ply additional grist to the mills of those wishing to verify existing theories and others intending to develop additional theories in this sphere.

In concluding this brief overview, I would like to make a few points on the series as a whole. On the one hand, the value of these materials is indisputable. Most are unique contributions that have ushered new primary sources into the scholarly mainstream. But on the other hand, the analytical component of these publications is insufficient, and, as a result — in accounts of blood libel, say, or narratives on ethnic stereotypes in Latvia, Lithuania, and Georgia — the reader has to perform his or her own comparative analysis to pinpoint what is universal and what is unique in them. Also, articles in a given collection sometimes cover the same ground, which, although inevitable in that the authors are working with a single field archive, could have been minimized by some judicious editing. Presumably these features may be expected to change for the better over time. On the whole, though, all four collections will certainly be of great interest to historians and students of religion and will have much of value to offer to the ongoing development of academic Jewish Studies.

Zhanna Kormina, Alexander Panchenko and Sergei Shtyrkov. (Eds.). (2015). ***The Invention of Religion: Desecularization in the Post-Soviet Context (Izobretenie religii: Desekuliarizatsiia v postsovetskom kontekste).*** **St. Petersburg: Izdatel'stvo Evropeiskogo universiteta (in Russian). — 280 pages.**

This book is the result of the work of a brilliant and significant school of anthropologists that has formed around several important scholarly institutions in St. Petersburg: the Kunstkammer (the Museum of Anthropology and Ethnography of the Russian Academy of Sciences), the Pushkin House (the Institute of Russian Literature of the Russian Academy of Sciences), and the European University at St. Petersburg. While the contributors to the volume are not exclusively Petersburgers (there is a broad geographical representation here, from America to Armenia), the school itself is Petersburg-based. The book under review here is the second collection of articles this school has produced, and it is as interesting as the first one (Kormina, Panchenko, Shtyrk-

ov 2015). It is also worth nothing that individual contributors have also published their own monographs and significant articles in the recent past (L'vov 2011; Kormina 2012; Panchenko 2012; Shtyrkov 2013, 2015). This school is distinctive for its decisive dedication to the method of "thick description," a tendency toward meticulous methodological reflection (including the researchers' self-reflection), and thorough familiarity with contemporary theoretical trends in anthropology.

Moreover, the volume has been organized around a specific, clearly articulated and transparent theoretical approach and an equally well-defined conceptual framework that focuses on post-Soviet religion. In general, we can describe the volume's approach as that of constructivism, which is now widely accepted in the humanities internationally as wholly respectable, but which has not been as clearly articulated in Russia as elsewhere. This approach is connected with post-modernist sensibility (though not at all with the post-modernist agenda per se), with the broadly assimilated techniques of deconstruction, with skepticism toward classical schemas, with interest in speech practices, with the dismantling of boundaries between official, elite, popular, and everyday forms of discourse and behavior. This approach, *grosso modo*, stands in opposition to what we can broadly categorize as adhering to essentialism, that is, to asserting some kind of unchanging essence in a given cultural phenomenon (for example, religious tradition).

When applying this approach to post-Soviet religiosity, as these authors do, a certain general conception of the latter spontaneously takes shape; this can be seen even in the volume's title. We have a panorama of possible "inventions" before us — inventions of "one's own religion," and "one's own self." Let us look at the main characters in individual essays. Female temporary workers (*trudnitsy*) in Orthodox Christian convents interweave their own hopes and fears into the standard model of "obedience" in the course of serious work on oneself (Daria Dubovka); young Armenian intellectuals create a primordial Armenian-Aryan paganism and, contrary to all stereotypes, daringly impart to it a written form (Yulia Antonian); women who lay claim to a special gift of spiritual vision, record certain (supposedly "traditional") Altaic "epistles" of a (supposedly "traditional") Altaic religion that is set forth as the base for an oddly eclectic indigenous identity (Dmitri Arziutov); inhabitants of the Mari village of Tium-Tium attempt to find their place at the intersection of the in-

fluence of "traditional Mari religion" and local Orthodox structures (Ksenia Gavrilova); nativists from the "Anastasia" movement create an ecological utopia with a comprehensive program — from housekeeping methods to an understanding of distinctive spiritual space (Yulia Andreeva); Russian and Armenian Pentecostals construct an identity of individual holiness on the basis of images of "spiritual warfare" with global evil (Alexander Panchenko); and a tiny group of trans-Carpathian Protestants invents for itself — literally under the anthropologist's gaze — a new Jewish identity (Alexander Lvov).

