” the ratmann, hoping that by doing so, the tax evasion charges brought against him would be dropped and he would be released from custody. The slander against Sergeev and Ivanov was avowed out of “some kind of a grudge”⁸¹⁹.

⁸¹⁵ Washofsky M. (2001): *“Jewish Living: A Guide to Contemporary Reform Practice”*. University of American Hebrew Congregations publishing, New York. Revised Ed., Pg. 215.

⁸¹⁶ Feldman D. (1999): *“The Unknown Investigation of the Kazan Judaizer Sect”*. Publications of the Hebrew University: History. Culture. Civilization. No. 2 (20). Moscow. Pg. 316; The Russian State Archive of Early Acts. Fund 248, Anagraph 113, Case 169: *“Of the Sect of Judaizers in Kazan”*. Document 6, Pg. 4.

⁸¹⁷ Ibid.; Ibid.

⁸¹⁸ Ibid., Pg. 317; Ibid., Pg. 5.

⁸¹⁹ Ibid., Pg. 319; Ibid., Pg. 7.

Reasoning on the sort of punishment Nesterov deserved to receive for making the false accusations, abbot Ioannikii cited a number of edicts, which in his opinion pertained to the case. Firstly, the abbot referred to the Council Code of 1649, the first section of which stipulated for the death by the means of burning to anyone who blasphemes against Jesus Christ, the Virgin Mary, or the Saints⁸²⁰ – for being found guilty of committing these crimes, the retired navy captain Alexander Voznitsyn was burned at the stake in Saint Petersburg ten years earlier. Ioannikii referred to this law as a prerequisite to his consequent citation of chapter 7, section 31 of the Council Code, which stipulated: “If someone purposely slanders against another person and it is proven that the person slandered against is innocent, the informer is to receive the same kind of punishment that the accused would have received if their guilt would have been proven⁸²¹. Furthermore, the abbot continued, chapter 22, section 13 of the Code stated: “Those thieves that conspire malicious affairs in order to deceive, are to be punished by execution”⁸²². Another citation referenced a law enacted by Peter the Great, which stipulated for the death sentence for the offenders, who upon being wrongfully convicted, informed on others with the intention of having the charges brought against them dropped⁸²³. Finally, Nesterov’s guilt was aggravated by the fact that he did not report of the apostasy of the alleged Judaizers for 3 years, while according to the law entitled “On the Great Deeds”, treason (including religious) was to be reported within 3 days from the time of its discovery⁸²⁴.

Based on the jurisdiction cited above, the Kazan Provincial Office determined the following sentence for Timofei Nesterov: for the “false accusations” – punishment by whipping; for slandering against the Kazan citizens on their alleged Judaizing – death by burning⁸²⁵, for if Kaftannikov and the group were found guilty, they would have received the same kind of punishment. The verdict was sent to the Senate in Moscow for its

⁸²⁰ Abramovich G., Mankov A. (1987): *“The Council Code of 1649: Text, Commentaries”*. Institute of History of USSR, Leningrad. Pg. 15.

⁸²¹ Feldman D. (1999): *“The Unknown Investigation of the Kazan Judaizer Sect”*. Publications of the Hebrew University: History. Culture. Civilization. No. 2 (20). Moscow. Pg. 318; The Russian State Archive of Early Acts. Fund 248, Anagraph 113, Case 169: *“Of the Sect of Judaizers in Kazan”*. Document 6, Pg. 6.

⁸²² Ibid.

⁸²³ The Complete Collection of Laws of the Russian Empire, from 1723 to 1727 (1830). First edition, Saint Petersburg. Vol. 7, No 4434.

⁸²⁴ The Complete Collection of Laws of the Russian Empire, from 1728 to 1732 (1830). First edition, Saint Petersburg. Vol. 8, No 5528.

⁸²⁵ Feldman D. (1999): *“The Unknown Investigation of the Kazan Judaizer Sect”*. Publications of the Hebrew University: History. Culture. Civilization. No. 2 (20). Moscow. Pg. 318; The Russian State Archive of Early Acts. Fund 248, Anagraph 113, Case 169: *“Of the Sect of Judaizers in Kazan”*. Document 6, Pg. 6.

approval, as the implementation of the punishment required the signature of the Empress. Until then, Nesterov was to remain in the custody of the Kazan magistrate.

