

“TSAR AND GOD”  
AND OTHER ESSAYS IN  
RUSSIAN CULTURAL SEMIOTICS

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AND OTHER ESSAYS IN  
RUSSIAN CULTURAL SEMIOTICS

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# TSAR AND GOD: SEMIOTIC ASPECTS OF THE SACRALIZATION OF THE MONARCH IN RUSSIA

*B. A. Uspenskij and V. M. Zhivov*

"I finally got the boys so worked up that they demanded to see the major. But earlier that morning I'd borrowed the rascal [a knife] from my neighbor and I took it and tucked it away, you know, just in case. The major comes over, all in a rage. He's coming. Well, don't fear, my boys, I say. But they were so afraid their hearts sank right down into their boots. The major ran in, drunk. 'Who's here! What's going on! I am tsar and God!'

"As soon as he said 'I am tsar and God!'—I came forward," continued Luchka, "with the knife in my sleeve.

"No, your Excellency," I say, moving closer and closer to him, "no, that's impossible, your Excellency," I say, "how can you be our tsar and God?"

"Oh, so it's you, it's you," screamed the major. "The ringleader!"

"No, I say, (moving nearer and nearer all the time), no, I say, your Excellency, as you yourself probably know, our God, who is all-powerful and omnipresent, is one, I say. And there is also only one tsar, who is put over us all by God Himself. He, your Excellency, I say, is the monarch. And you, your Excellency, I say, are only a major—our boss, your Excellency, by the tsar's grace, I say, and by your own deserts."

"Wh-at-t-t-t!" he clucked, unable to speak, choking with anger; he was so surprised.

"That's how it is," I say, and suddenly throw myself at him and stick the knife right into his stomach, all the way in. Neatly done. He started to move but his legs only jerked. I ditched the knife.

"Look, I say, boys, lift him up now!"

"Here I'll make a short digression. Unfortunately, expressions like 'I am tsar and God' and many similar things were quite common among many of the commanding officers in the old days."

—F. M. Dostoevskii, *Notes from the House of the Dead*, chap. 8

The present study simultaneously belongs to literary studies and to social history, as well as to the history of culture and of political ideas. It concerns attitudes toward the tsar in Russia during various periods of Russian history,

and the linguistic—and more generally speaking, semiotic—means by which these attitudes were manifested. Obviously, this is connected to the history of political views. At the same time, insofar as we are speaking of the sacralization of the monarch, a series of problems necessarily arise which, generally speaking, belong to the sphere of religious psychology. We would like to show how differing attitudes toward the tsar correlate with various stages of Russian political and cultural history; how diverse aspects of Russian cultural life converged around this question; and how in different periods the very same texts could be interpreted as having very different content, as they related to the interests of the particular historical period.

From a certain moment the attitude toward the monarch in Russia assumed a religious character. This feature of Russian religious consciousness struck foreigners strongly. Isaak Massa, for example, wrote that Russians “consider their tsar to be a supreme divinity”<sup>1</sup>; and other writers repeat this as well. Thus in the words of Henrik Sederberg, the Russians “consider the tsar almost as God,”<sup>2</sup> and Johann Georg Korb remarked that Muscovites “obey their Sovereign not so much as citizens as much as slaves, considering him more God than Sovereign.”<sup>3</sup> But it was not only foreigners who testified to this. At the All-Russian Church Council of 1917-1918, the opinion was voiced that for the imperial period “one should not speak of Orthodoxy [*Pravoslavie*, literally, “correct glorifying”] but of glorifying the tsar (*ne o pravoslavii, a o tsareslavii*).”<sup>4</sup> The priestless Old Believers also characteristically declared that what differentiated their belief from Orthodoxy was that “there is no tsar in our religion.”<sup>5</sup>

Such statements will not seem tendentious if we recall that M. N. Katkov, for example, wrote, “For the people that constitute the Orthodox Church the Russian tsar is an object not only of respect, to which any legitimate power has the right to expect, but also of a holy feeling by right of his significance in the economy of the Church.”<sup>6</sup> Elsewhere, Katkov wrote, “The Russian tsar is not simply the head of state but the guardian and custodian of the eastern Apostolic Church which has renounced all secular powers and entrusted the tasks of its preservation and daily affairs to the Divinely Anointed One.”<sup>7</sup> In the words of Pavel Florenskii, “in the consciousness of the Russian people autocracy is not a juridical right but a fact, manifested by God and God’s mercy, and not a human convention, so that the tsar’s autocracy belongs to the category not of political rights but of religious dogma; it belongs to the sphere of faith and is not derived from extra-religious principles that consider social or governmental utility.”<sup>8</sup> “The truth of Orthodox tsars’ autocracy . . . is raised in some sense to the level of a tenet of faith,” explains the monarchist brochure *The Power of*



*Autocracy According to Divine Teaching and the Russian Orthodox Church.*<sup>9</sup> “Who does not know how we Russians look at our tsars and their children? Who has not felt that lofty feeling of ecstasy that overcomes Russians when they look upon the tsar or the tsar’s son? Only Russians call their tsar ‘the earthly God,’” wrote P. I. Mel`nikov-Pecherskii.<sup>10</sup>

How should we interpret these pronouncements? What is the origin of this tradition? Is it something ancient and indigenous or new to Russia? How did the deification of the monarch, something that so clearly suggests paganism, reconcile itself to a Christian outlook? These questions demand answers. Let us begin with chronology.

## I. THE SACRALIZATION OF THE MONARCH IN THE CONTEXT OF HISTORICAL AND CULTURAL DEVELOPMENT

### 1. *Early Russian Notions of State Power and the Beginning of the Sacralization of the Monarch*

**1.1.** Russian religious and political thought developed under the direct influence of Byzantium. It was precisely from Byzantium that the idea of the parallelism of tsar and God was borrowed. However, this idea in and of itself in no way presumes the sacralization of the monarch. Sacralization involves not only comparing the monarch to God, but the monarch’s acquisition of a special charisma, special gifts of grace due to which he begins to be seen as a supernatural being. The Byzantine texts that came to ancient Rus’ in Church Slavonic translations say nothing about this kind of perception.