These almost interchangeable verbs — to invent and to construct — impart rhythm and meaning to this entire collection. We are presented with many examples of what may be called, following Claude Lévi-Strauss in his *Pensée sauvage* — *bricolage*. In each essay we see how various types of protagonists — intellectuals (*intelligenty*), cultural and educational workers, and simple village dwellers — construct unexpected puzzles of lived religion. As a rule, they use ready-made elements already extant in their social environments, which when unpacked can reveal anything and everything — decomposing myths, prophetic dreams, ethnic phobias, Soviet stereotypes, post-Soviet hopes. At times what is already present is not enough, and then they need to really invent, and the more or less spontaneous, almost subconscious process of everyday *bricolage* is replaced by a fully conscious process of cultural engineering.

Daria Dubovka opens her essay with this statement: "Today's Orthodox monasteries are a paradise for constructivists," thereby announcing her own academic identity. It is possible that not all of the authors would agree with such a candid self-positioning, but, to some degree or other, they all seem to be in a researcher's paradise. This paradise is post-Soviet society in all of its fullness, in which, indeed, it has been necessary to reinvent an enormous number of things to varying extents — individual and collective identities, moral norms, life goals and strategies, and so on. And of course, new religions. Even if, as in the case of revived Orthodox monasticism, these religions stubbornly call themselves timeless and traditional. Here the innovation is not in the external, traditional tableau of cloistered life, but rather in the depth of emotional experience. As Dubovka shows, the resident of convents, who have come from a completely different, non-religious environment in a rush of neophyte insight or in flight from a life crisis, must on

a daily basis invent and recreate themselves, adapting the strong expectations of their egos to the monastic system of humility and obedience. And if this observation about innovation and construction can be applied to the great and "omnipresent" Russian Orthodoxy, then certainly it can be applied to numerically modest groups such as the Ukrainian charismatic Pentecostals that Catherine Wanner discusses, to Mari-El or Armenian "Pagans," or to the Russo-Ukrainian Judaizers. Even if in all of these instances everything looks like a "revival" or a "rebirth," we know (and the contributors demonstrate) that we are speaking here more about *reconstruction*, and every reconstruction involves modernizing the significance of the object of reconstruction.

And one further observation: what unifies the majority of the religious inventions described in this volume is resistance to the "System," to some sort of alien and hostile force, and the attempt to display one's own alternative voice and scenario, which recalls, in a certain sense, the *hidden* or *alternative transcripts* of postcolonial discourse. It is precisely the search for "one's own voice" that is the initial trigger for active invention. As inheritors of the "secret code" of the Catacomb Church of the Soviet period, Orthodox strugglers against new identification technologies continue the tradition of a desperate battle with Big Brother, this time in the form of electronic monitoring of individuals. And, however paradoxical it may seem, this monitoring is firmly associated with the impersonal, neo-liberal West (Kathy Rousselet). Orthodox nuns and novices try to reconcile their "egos" with the system of absolute obedience that forced Michel Foucault to talk about the "totalitarianism" of Christian monastic institutions. Ethnographer-enthusiasts who are inventing an Armenian Neo-Paganism are challenging the Apostolic Church with its claims to cultural monopoly; the inventors of a "Mari traditional religion" attempt to liberate themselves from the weight of Orthodox pressure, while the inventors of an "Altaic traditional religion" do the same against the threatening pressure from another (also partially invented) official system, Buddhism, which is being promoted by local authorities (see the articles by Yulia Antonian, Ksenia Gavrilova and Dmitry Arziutov). An anti-"System" agenda is also absolutely characteristic of the "Anastasians," who are fleeing from the "Big Brother" of rational urban civilization to "Nature" (Yulia Andreeva). Conservative Pentecostals, as well as aggressive Orthodox opponents of individualism, wage an uncompromising spiritual bat-