Whether or not Nesterov was finally executed is unknown. The only other document at the Russian State Archive of Early Acts pertaining to the case is an instruction sent by the Senate to its chancellery on October 6, 1749 requesting to locate and archive the materials of the investigation⁸²⁶; by this time the case had already been closed. Nevertheless, taking into consideration the severity of the crime committed, it is more likely than not that the verdict had not been implemented, for an extraordinary event such as a public burning would have been well documented. Moreover, during the reign of Elizaveta Petrovna (1741-1762) no death sentences of any kind had been issued⁸²⁷. Most probably, Nesterov was sent to a convent, where he spent the rest of his life.

Although it was determined that Nesterov slandered against the residents of Kazan in the hopes of obtaining freedom and out of a personal grudge against the accused, his source of knowledge of the Jewish prayer in the Hebrew pronunciation remains a mystery. There is no record indicating the existence of a Jewish community in Kazan at the time, and since Elizaveta's edict of 1742, Jewish merchants were also officially barred from entering the Russian Empire⁸²⁸. Nonetheless, could it be that Jewish rituals were practiced in Kazan in great secrecy after all? This question remains open. In any case, it can be firmly stated that Judaism, but not Jews per se, had a direct influence on the course of the events in Kazan in the middle of the 18th century. It is worth noting that in the same century, the neighboring Saratov province became one of the centers of the Sabbatarian sect, which professed various principles of Judaism.

For the purpose of this research, it is not of a principal importance that a "Judaizer heresy" as such was not found in Kazan, but rather that in order to absolve himself of charges, a convict accused a man of authority with committing one of the gravest crimes – of the apostasy from Christianity to Judaism. It is likely that Nesterov was aware of Voznitsyn's and Leibov's execution; accordingly the event may have given him the idea to make this kind of a denunciation. Furthermore, the method of the investigation of a potential heresy closely followed the proceedings of the Voznitsyn-Leibov case, with the procedures becoming precedent and being later utilized in relation to the Sabbatarian movement and other non-Orthodox fractions.

⁸²⁶ Ibid., Pg. 322; Ibid., Pg.6

⁸²⁷ Mironov B. (2003): *"The Social History of Russia During the Imperial Period: XVIII – Beginning of XX"*. Bulanin publishing, Saint Petersburg Vol. 2, Pg. 27

⁸²⁸ The Complete Collection of Laws of the Russian Empire, from 1740 to 1743 (1830). Typography of the Chancellery of His Imperial Majesty, Saint Petersburg Saint Petersburg. First edition. Vol. 11, No 8673.

Conclusion

The central aim of the research was to address religious altercations between Jews and Orthodox Christians in the Ruthenian lands during the Early Modern Period. The subject has been studied through the examination of some of the most momentous instances of proselytism and apostasy that transpired between Christians and Jews during this era, which had been depicted in polemical works, chronicles, correspondence, legal documents and criminal cases. Going beyond the boundaries of the traditional historiography, which predominantly consigned Jews as the victims of zealous proselytism and forced conversions imposed by the dominant Christian realm, within the framework of the presented dissertational research, the adherents of Judaism appear as ideologically motivated parties that were congruently involved in the dissemination of their faith amongst the Orthodox faithful. In that regard, an argument is put forward on the intolerance of the Jews in the Russian controlled territories during the Early Modern period being based not on racial chauvinism, but rather impelled by a religious contention and the anxieties of 'Judaizing'. This predisposition is demonstrated by the keenness of both the Russian State and Church on welcoming the Jews who baptized into Orthodoxy within their geographical and spiritual domains as equals, and even granting generous privileges for their embracement of the Christian faith. Moreover, in light of the threat of Jewish proselytism, the apprehension of which is found across the ecclesial polemics and the legislative proclamations of the time, the act of Jewish conversion to Christianity came to symbolize the ideological triumph of the Church over the Synagogue.

Whilst it was forbidden for the adherents of Judaism to reside on the territory of the Russian state throughout the Early Modern period, the Orthodox literature of the time is almost completely void of 'real life' persons of the Jewish faith. Rendering of the Jews in sermons and polemical writings is predominantly based on their biblical imagery, the contention against which is constructed based on their denial of the divine and messianic status of Jesus Christ. A few notable exceptions are the late 15th century tractates and epistles of Monk Savva, Josef Volotsky and Archbishop Gennady, which assert that the 'heresy of the Judaizers' was instigated by a Jew named Zacharia Skara (Skhariya), who arrived to Novgorod from Kiev in 1470 and effectively proselytized Judaic teachings amongst the Orthodox faithful of Muscovy. Although the actual existence of his persona is a matter of dispute, Bruckus and Taube had brought forward considerable literary evidence identifying Zacharia the heresiarch as a Jewish Kievan scholar Zacharia ben Aharon ha-Kohen, who copied and anointed a number of philosophical and astronomical texts in the corresponding time period. The denial of the Jewish trace in the spread of the Judaizer heresy in Novgorod and Moscow is predominantly based on the perception of Judaism being a non-proselytizing religion on the one hand, and on the other on the reluctance to accept the possibility that amongst the high clergy and nobility there could have been those who rejected the dogmas of Christianity in favor of Judaic philosophies. Yet, while the writings of a prominent contemporaneous Kiev Rabbi Moses ben Jacob ha-Goleh, for whom the aforementioned Zacharia had copied texts of a mystical nature, contain elements of a Kabbalistic eschatology which stress the importance of proselytes for the advent of the Messianic age, the questions pertaining to the timing of the end of the world were likely to serve as the grounds for the initial impulse of attraction of the Orthodox clerics to the cross-confessional communiqué with the erudite Jews. Thus, in