The parallelism of the monarch and God as “mortal” versus “imperishable” tsar came to Russia with the work of the sixth-century Byzantine writer Agapetos (Agapit), which was well known to early Russia writers.<sup>11</sup> In the twenty-first chapter of his work Agapetos states that in his perishable nature the tsar is like all people, but that in his power he is like God; from this association of the tsar’s power with God’s it is concluded that the tsar’s power is not autonomous but God-given and therefore must be subordinated to God’s moral law. This chapter was included in the early Russian anthology *Bee (Pchela)*. In a copy of the fourteenth-fifteenth century the passage goes like this: “The tsar’s fleshly nature is equal to that of all humans, yet in power of rank [he is] like God Almighty, because there is no one higher than him on earth, and it is proper for him not to be prideful, since he is mortal, and neither to become enraged, since he is like God and is honored for his divine nature

(although he also partakes of mortal nature), and through this mortal nature he should learn to act toward everyone with simplicity."<sup>12</sup> The idea of a moral limitation on the tsar's power as a power derived from God is expressed here with complete clarity.<sup>13</sup>

Agapetos' juxtapositions are often encountered in early Russian writing. Thus in the Hypatian Chronicle in the story of Andrei Bogoliubskii's murder in 1175 we find an echo of his idea: "Although the tsar's earthly nature is like that of every man, the power of his rank is higher, like God;"<sup>14</sup> and the same words are found in the same place in the Laurentian and Pereiaslavl' Chronicles.<sup>15</sup> The same quotation is also found in Iosif Volotskii, both in a fragment of his epistle to the grand prince (which, generally speaking, represents an abbreviation of Agapetos' chapter)<sup>16</sup> and also in the sixteenth sermon of the *Enlightener* (*Prosvetitel'*).<sup>17</sup> In the *Enlightener* we find the monarch referred to directly as "the perishable (*tlennyi*) tsar." In proving that it is wicked to demand that God give account of the world's end, Joseph writes: "If you began to interrogate the earthly and fleshly tsar and to say: why didn't you do this the way I thought it should be done, or in the way I know; you would not have accepted bitter suffering, like an impudent, evil, proud and disobedient slave. And you dare to interrogate and to test the Tsar of tsars and Creator of everything . . ." <sup>18</sup>

In the Nikonian Chronicle Mikhail Tverskoi says to Baty: "To you, tsar, a mortal and perishable man, we give honor and obeisance as to one who has power, because the kingdom and the glory of this quickly perishing world is given you by God."<sup>19</sup> It is noteworthy that these words which one could also take as an echo of Agapetos' ideas are addressed to a non-Christian monarch; it is clear that the point in this case (as with the juxtaposition of a "mortal" and "imperishable" tsar) is connected to the notion of the divine sanction of all power,<sup>20</sup> the idea of the monarch's responsibility for what has been given into his care, but in no way concerning the ruler's special charisma.

Finally, Aleksei Mikhailovich (1629-1676) often referred to himself as a "perishable tsar" (*tlennyi tsar*). For example, in documents addressed to V. B. Sheremet'ev he wrote: "You know yourself how the great Tsar, the eternal, was pleased to be with us (*izvolil byt' u nas*), the great sovereign and perishable tsar, you [know this], Vasilii Borisovich, [who are] not a boyar for nothing . . . Not simply did it please God that we, great sovereign and perishable tsar, render honor to you and for you accept it. . . . Thus [it should be], according to God's will and our command, [that of the] great sovereign and perishable tsar . . ." <sup>21</sup> We find the same expression in his epistles to the Trinity-Sergius Monastery of 1661 announcing his victory over the Poles.

Here he refers to himself in the following way: "Faithful and sinful slave of Christ . . . seated on the tsar's throne of this transient world and preserving . . . the scepter of the Russian kingdom and its borders by God's will, the perishable Tsar Aleksei."<sup>22</sup>

The above characterized attitude to the monarch expressed in the appellation "fleshly tsar" is also clearly stated in the forty-first sermon of Nikon of the Black Mountain's *Taktikon*, which was well known in Rus'. In particular, in the excerpt from John Chrysostom there is a specific distinction made between divinely-established power as a principle and God's sanction of a particular ruler: "It is said there is no power but of God, and you ask if every prince is appointed by God. Nothing is said about that and I would not speak about any particular prince. But we shall speak about the principle that power has to exist and that some have to possess it and others have to be possessed by it, so as not to move about randomly, here and there, like waves . . . so don't say that there are no princes not installed by God. In the same way, when a wise man says that a bride is betrothed to a groom by God, it means that the marriage was created by God but not that He necessarily unites everyone alive with a wife, since we see some people living in sinful and unlawful marriage with each other, and we do not ascribe it to God."<sup>23</sup> There is an ample number of occasions in the ancient tradition when the tsar is called "god." However, until a particular period this label only occurs in a special context. The most well known example is the statement of Iosif Volotskii who, addressing tsars in *The Enlightener* (sixteenth sermon), says: "You gods and sons of the Most High, beware that you not be sons of anger and do not die as human beings and take the place of a dog in hell. Tsars and princes, heed this, and fear the horror of the Most High: it was written for your salvation, do God's will, accept his grace, because God put you in His place on the throne."<sup>24</sup> This is how M. A. D'iakonov interprets this passage: "Tsars are not only servants of the divine who have been chosen and placed on the throne by God; they themselves are gods, like people only in nature, but in power like God Himself. This is no longer a theory of the divine derivation of tsarist power but the utter deification of the tsar's person."<sup>25</sup> D'iakonov's opinion is suggestive, but does not accurately correspond to the true state of affairs, as it is the result of a mistaken reading of the text.<sup>26</sup>