tle with the Evil that is constantly generated by the liberal West, while charismatics from the Kyiv-based Embassy of God, founded by Sunday Adelaja, call us to "overthrow the kingdom of darkness," that is, modern secularism (Alexander Panchenko and Catherine Wanner, respectively). In all of these cases, a relatively small alternative initiative is set in opposition to some kind of hulking, domineering agent, real or imagined. It is interesting to note that Big Brother can assume different guises in different situations. It is also significant and natural that the "inventors" of small religions strive to identify a powerful opposing referent, from whom they win back space for new meanings (even if at times they set themselves a wholly maximalist eschatological task). At the end of the day, an alternative identity — some kind of distancing from the dominant cultural grammar — is characteristic of new forms of religiosity. In the post-Soviet, and, to some extent, in the post-colonial context, this is precisely how religiosity is invented — as a space for individual searches and group alternatives.

It is interesting that this model of "fighting the system" resonates with the methodology chosen for the most part by the contributors to this volume, specifically their distrust of stereotypical theoretical explanations. For example, Daria Dubovka takes issue with Ivan Zabaev on the question of an Orthodox economic ethos: she proposes that it is unlikely that such a thing exists de facto, or at least it cannot be deduced from a collection of theological or pastoral texts to create some sort of ideal model that could then be projected onto actual behavior (for example, the trope of obedience). It is not an ideal, abstract model that creates human reality, but people themselves (for example, the inhabitants of convents) create this reality from the material of ideas, emotions and instincts that they bring with them so as to relate them to the canonical matrix that they are presented with.

In this connection Michel de Certeau's analysis of the negotiations that people undertake with cultural norms and rules or with those who claim authority to set cultural norms is relevant. In Alexander Lvov's example of the Judaizers, these negotiations are conducted through "textual rationalism" (an adapted, individual reading of the Bible), which is compared with (and sometimes opposed to) the authority of "Judaic norms," represented by a rabbi who came from Israel. For Lvov, what is most important methodologically is how the authors export their expectations into the space of normative dissonances (in this case,

between the Torah and the Talmud). Ksenia Gavrilova is dissatisfied with earlier explanations of the Mari revival (in the works of Sergei Filatov, Boris Knorre, Victor Shnirelman, etc.), and particularly its classification as "Paganism" or "Neo-Paganism," in opposition to Christianity. It would seem that "Pagan" discourse creates an ideal model for the anti-System pathos of a rebellious minority. However, Gavrilova goes further: having assimilated the declarations of urban religion "entrepreneurs," she turns to the living voices of the residents of a single ordinary village. These voices strengthen, as it were, a second stage of deconstruction: at the level of everyday practices, the urban creation of a "Mari religion," with its visible systematization that imitates Christianity (in order to be capable of competing with it), becomes dubious. Her refined and careful micro-analysis demonstrates the lack of a fully resolved, informal equilibrium between competing and equally self-imposing systems — Christianity and the "Mari religion."