this study it has been asserted that while the Judaizer heresy embodied a deliberate attempt at the conversion of Russia's religious and political elite to Judaism (or elements thereof) by the Kabbalists of Kiev, this episode materialized age-old anxieties of the existential threat of Jewish proselytism and inherently caused the Church to cultivate practical mechanisms for the protection of the Orthodox faith from eccentric encroachments. Accordingly, there can be little doubt that the episode had a direct impact on the consequent categorical intolerance of the Jewish presence on the Russian soil, for as far as the Church intellectuals and the State officials were concerned, Jews living side by side with Christians constituted a principal danger to the Orthodox establishment.

By exposing the problems of religious identity in the emerging Russian state, the ideological battle with the Judaizers provided the impetus for the creation of such vertices of the Russian Orthodox heritage as the first complete Slavonic codex of the Bible, commissioned by the aforementioned principal opponent of the heresy archbishop Gennady, as well as of the first Russian theological treatise "*The Enlightener*" by abbot Josef Volotsky. Nonetheless, lacking effective institutes for control of the parishioner consciousness, as compared to those established by the Catholic Church, the Orthodox hierarchs insisted on the intervention of the royal authorities into the matter. By demanding the death penalty for the Judaizers, whom Volotsky categorized not only as heretics but as factual apostates from Christianity to Judaism, the abbot sought to prevent the catastrophe of the religious and cultural division in the fragilely united Russian society. For the first time in the history of Russia, the punishment for a crime committed against the Church – namely the apostasy to Judaism and the proselytization thereof – was the death penalty by the means of burning at the stake. It must be noted that the cruel punishment generally achieved the desired effect: the unity of the Church was restored, the threat of Judaizing was eradicated, the heretical fractions were forced into deep hiding, and the disoriented clergy and laity were comforted. In the development of legal thought, the need to protect the faith from encroachments was anchored not only in the canonical law, but also received a juridical verification in the State legislation. Thus, when Russia's first comprehensive set of laws was codified through the Council Code of 1649, the death sentence to apostates and proselytizers of other faiths by the means of burning was stipulated in its very first clause.

The analogous fiery auto-da-fe was executed in 1738, when by the orders of Empress Anna Ioannovna the retired navy captain Alexander Voznitsyn was sentenced to death by burning at the stake for "blasphemy against Christ, the rejection of the true Christian law and the adoption of the Jewish faith" along with his Jewish 'mentor', tax farmer Boruch Leibov. This act demonstrates that the anxieties of Judaization remained acute in the Russian State well into the late Early Modern period. Evidently, the conversion of a Russian nobleman to Judaism through the efforts of a prominent Jewish philanthropist could not have been perceived as anything less than disturbing by Russia's Orthodox faithful. For the purpose of this study, it is not of a principal importance whether Voznitsyn actually apostated from Christianity and embraced the Jewish faith under Leibov's spiritual guidance, although the fact of the captain's circumcision, coupled with the implicating testimonies of his wife and certain other material evidence, do not permit for the exclusion of such a possibility. In a similar vein, despite the ensuing investigation of the Judaizing sect of Kazan in the 1740s having been concluded by the acquittal of the accused, the knowledge of a Jewish prayer in a nearly correct Hebrew