First of all, it is necessary to note that most of the passage cited from *The Enlightener* does not belong to Joseph himself. The same words are repeated with greater or lesser accuracy in other old Russian texts, all of which are based on one common source, the "Sermon of Our Holy Father Vasilii, Archbishop of Cesarea, On Judges and Rulers," a monument apparently of Russian derivation,

sometimes ascribed to Metropolitan Kirill II (1224-1233). Here we read: "Heed, as it is written: you are gods and sons of the Almighty. Princes and all earthly judges are servants of God, about whom the Lord says, where I will be, there also will be my servant. Beware, and do not be the progeny of anger; being gods, do not die as human beings, and do not take the place of a dog in hell, as that is a place for the devil and for His angels, but not for you. For God Himself chose for you a place on earth and placed you up on the throne, giving you life and grace. Therefore be like fathers to the world; as it is written: princes of this world are truth."<sup>27</sup> With variations this text is reproduced in the *Scales of Righteousness* (*Merilo pravednoe*) and in Iosif Volotskii—both in *The Enlightener* and in the *Fourth Sermon on Punishments* (*Ob epitimiakh*).<sup>28</sup>

Until a certain period—precisely, before the eighteenth century—calling the tsar "god" is only encountered in this context, in which it carries a special meaning. Just what is this? Significantly—and this has escaped the attention of commentators on Joseph's text and the other cited works—the phrase "you are gods and sons of the Most High" (*bogi este i synove Vyshiago*) is a quotation from the eighty-first psalm, line 6.<sup>29</sup> But if this is so, first of all, the given usage goes beyond the Russian tradition alone, and secondly, we can define rather clearly the specific meaning put into these words. There is no doubt that both the authors and readers of the given texts knew the biblical source and hence would have understood them in the sense in which they found them used in the Psalter. And this meaning is precisely defined in the *Explanatory Psalter* (*Tolkovyi Psal'tyr*), which Iosif Volotskii and the other authors also certainly knew. The issue concerned earthly judges whose power over human fates made them comparable to God,<sup>30</sup> i.e., a functional comparison of tsar and God concerning power and the right to judge and make decisions. Understandably, this interpretation of the Psalm made its citation natural in texts of a didactic and juridical character, a category to which all of the above-cited monuments belong; moreover, the very appearance of this quotation in monuments concerning law indicates that this very interpretation of the Psalm was in mind.<sup>31</sup>

Hence the fact that early Russian texts testify to calling the tsar "god" by no means signifies the identity of God and tsar or some kind of actual similarity between them. The issue only concerned a parallelism between them, and the parallel itself only served to underscore the infinite difference between the earthly tsar and Heavenly Tsar. Both the power of the prince and his right to judge thus do not appear absolute at all, but delegated by God with strict conditions whose violation would lead to the complete disidentification of ruler and God, to someone God would renounce, condemn and overthrow.<sup>32</sup>

The Florentine Union and fall of Byzantium, as a result of which Russia found itself the single Orthodox kingdom (not counting Georgia, which was suffering from feudal divisions and played no part in the political arena), introduced a new element into Russian religious and political thinking. Significantly, the fall of Constantinople (1453) almost coincided with Russia's final overthrow of Tatar overlordship (1480). These two events were connected in Rus': at the same time as in Byzantium Islam triumphed over Orthodoxy, in Russia the opposite occurred—the victory of Orthodoxy over Islam. Thus Russia took the place of Byzantium and the Russian grand prince the place of the Byzantine basileus. This opened up new possibilities for a religious understanding of the Russian monarch.

The conception of Moscow as Third Rome defined the Russian grand prince as successor to the Byzantine emperor and at the same time put him in a position that had no direct precedent in the Byzantine model. The conception of Moscow as Third Rome was eschatological, and in this context the Russian monarch as head of the last Orthodox kingdom was endowed with a messianic role. In the *Epistle about the Sign of the Cross*, sometimes ascribed to the elder Filofei (Philotheus) of the Eleazarov (Yelizarov) Monastery, it says that “today's single holy Catholic apostolic eastern church shines more brightly than the sun in all the heavens, like Noah in the ark saved from the flood.”<sup>33</sup> For all of the importance of the Byzantine emperor for Byzantine religious life he had no such messianic role. Christianity and empire existed in Byzantium as connected but independent spheres, so that Orthodoxy could be considered separately from the Orthodox empire.<sup>34</sup> For this reason transferring the status of the Byzantine emperor onto the Russian monarch necessarily led to rethinking its status.

Starting with Vasilii II (the Blind) who ruled during the fall of Constantinople, Russian rulers were more or less consistently called “tsars,” that is, the way in which Byzantine emperors were referred to in Rus' (earlier such usage had merely been occasional).<sup>35</sup> In 1547 Ivan IV (the Terrible) became the crowned head of the kingdom, and the title of tsar, fixed by sacred rite, became an official attribute of the Russian monarch. In the Russian context this title had different connotations than in Byzantium. In Byzantium calling the emperor “basileus” (tsar) referred primarily to the imperial tradition; the Byzantine sovereign acted as legal successor to the Roman emperors. In Russia the title of the monarch referred primarily to the religious tradition, and to the texts in which God was called “tsar”; and in Russia the imperial tradition was not relevant.<sup>36</sup> Thus if in Byzantium the name tsar (basileus) was perceived as describing the office of supreme ruler (which metaphorically could be applied

to God), in Russia the same title was perceived, in essence, as a proper name, as one of the divine names; in these circumstances, calling a person a tsar could take on mystical meaning.