However, if we are to speak of one Big System whose pressure is palpable in all cases, it would be the collective memory of the Soviet past. Soviet habits, the Soviet *habitus*, Soviet mentality — for now this is the ineradicable store of material from which new forms of thinking and practice are molded. This Soviet material is not the only material, but it is probably the fundamental one; it permeates all the book's chapters. In the introduction, written by Zhanna Kormina and Sergei Shtyrkov, Soviet influence is conceptualized; this introduction is dedicated wholly to the "pre-history of post-Soviet desecularization." The authors refute widely known explanations for the increase in religiosity: for example, the idea that religion filled a "spiritual vacuum" after the fall of the USSR, or that it was needed to overcome general post-Soviet *anomie*. Risking some exaggeration, Kormina and Shtyrkov suggest something else: there was no break or rupture, but rather a gradual transition during which ideas and practices were re-formatted in the depths of late Soviet culture over the course of decades; ideas and practices reformulated in the spirit of desecularization came to fruition. To explain this, they refer to the concept of *recycling*, introduced by Sonja Luehrmann to capture precisely such a thorough transformation by exploring how entirely secular Soviet ideological tropes were gradually reconceptualized in a religious spirit, and their bearers (cultural and ideological workers) were transformed en masse into subjects of religious agency.

How exactly did this re-formatting take place? Kormina and Shtyrkov write: "As we want to demonstrate in this book, in actuality the groundwork for the religious enthusiasm of the beginning of the 1990's was laid during a prolonged process involving the legalization of religion during Soviet times through its localization in the sphere of 'culture.'" Using a variety of sources, they proceed to wonderfully and subtly demonstrate how, beginning in the 1960s, there was, if not a linear, then a hidden rehabilitation of religion by means of its "recoding" in the categories of museum heritage, its use in ideologemes related to culture, and its inclusion in a kind of reserve of national spiritual memory. In the late USSR, the need for something higher than the "everyday" was increasing, and religious meanings, converted into cultural or aesthetic meanings, as well as into markers of ethnic identity, were very a propos. Of course, there was also interest in the specifically religious dimension, outside the bounds of Soviet utilization of religion (as in the works of Soloukhin, Tarkovsky, etc., not to mention the religious quasi-underground itself). Nonetheless, these were exceptions: as Kormina and Shtyrkov demonstrate, the majority of "workers and creators of culture" were preoccupied with the "re-coding of religious symbols into the secular Soviet language" (for example, viewing a church building as an "artifact of the history and culture of the Russian people.")

Here is one more marvelous quote: "During the active modernization and urbanization of Soviet society, religion, as a component of life, began to be understood as an ethnographic archaism that was incompatible with the everyday life of the modern person. On the other hand, the frame of cultural heritage makes religion (or more accurately, the fragments of its external life) useful for society. And in the 1990s, museums became something like a store of stem cells for the future religious rebirth" (20).

In the 1990s, the need for a cultural and ethnic camouflaging of religion ended. The religious was latently prepared to become something publicly recognized. It became possible to speak of religion as religion, and of a church building precisely as a religious place and not merely as a museum or repository of national spirituality. Ideological workers (including teachers) could now replace their secular language with openly religious language. Precisely this is "desecularization": as described by Talal Asad, cited by the authors in their introduction, the imaginary border between the secular and the sacred becomes

moveable, and the prior status of religion as a sharply limited, semi-secret space hidden behind a tall fence is negated.

And now we get to the most interesting observation: the prohibitions are removed, the religious has the right to be "simply religious" rather than a hypostasis of something else (something "fantastical," "national," etc.) — but the flavor of Soviet interpretations does not disappear — it remains in the mentalities of the new believers, the new religious activists and even the priests themselves (as well as imams, shamans, "Neo-Pagan" priests, etc.). No full de-culturalization of religion is taking place. The bridal train of secular interpretations does not disappear. In my opinion, this is precisely the most significant aspect of post-Soviet desecularization — this ineradicable Soviet flavor that colors religion and its powerful ethnic and folk connotations; the collectivist overtones; the peculiar leftist conservatism; and the stubborn opposition to the modern, to liberalism, and to the West. Alexander Panchenko provides a summary of this Soviet background in his study of Pentecostals, specifically underlining the merging of the religious not only with (secular) concepts of literature and culture, but also with Soviet "forms of social discipline" (Komsomol and Party meetings, etc.).