pronunciation by their denouncer, who claimed that it had been taught to him by the members of the group, suggests the possibility of a concealed Judaic practice. What is imperative is that in both cases, the authorities reacted to the accusations of 'Judaizing' with the most attentive, thorough investigations, on par with matters of national security. Thus, the involvement of the country's central ecclesial and governmental institutions in the case proceedings, including the Most Holy Governing Synod, the Ruling Senate, the Office of Secret Investigations, and the monarch herself, indicate that Voznitsyn's transgression measured up to a crime against the State. Moreover, there can be little doubt that the incident connoted to the authorities that from the Jewish population in the western regions of the Empire (the former territories of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth) stemmed a tangible threat of the proselytization of their faith. Even though the previous attempts of central government to limit the Jewish settlement in Ukraine and Belarus proved to be detrimental for the region's economy, the religious predisposition prevailed over pragmatic considerations. As far as the Russian authorities were concerned, tolerance of another faith could not have been endured if the representatives of that faith were trying to impose it upon others. Thus, the causality between Boruch Leibov's conviction for proselytism and Her Imperial Majesty's adoption of the nominal decrees ordering for the expulsion of the Jews from the Russian Empire, issued repeatedly in 1740 and 1742, cannot be underestimated. Notably, the decrees stipulated that those Jews, who "wished to accept the Christian faith of the Greek rite", were to be permitted to remain on Russian soil. The very fact that the conversion to Orthodoxy presented an individual of the Jewish ethnicity with a legitimate opportunity to integrate into the Russian society emphasizes that the antipathy of the Russian authorities towards adherents of Judaism during the Early Modern period was based strictly on religious grounds. Accordingly, it follows that while the conversion of a Christian Orthodox individual to Judaism was categorically unacceptable for the hierarchs of the Russian Church and State, as the embracement of the most principally contending religion by their flock not only undermined their authority but also challenged the very truths of Christianity, the conversion of a Jew to Orthodoxy was a matter of a principal ideological significance. More so, it was encouraged, welcomed and rewarded by substantial benefits.

The policy of permitting Jewish settlement on the Russian territories based on the condition of the conversion to Christianity began to be endorsed about a century earlier, when during the course of the recurrent Russo-Polish wars, a considerable number of the Polish-Lithuanian Jews were taken captive by the Russian army. While the subsequent peace agreements stipulated for their release, a larger number of the Jewish captives chose to accept baptism and settle in the Russian State than those who remained devoted to Judaism and returned home to their communities. Moreover, the archival records reveal numerous cases of a voluntary migration of the Polish-Lithuanian Jewry to Russia throughout the 17th century, which inevitably constituted the assumption of the Orthodox faith. The analysis of the corresponding clerical records and the sources of a personal origin (the correspondence between the members of the high clergy) has led to the conclusion that the Jew-turned-Christian neophytes had a very limited, and often utterly absent comprehension of the nature of the "Orthodox Greco-Russian faith". During the process of the compulsory instruction ahead of the Christening ceremony, the Jews were taught only the basic postulates and prayers of Orthodoxy. Accordingly, given that the

conversion presented the possibility of obtaining financial support from the State, provided for the various social benefits such as exemptions from taxation and conscription, as well as significantly broadened career perspectives, it is pertinent to postulate that amongst the ranks of the Jews who chose to embrace Christianity and settle in the Russian State, there was a significant number of individuals who were driven by the perspectives of comfort and economic well-being rather than by spiritual convictions. In that context, rampant were the allegations of baptized Jews being involved in 'Judaizing' activities – that is practicing Judaism in secret and enticing Christians into their faith.

For the purpose of the study, therefore, the Jews are principally considered as actors who made the decision to convert to Christianity based on their personal set of values, individual life circumstances and ideological convictions. By assuming such a standpoint, the aim is not to abate the enormity of forced conversions, the practice of which had been analyzed based on the example of its systematic employment by the Cossacks during the rebellion against the Polish crown. Rather, the alteration of the research angle towards the study of the individual biographies of the Jews who chose to breakout from the bosom of Judaism and join the Orthodox realm, and the juxtaposition thereof with the internal processes that took place within the Jewish communal environment, allowed to place new issues at the center of the analysis of the phenomenon of Jewish conversion to Christianity. Thus it has been proposed that the contexts, which influenced the increase in the number of individuals who withdrew from the Jewish faith and became Christian in the second half of the 17th century, included but were not limited to the deterioration of the socio-economic conditions of the Jewish communities, the intensification of the Jewish-Christian contacts, and the upsurge of messianism and millennialism brought about by the ascent and desolation of the Sabbatian momentum. That being said, the examination of the individual cases of conversion of the Polish-Lithuanian Jews to Orthodoxy and immigration to Muscovy, the evidence of which survives across the various archival records, has indicated that the decision to undergo such a radical change in their lives included reasons of a personal nature, such as their marital relations, social origin, and professional appurtenance, amongst other. The choice to baptize into Orthodoxy rather than to embrace another Christian denomination may have been associated with the opportunity to leave the territory of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth and migrate to the Russian state, where Jewish communities did not exist. The willingness of the Russian authorities to accept baptized Jews into its domain cannot be overemphasized.