In this context the evidence of Russian grammatical works that described the writing of sacred words using an abbreviation mark (*pod titlom*) is extremely indicative of what was happening. In principle, the same word could be written with a "titlo" above or without one depending on whether it signified a sacred object or not. According to the oldest tradition, the word "tsar" would be written with a "titlo" only if it referred to God: "[The name] of the heavenly King, the creator of all creations visible and invisible is only [to be written] with a titlo, while the earthly tsar, even if he is holy, is to be written syllable by syllable, without a titlo."<sup>37</sup> In other texts, however, this use of the "titlo" was extrapolated onto the names of pious tsars: "Do write [the name] of the Heavenly King and a holy tsar with a titlo, but [when naming] an unlawful tsar write out all of the syllables without a titlo."<sup>38</sup> Clearly, such extrapolation presumes incorporating a pious tsar into the religious tradition, transferring the attributes of the Heavenly Tsar onto him. In his travel notes of 1607 Captain Margeret described the Russians' special perception of the title of tsar. According to him, Russians believe that the word "tsar" was created by God and not by men; accordingly, the tsar's title sets him apart from all others that lack this divine nature.<sup>39</sup>

Thus having taken the place of the Byzantine basileus, the Russian tsar, in the opinion of his subordinates, as well as his own, acquired special charismatic power. One might presume that this perception developed gradually and was not universal. However, it is very clear that the first Russian tsar, Ivan the Terrible, believed that he himself unconditionally possessed such special charisma. It was precisely this perception that led Ivan to believe that his actions were not liable to human judgment. "For whom do you place as judge or ruler over me?" he asked Prince Kurbskii.<sup>40</sup> The tsar's acts are not subject to review or in need of justification, just like those of God; to his subordinates the tsar acts as God, and it is only in his relations with God Himself that his human nature manifests itself.

"Why do you not agree to suffer from me, stubborn ruler, and inherit the crown of life?" he asks Kurbskii, demanding from him the same unthinking obedience as that which God demands.<sup>41</sup> Kurbskii on the other hand does not share this view of the tsar's power. In Ivan's excesses Kurbskii sees his departure from the ideal of the just tsar and his transformation from a pious monarch into a "torturer." For Ivan, to the contrary, these excesses may serve as the mark of his charismatic exceptionalism. No canon of charismatic

behavior existed, so that Ivan could interpret his new status as permission for complete license.<sup>42</sup>

This view of the tsar's power sharply contrasts with traditional views as presented in logically consistent form, for example, in Iosif Volotskii's seventh sermon from *The Enlightener*: "If there is a tsar ruling over people and that tsar is ruled by foul passions and sins, greed and anger, craft and falsehood, pride and frenzy, . . . lack of faith and blasphemy, such a tsar is not God's servant, but the devil's, not a tsar but a torturer . . . And you should not obey such a tsar or prince who leads you into dishonor and craftiness, even if he applies torture to you and threatens you with death."<sup>43</sup> Thus, in Joseph's opinion, one should only obey a just tsar, while opposition to an evil one is justified. A subject must decide him or herself whether or not the tsar is just or evil, guided by religious and moral criteria, and alter their behavior accordingly. Kurbskii apparently adheres to these traditional ideas.<sup>44</sup>

Calling the tsar "the righteous sun" (*pravednoe solntse*) which in liturgical texts refers only to Christ testifies to the developing sacralization of the tsar's power.<sup>45</sup> In any case, this label was used for the False Dmitrii; in the Barkulabovskii Chronicle it is said of him: "He is the true indisputable tsar, Dimitrii Ivanovich the righteous sun."<sup>46</sup> According to the testimony of Konrad Bussow, after the False Dmitrii's entrance into Moscow in 1605 the Muscovites fell down before him exclaiming (in his outlandish transcription): "Da Aspoidi, thy Aspodar Sdroby. Gott spare dich Herr gesund . . . Thy brabda solniska. Du biist die rehte Sohne," that is, "Let the Lord give you, sovereign, health. You are the righteous sun!"<sup>47</sup> Later (in 1656) Simeon Polotskii addressed Aleksei Mikhailovich the same way: "We greet thee (*Vitaem tia*) Orthodox tsar, righteous sun."<sup>48</sup>

At the same time we have evidence that this kind of sacralization was not universal. For those for whom this perception of the tsar was alien, the expression "righteous sun" when applied to the tsar or to any mortal individual in general sounded like blasphemy. We may conclude this from a special work that has come down to us in a seventeenth-century copy, apparently composed at that time, the "Opinion (*povest*)" about the chosen words about the righteous sun and about not heeding divine commandments, since people call each other righteous sun, flattering themselves.<sup>49</sup> Here we read:

In ignorance and thoughtlessness many people apply words of grace to a mortal person in affectionate phrases. I will tell you about such as these, brothers; for people use flattering and affectionate words, and making a request they may say to one another: "righteous sun"! My soul is horrified at this human lack of understanding and my spirit quakes . . . because righteous

sun is god's name. Sinful and mortal people assume God's glory and . . . call each other by Christ's name . . . Understand this, beloved brethren; never call anyone righteous sun, not even the earthly tsar himself, [since] no one of earthly power can be called righteous sun; for this is God's name, not that of perishable man . . . And you, terrestrial rulers, learn from the Lord and serve Him with fear, and accept this teaching about this word and take special care not to call yourself "righteous sun," and do not order simple folk to call you "righteous sun" . . .

It is completely clear that this work opposes the sacralization of the monarch and applying sacred names to him.