In light of these ruminations, the book's conceptual framework becomes entirely clear. Let me reiterate: rather than a discussion of a religious "renaissance" that simply freed itself from atheist pressure and filled in lacunae in meaning and symbolic values, we have a discussion of precisely its "invention" — its construction from a set of secular Soviet interpretations mixed with new sources. Kormina and Shtyrkov do not discuss the latter in their introduction; their task is to show the genealogy and reveal the inherited substrate. The authors of the subsequent chapters analyze how new ideas and practices are built on this substrate, flowing forth onto the territory of the dissolved empire.

And here it turns out that all these various religious experiments, all of these curious attempts at *bricolage*, are essentially just one episode, one aspect of a large-scale re-formatting of an entire society and its inscription into the new frameworks — pluralist, consumerist, global, entailing a market economy; into newly rebuilt ideological topics; and into new frames of personal, individual identity. Some of the articles in this book address this ultimate, and methodologically extremely difficult to capture, restructuring of personality, since the invention of religion is a personal event — and an indicator of the invention

of a new "ego" from the old *homo sovieticus*. For example, in Catherine Wanner's essay, Ukrainian Pentecostals argue over a new interpretation of money and wealth within the categories of good and evil; the Russian-Armenian Pentecostals in Panchenko's contribution or the female Orthodox neophyte workers in Dubovka's essay search for a new *modus vivendi* in a changing world, and work to resolve difficult moral dilemmas and recreate themselves in accordance with newly conceived expectations.

In her excellent contribution, Daria Tereshina steps beyond religion proper into a wider space where she reveals the complex vicissitudes of the invention of identity. Her essay looks at Russian distributors for the marketing company Amway (an abbreviation of American Way). By addressing their speech practices, Tereshina analyzes how Amway's ethos of success and corporate solidarity — which was initially so foreign to the Russian mentality — forces people to fundamentally rethink their "selves." This transformation of subjectivity (understood in the framing of "personal growth") suggests a break or rupture with the past, and to some extent a break with their former social environment. However, if the norm is a desire to suppress the memory of earlier difficulties and traumas, in other situations an explicit therapeutic narrative of overcoming trauma, a "victory over oneself," the break of the old "self" and the creation of a new "self" is used.

Here we are presented with obvious associations with a religious conversion: even if people do not have direct, conscious references to such an analogy, their experience of transformation resembles a religious one. We reach an important conclusion: conversion is, perhaps, one of the central mental categories of post-Soviet societies. In the last quarter century we have seen millions of "conversions" in one sense or another, millions of examples of personal transformation. This has been just as evident in the religious sphere as in other spheres, and possibly even more pronounced. Conversion is always an invention of the self, and from this we have the inevitability and universality of the creation of adequate symbolic structures, including religions, from both old and new available material. For this reason, we can conclude that the book under review, which does not claim to present a comprehensive picture of post-Soviet religiosity (since it does not address many of its forms), "hits the nail on the head," and brings into focus a certain central characteristic not only of religion, but of the era in general.

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Nikolai Seleznyov. (2014). *Pax Christiana and Pax Islamica: On the History of Interconfessional Relations in the Medieval Middle East*. (*Pax Christiana et Pax Islamica: Iz istorii mezhkonfessional'nykh sviazei na srednevekovom Blizhnem Vostoke*). Moscow: Rossiiskii gosudarstvennyi gumanitarnyi universitet (in Russian). — 268 pages.

The monograph under review synthesizes the research of N. N. Seleznyov in the field of the constructive social and intellectual interplay of religious communities. The author bases his work on the study of historical experience as conveyed by original (Arabic) theoretical texts. Seleznyov publishes and analyzes sources that allow him to achieve a theoretical reconstruction of a situation of fruitful coexistence of religious communities in the broad cultural space of the Islamic world. This material provides a foundation for tracing the historical logic behind the construction of interrelations between confessional groups that are oriented around the value of tradition. The data on the historical experience of such interrelations was not sufficiently taken into consideration by earlier researchers. Many earlier studies focused on