The perception of Jews in the Russian State discourse had been assessed by most historians as intrinsically negative, wherein no significant difference had been depicted between the adherents of Judaism and christened Jews. In those terms, the act of baptism was connoted as a repressive measure. Such conclusions were based predominantly on the analysis of the discriminative legislation enacted in relations to the Jews by the State authorities throughout the Early Modern period. Without disputing such an assessment of the general State policy tendencies towards the Jews, and in order to gain a more complete understanding of the formation of the conventional models of perception of Jews by the ecclesiastical and governmental authorities, taken into account must be the specifics of the apprehension of foreign faiths in Russia during the period in question. Moreover, the causal-investigatory connections between specific events (for the most part

conflictual situations) and the issuance of legislative acts must be given a prime consideration.

Upon baptizing into Orthodoxy, a Jew received a new name (at times a Russified version of their Jewish name), and acquired the status of a ‘newly christened Jew’, which usually accompanied them for the rest of their lives. For the most part, the connotations such as an “ex-Jew” or a “christened Jew” were not pejorative, but rather pointed to the ethnic origin of the individual. Concurrently, such a predisposition does not exclude the possibility of conflictual situations, in which a person could have been discriminated against due to having Jewish roots – particularly in regards to the accusations of ‘Judaizing’. Such instances, however, do not suggest the existence of particular anti-Semitic tendencies in Early Modern Russia, but rather point to the prevalent xenophobia towards foreigners and adherents of other faiths. In fact, the records attest to a highly favorable treatment of Jewish neophytes by the authorities. The involvement of baptized Jews in the affairs of the state also suggests the invalidity of the assertions of the existence of a robust anti-Semitism in the Russian State discourse. During the Early Modern period, the confessional factor dominated over the ethnic, and accordingly effected the perception of the adherents of the Jewish faith on the one hand, and the christened Jews on the other, by the Russian authorities and the general population alike.

While the ‘Jewish question’ was at the forefront of the Moscow endorsed Cossack uprising of 1648-1656 against the Polish crown, there is evidence to suggest that for the Cossacks too, the Jews principally embodied a religious rather than an ethnic grouping. According to the contemporaneous Jewish, Ukrainian and Polish sources, the rebellion was accompanied by the systematic pogroms of the Jewish communities in Ukraine and Belarus, during the course of which the Cossacks presented the Jews with the choice to convert to Christianity or else be killed. Thus, the Jewish chroniclers depicted the Orthodox Christian Cossacks as enemies who threatened their lives due to the religious hatred of Judaism, and accordingly formed an idealized, apologetic image of a holy community – its destruction was assessed as a test of faith, where the majority of its members chose martyrdom over betraying their religious heritage. While the chronicles’ authors downplayed the scale of the acceptance of baptism by their coreligionists, their narratives do contain the accounts of Jewish conversions to Orthodoxy, which are depicted judgmentally as the transgression of God’s commandments. In a similar vein, the chronicles of a Cossack origin depicted the Jews as being the irreconcilable enemies of Christianity, and elatedly account that due to their efforts, scores of Jews had accepted baptism under the threat of death. In that context, emblematical assertions were made that not a single Jew was left in Ukraine. The presence of Jewish names in the Cossack military registers suggests that it sufficed to change one’s religion to cease ‘being a Jew’ and gain acceptance by the rebels into the Orthodox society on practically equal terms. Thus it can be deduced that the contention of the Cossacks against the Jewish population of Ruthenia was fueled predominantly by religious animosity, where the act of baptism was connoted as a mode for safeguarding the Orthodox faith, and the demonstration that the Church, not the Synagogue, was in God’s favor.

Inquiry into the phenomena of proselytism and apostasy, so scarcely addressed in the context of the history of Jewish – Christian Orthodox relations in Early Modern Eastern Europe, encompasses a platform for a concurrent study of a vast array of aspects. A simultaneous exploration of the intersection of the confessional, geographic and social

boundaries leads into an area of omnifarious frontiers. Thus, scrutinizing a polysemantic social process such as the change of faith in a complex from a methodological point of view territory – the Polish-Russian borderlands, presents a unique approach to the study of this multicultural region. While the work presented a comparative analysis of the transmission of religious ideologies between the two most discernible confessional communities of the Early Modern Ruthenian lands, the problems of proselytism and apostasy in the Jewish and the Orthodox realms are, of course, not confined to this dissertational research. Further archival inquiry into the subject matter promises to yield a vaster understanding of the intricacy of the transmission and the alteration of faith.

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I declare that I have referenced all resources and aids that were used and assure that the paper is authored independently on this basis.

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