Sacralization is also evident in depictions of the tsar which to a great degree recall those of saints. Thus, according to the testimony of Ivan Timofeev, Boris Godunov ordered his picture painted on a fresco with his name inscribed in the same way as saints' were: "He intended to create an adorned image of his likeness on the walls, and [to place] his name together with those of the saints."<sup>50</sup> In an analogous way depictions of Aleksei Mikhailovich were made later that contemporaries would interpret as his claim for holy status. In this connection Patriarch Nikon wrote: "And let us learn not to prescribe Divine glory prophesied by prophets and apostles to ourselves, nor to be painted freely amid the Divine mysteries of the Old and New Testaments, as it was done in the Bible printed in Moscow: the depiction of the tsar on an eagle and on a horse is indeed pride, ascribing to him prophesies prophesied about Christ."<sup>51</sup> Subsequently, a depiction of the reigning monarch could appear on the *panagia* [an image worn around the neck of Orthodox bishops], and here the raising of the tsar to sacred status is indisputable; in 1721 Ekaterina Alekseevna granted such a *panagia* with a portrait of Peter I (with a Crucifixion on the other side) to Feodosii Ianovskii.<sup>52</sup>

The conception of the tsar's special charismatic power fundamentally altered traditional notions, as the juxtaposition of just and unjust tsar now became that of genuine and false tsar. In this new context "just" may signify not "acting justly" but "correct," where correctness is defined as chosen by God. Thus the true tsar is determined not by behavior but by providence. At the same time the problem arises of distinguishing between true and false tsar, since it is not amenable to rational solution; if true tsars receive their power from God, then evil ones get theirs from the devil. Even the church rite of sacred anointment and crowning cannot confer grace on a false tsar, insofar as these are only visible actions, and in actuality it may be demons that crown and anoint at the bidding of the devil.<sup>53</sup>

Because of this the phenomenon of pretendership (*samozvanstvo*) or imposture also testifies to the sacralization of the tsar and the charismatic



nature of his power. Pretendership appears in Russia when tsars appear, that is, after the establishment and stabilization of tsarist power; it is itself a claim for the sacred status of a tsar. The violation of the natural order of succession gave rise to the appearance of pretenders; in this situation the question naturally arose whether or not the true tsar was sitting on the throne, and thus created an opening for rival claimants to this power. Neither Boris Godunov nor Vasilii Shuiskii, for all the correctness of their ascensions, could be seen as authentic tsars,<sup>54</sup> and they themselves thus turn out to be a kind of pretender (“false tsars,” “seeming tsars,” etc.). The presence of a false tsar on the throne provokes the appearance of more false tsars, as there occurs a kind of competition between claimants, each of whom insists that he is the chosen one. However paradoxical it may be, such a way of thinking is based on the conviction that the only one who can judge who the genuine tsar is is not a person, but God. Pretendership is thus a fully natural and logically justified consequence of the sacralization of the tsar’s power.

**1.2.** And so, with the assumption of the title of tsar, Russian monarchs began to be seen as endowed with special charismatic power. The sacralization of the monarch which we are observing here is far from a unique phenomenon. In particular, it was to some extent characteristic of both Byzantium and Western Europe.<sup>55</sup> However, neither in Byzantium nor in Western Europe was the sacralization of the monarch so directly connected to the problem of authenticity as it was in Russia. Although the character of monarchical charisma could be understood in different ways, charisma itself was ascribed to the status of the monarch, to his functions rather than to his natural qualities.

In Byzantium, ancient notions of the emperor as a god that had become part of the official cult of the Roman Empire were reworked in terms of Christianity. In their Christianized variant, these notions developed into a parallelism between the emperor and god, in the framework of which sacralization could occur, or be preserved. This sacralization did not fundamentally differ from the sacralizing of the clergy, which was based on a similar parallelism, according to which the higher clerics represented a living image (icon) of Christ. Thus, in Byzantium the emperor was perceived as part of the church hierarchy and could be perceived as a man of the church.<sup>56</sup> One could say that in the conditions of “symphony” between church and state as existed in Byzantium the sacralization of the tsar consisted in his participation in priesthood and priestly charisma; possibly, this derived to some extent from traditions of the Roman Empire, where the emperor functioned as *pontifex maximus* in the pagan hierarchy.<sup>57</sup>

In Western Europe, the sacralization of the monarch had other roots. It developed from magical notions about the leader on whom the well-being of the tribe depended. Upon Christianization, these notions transformed into the belief in the personal charismatic power of the king who possessed miraculous powers. The monarch was perceived as source of well-being, and in particular, it was thought that touching him would cure sickness or ensure a good harvest.<sup>58</sup> It is no accident that the canonization of monarchs was more characteristic of Western Europe than Byzantium; one may hypothesize that the most ancient Russian princely canonizations were oriented precisely on Western, first of all Western Slavic, models.

If in Byzantium and Western Europe sacralization of the monarch had definite traditions, in Russia it developed at a relatively late period as a result of the assumption of the title of tsar and rethinking the role of the ruler. The idea of the parallelism of tsar and God was assimilated from Byzantium; this was characteristic of both traditional and newly developed ideas about supreme power. On the other hand, similarity with the West was manifested in the understanding of the monarch's charismatic power as a personal gift. The tsar was seen as partaking in the divine as an individual, which defined his relations both to God and to man.

## *2. New Ideas about the Tsar in Connection with Foreign Cultural Influences: The Reconstruction of the Byzantine Model and Assimilation of Baroque Culture*

**2.1.** As we have seen, the sacralization of the monarch in Russia began within the framework of the conception of Moscow as the Third Rome. This conception presumes a separation from external cultural influences almost by definition. And it is true that it arose from a negative attitude toward Greeks, insofar as Moscow became the Third Rome precisely because they were unable to maintain Constantinople as the Second Rome; having concluded an alliance with the Catholics (the Florentine Union), the Greeks betrayed Orthodoxy and were punished by the destruction of the empire. Hence it was natural for Russians to distance themselves from the Byzantine model; what was important was to preserve Orthodox traditions, not Greek cultural models. So if earlier Byzantium had taken on the role of teacher, and Rus' its pupil, now it could be thought that Russia became the teacher. Furthermore, the connection to Byzantium was defined not by cultural orientation but the fact of succession itself. The Russian tsar assumed the place of the Byzantine emperor, but

Russians derived their notions about the tsar's power from their own tradition which was only connected to Byzantium in its origin.

The political and religious ideology that was conditioned by the perception of Moscow as Third Rome may be defined as a theocratic eschatology: Moscow remains the only Orthodox kingdom, so the tsar's mission takes on a messianic character. Russia as the last outpost of Orthodoxy is juxtaposed to the rest of the world, and this conditions the negative attitude toward foreign cultural influences (to the extent that they are perceived as such). The purity of Orthodoxy is confined to the borders of the new Orthodox kingdom, which was alien to the task of universally spreading the faith; cultural isolationism is perceived as a condition for preserving its purity. The Russian state is itself taken to stand for the entire universe in an isomorphic relation and therefore has no need to spread or propagandize its ideas. Conversing with representatives of the Greek Church in 1649, Arsenii Sukhanov argued that:

In Moscow they would even kick out the four patriarchs, just like the pope, if they weren't Orthodox . . . Indeed you Greeks can't do anything without your four patriarchs, because in Tsargrad [Constantinople] there was a pious tsar alone under the sun, and he appointed the four patriarchs and the pope in the first place; and those four patriarchs were in one kingdom under one tsar and the patriarchs gathered in councils at his royal pleasure. But today instead of that tsar there is a pious tsar in Moscow, the single pious tsar in the world—and God has glorified our Christian kingdom. And in this kingdom the sovereign tsar established a patriarch instead of a pope in the ruling city of Moscow . . . and instead of your four patriarchs he established four metropolitans in ruling capacity. So we can carry out God's law without your four patriarchs.<sup>59</sup>

This ideology underwent a basic transformation in the reign of Aleksei Mikhailovich. Moscow was confirmed as the Orthodox capital, but at this stage the conception of Moscow as Third Rome acquired not theocratic but political meaning. This presupposed a rejection of cultural isolationism and a return to the idea of a universal Orthodox empire. In consequence, the Byzantine cultural legacy again became relevant. Aleksei Mikhailovich strove in principle for a rebirth of the Byzantine Empire with its center in Moscow as a universal monarchy that would unite all of the Orthodox into a single state. The Russian tsar did not merely need to occupy the place of the Byzantine emperor but also to *become* him. For this new function, traditional Russian notions of kingship were clearly insufficient. The Russian tsar was conceived according to the Byzantine model, and this stimulated its active reconstruction. Russian traditions were seen as provincial and insufficient;

hence there was a new positive attitude toward Greeks, who were seen as carriers of the Byzantine cultural tradition.

The attempt to renew a universal Orthodox kingdom was realized first of all on a semiotic level. The Russian tsar tried to behave like a Byzantine emperor, and because of this Byzantine texts (texts in a broad semiotic sense) took on new life. One may say that they borrowed the text of imperial behavior which was supposed to give Russia new political status. From this point of view it is exceptionally indicative that both Aleksei Mikhailovich as well as his successor Fedor Alekseevich assumed the symbolic attributes of the Constantinopolitan basileus. Aleksei Mikhailovich ordered an orb and diadem from Constantinople to be made “following the image of [those belonging to] the pious Greek Tsar Constantine.”<sup>60</sup> During the coronation of Tsar Fedor Alekseevich, he took communion at the altar according to the priests’ rite, as Byzantine emperors did.<sup>61</sup> In this way the Russian tsar seemed to acquire a definite place in the church hierarchy, as it was with Byzantine emperors (see section I-1.2.1). Since the time of Aleksei Mikhailovich references to the tsar during the church service gradually broadened to include the entire reigning house.<sup>62</sup> Thus the church blessing was not only given to those who bore the burdens of rule but to those who were in one way or another connected to the sacred status of the monarch. It seems possible that in publishing the Law Code (*Ulozhenie*) of 1649 Aleksei Mikhailovich was also acting in the footsteps of the Byzantine emperors. For them lawgiving, including the publication of juridical codes, was one of the most important privileges of the supreme power, insofar as the emperor here acted as the formal source of the law and even, in Justinian’s phrase, “the living law (*odushavlennyi zakon*).”<sup>63</sup> Lawgiving was a crucial mark of the emperor’s worth, and it was precisely in this capacity that Aleksei Mikhailovich took over the practice.

The borrowing of new texts also presumes the borrowing of the new language in which they are written. Generally speaking, in order to identify Aleksei Mikhailovich as a Byzantine emperor one needs Byzantines who know all of the requisite symbolism. As far as Russia was concerned, one may say with assuredness that there were very few who were familiar with it, and that the majority of people could only read it using the old language.

What sort of message could be garnered from such a reading? As we already know (see section I-1.2.1), in Byzantium the sacralization of the monarch was marked by his connection to the church hierarchy. To Russians this was unfamiliar and could be interpreted as the infringement of the state on the church, as the monarch’s usurpation of ecclesiastical power. This is because in the old cultural language this kind of sacralization was read as blasphemy.

Dressed in Greek robes and according himself the sacred status of a Byzantine emperor, Aleksei Mikhailovich was transformed in traditional Russian consciousness from an Orthodox tsar into Nebuchadnezzar, who compared himself to God, and into Manasseh, who made the church submit to him. This is what Archpriest Avvakum, in particular, wrote about him. He charged the tsar with breaking Orthodox traditions and with a contemptuous attitude toward Russian saints. "Our Russian saints were fools," he spoke, echoing the tsar, "they were illiterate!" Avvakum ascribed Nebuchadnezzar's blasphemous sentiments to him: "I am God! Who is my equal? The Heavenly One, really? He rules in heaven, and I on earth, His equal!" At the same time he compared the tsar to Manasseh, likening his ecclesiastical policies that led to the schism to the forced introduction of paganism, and he saw Aleksei Mikhailovich's behavior as the sacrilegious appropriation of church power: "In whose law does it say the tsar should control the church, change the dogmas, burn holy incense? His proper role is to look after it and protect it from the wolves that are destroying it, not to instruct it in how to keep the faith and how to make the sign of the cross. For this is not the tsar's affair, but that of the Orthodox hierarchs and true pastors . . ."64

Objections to the tsar's usurpation of church prerogatives in the second half of the seventeenth century did not only come from Old Believers. Avvakum's nemesis Patriarch Nikon criticized Aleksei Mikhailovich in similar terms, also charging him with improper claims on church power. From Nikon's point of view, the tsar was aiming at leadership of the church. He stated: "When is the tsar head of the church? Never, and the head of the church is Christ, as the apostle writes. The tsar is not, nor can he be head of the church, but is one of its members, and therefore can do nothing in the church more than the lowest rank of reader."<sup>65</sup> So accusations of this sort came from various opposing parties, and one must admit that Tsar Aleksei Mikhailovich actually did give reason for such reproofs, in many ways anticipating Peter I's church policies (see section II-2.1). These new aspects of the tsar's relations with the church merged in the cultural consciousness of the era with the growing sacralization of the monarch.

In the sphere of practical activity the tsar's new relations with the church were expressed predominantly in the establishment of the Monastery Office (*Monastyrskii prikaz*) which was supposed to administer church property and fulfill a series of administrative and judicial functions that were formerly under the jurisdiction of the church. This reform was carried out by the Law Code of 1649 (chapter 13), and elicited a sharply negative response from the clergy.<sup>66</sup> The establishment of the Monastery Office was clearly perceived as

the tsar's infringement on the power that had formerly belonged to the pastors of the church.

A change in the formulas of certificates of ordination (*stavlenye gramoty*) given out upon elevation to the priesthood was also perceived as an infringement on church authority. These now included a declaration that the elevation was carried out "by order of the sovereign tsar." Protesting against this, Patriarch Nikon wrote to the tsar around 1663: "Your hand controls both all episcopal courts and property, and it is terrifying to say much less to endure if [it is true] what we hear, that bishops are installed and archimandrites and abbots are ordained by your order, and that in certificates of ordination you are given equal honor to the Holy Spirit, since it is written that [they are ordained] by the grace of the Holy Spirit and command of the great monarch. [As if] the Holy Spirit wouldn't be able to ordain without your order."<sup>67</sup> Likewise, arguing with the boyar Semen Streshnev, Nikon wrote: "You say, interlocutor, that our most gentle and most fortunate tsar entrusted Nikon with watching over the church's fate; it was not the tsar that entrusted Nikon with watching over the church's fate, but the grace of the Holy Spirit; but the tsar demeans and dishonors the grace of the Holy Spirit, and treats it as powerless, as if without his order this or that archimandrite, abbot or presbyter, cannot be ordained on the basis of the Holy Spirit's grace, but only by the command of the great monarch, as it is written [that one may] bury someone who's been strangled or killed, or [say] a prayer for a child born in sin—all by the monarch's order. The monarch does not respect the high clergy, but dishonors it in a way that is indescribable, [bringing] more dishonor than pagan tsars did."<sup>68</sup> It is clear from these quotes that the change in formulaic conventions was perceived as the tsar's appropriation of the high clergy's authority.

No less characteristic was Nikon's protest against Tsar Aleksei Mikhailovich's Law Code (*Ulozhenie*), which he similarly perceived as a claim on religious authority.<sup>69</sup> Nikon objects in particular to the formula: "the judgment of the sovereign Tsar and Grand Prince Aleksei Mikhailovich" (chapter 10, article 1). He argued that true judgment belongs to God alone; from this perspective, Aleksei Mikhailovich was misappropriating divine authority.<sup>70</sup> Thus according to Nikon tsarist power was being illegitimately sacralized. We should note that the given formula in the Law Code was traditional for Russian jurisprudence,<sup>71</sup> but in the context of the increasing sacralization of tsarist power it became semiotically significant.

Behind these semiotic changes that Aleksei Mikhailovich was introducing stood a profound transformation of notions about the nature of the tsar's power. If this power had originally been connected with the tsar's piety and

justice (see section I-1.1), and then with his divine election, that is, with his charismatic nature (see section I-1.2), now its relationship to the Byzantine cultural model took precedence. From the point of view of these new notions, Russia's inclusion in the centuries'-old tradition of the Roman and Byzantine empires became fundamentally important. In this tradition the king's charisma took on more or less definite contours. If earlier it had been expressed in certain special powers, bestowed from above and inaccessible to simple mortals, now it was manifested in a definite norm of behavior; a certain canon of charismatic behavior replaces fortuitous charisma. In this canon the most semiotically significant are the relations between church and state; the tsar's new prerogatives in this area manifest his sacral status.

Understandably, older conceptions of the tsar's power continued to live on in the cultural consciousness of Russian society; they could interact variously with the orientation on Byzantine cultural models. At the same time these models themselves could be interpreted differently. All of this created the basis for new cultural conflicts. One should keep in mind that in Byzantium itself relations with the emperor were not without ambiguity;<sup>72</sup> thus the Byzantine theory of a symphony between church and state could be understood very differently in Russia. We may presume that the conflict between Aleksei Mikhailovich and Patriarch Nikon was based on opposing interpretations of the very same Byzantine ideas.<sup>73</sup> It is no less indicative that Patriarch Nikon, who apparently considered that Aleksei Mikhailovich's behavior deviated from the correct Byzantine model, condemned him in very traditional Russian terms, describing him as an unjust tsar.<sup>74</sup>

Aleksei Mikhailovich's early cultural reforms were defined by Byzantinization. Borrowed forms were torn from their original context in which their meaning had been defined by historically established interpretations. Transferred into a new cultural context, they took on new life, which could only have had indirect connection to their previous existence. Furthermore, new signs could also create new content; torn from their traditional signification they take on a meaning-generating function. This gives them stability and independence from passing cultural trends (e.g., fashion). This is exactly what happened in the case of Byzantinization. It might seem that in the Petrine era, a time of intensive westernization, it would have ceased, the more so since Peter's negative attitude toward Byzantium is well known.<sup>75</sup> However, this is not what happened. Byzantinization was not only compatible with Europeanization, but as concerns the sacralization of the tsar's power, it combined with Europeanization, forming a single whole. This combination had its origins in the pre-Petrine epoch.

2.2. Thus under Aleksei Mikhailovich a Byzantinizing of Russian culture took place. This process, generally speaking, was internal, insofar as Byzantium as such had not existed for a long time. The issue had to do with reconstructing the Byzantine tradition, and this led to a search for those who had preserved it (as opposed to those in Moscow who had repudiated it after the Union of Florence). This is why Greeks and Ruthenians who had preserved the connection with the Greek church became so important at this time. If at one time a part of the Russian church had rejected subordination to Constantinople, connecting preservation of the Orthodox tradition with its autocephaly, now attention turned to those in the church who had preserved that connection. The Ruthenian tradition thus played a key role in the combination of Byzantinization and Europeanization discussed above.

Indeed the Ruthenian cultural tradition simultaneously connected Muscovite Rus' with Constantinople (southwestern Rus' came under the jurisdiction of the Constantinopolitan patriarchate) and with Western Europe (southwestern Rus' was part of the Polish kingdom). Together with Greek cultural traditions came panegyric texts modeled on the Latino-Polish Baroque. Independent of origin, Greek or Western, the imported texts were inscribed into the Great Russian cultural tradition and here subjected to reinterpretation. The mechanisms of this reinterpretation were uniform and revolved around the same cultural disputes: if, for traditional consciousness, things both Byzantine and Western could be taken as new and blasphemous,<sup>76</sup> in the reformist, Kulturträger perception they both appeared as the means to transform Russia and to aid Russia's assimilation of universal cultural values. In relation to the monarch, both of these external traditions combined organically to create a certain resonance that led to the ever increasing sacralization of the tsar's power.

As a result, Byzantine and Western influence led to the creation of a new culture that contained features of both traditions. This new culture was juxtaposed to the traditional first of all in its attitude toward the sign and the ways of interpreting the new texts. Starting with the era of Aleksei Mikhailovich, semiotic behavior (and, in particular, linguistic activity) ceased to be homogeneous in Russia. Two attitudes toward the sign came into conflict: on the one hand, the sign as a convention, which was characteristic of southwest Russian learning (and which ultimately derived from Latino-Polish Baroque culture), that is, one which was based on Western sources of the new culture; and on the other, a view of the sign as non-conventional, characteristic of the Great Russian tradition.<sup>77</sup> Thus the very same texts could function in two keys, and what for some could represent a conventional figure



of speech for others could suggest sacrilege. This conflict became more serious with time and became especially obvious in the Petrine period. When, for example, Feofan Prokopovich greeted Peter who had unexpectedly dropped in on one of his little nocturnal feasts with the words of the troparion “Behold the Bridegroom cometh at midnight!”,<sup>78</sup> for some this was nothing more than a metaphorical image while for others it sounded like blasphemy.

Metaphorical usage is but one particular aspect of the Baroque attitude to the word; characteristic of the Baroque was not only play with words but play with meanings. In particular, in Baroque culture quotations are primarily used for ornamentation, and consequently the goal of a citation was by no means to be faithful to the main idea of the words; on the contrary, putting a quotation in an unexpected context to create a new resonance, a play with alien speech, was one of its most sophisticated rhetorical devices. Thus a Baroque author could seem externally similar to a medieval bookman or theologian but profoundly different in terms of his basic attitude to language.

A striking example of this attitude is from Prokopovich’s treatise “On the Tsar’s Power and Honor” (1718). In laying out his theory of tsarist power, Feofan writes:

Let us also add to this teaching, like a crown, names or titles appropriate to high power, names that are not vain, as they are given by God Himself, which are the best adornment of kings, better than porphyry and diadems, better than all the most magnificent external paraphernalia and its glory, that all together demonstrate that such power comes from God Himself. What titles? What names? They call them God and Christ. The words of the Psalm are splendid: *I said, “You are ‘gods;’ you are all sons of the Most High;”*<sup>79</sup> for this is addressed to rulers. The Apostle Paul is in agreement with this: *Indeed there are many “gods” and many “lords.”*<sup>80</sup> But even before both of these Moses referred to rulers the same way: *Thou shalt not revile the gods, nor curse the ruler of thy people.*<sup>81</sup> But what is the reason for such lofty names? The Lord Himself says in John the Evangelist that people to whom the word of God came are called gods.<sup>82</sup> What other word should be used? Was it not given by God as an admonition to them to uphold justice, as we read in the Psalm we cited? For the power given by God they are called gods, that is, God’s deputies on earth. And Theodoret<sup>83</sup> says this well: *Since there is God the true judge, judgment is also entrusted to man; therefore they are called gods because in this they imitate God.*<sup>84</sup>

On the one hand, Feofan’s reasoning is a typical example of a Baroque play on meanings, and on the other, it makes a clear political argument. The texts he cites do not make the point he derives from them, and Feofan of course was perfectly aware of this. Thus in the citation from the Epistle to the

Corinthians “gods” does not refer to rulers but to pagan idols, and hence cannot serve as exegesis of Psalm 81. Just as baseless is the reference to Theodoret’s commentary, which was part of the Explanatory Psalter (Tolkovyǐ psaltyr’). According to Theodoret, the name “gods” is given to rulers and judges as a sign of their responsibility before God and not as a title meant to glorify them. This kind of free use of quotes was fully appropriate in the framework of Baroque culture and also consistently served the political aims of the given treatise; Baroque rhetoric was used as an instrument to sacralize the monarch. It apparently did not bother Feofan that his readers and listeners who were familiar with the New Testament and the Explanatory Psalter could not help but understand the quoted texts in quite a different way. This polemical challenge was also part of the Baroque play of meanings, although Baroque culture itself did not necessarily presume an opposition (as in the current case) between the “enlightened” adherents of Petrine ideology and the “ignorant masses” that held to traditional notions.

It is completely understandable that the traditional audience perceived reasoning like this in the context of its habitual language rather than via that which was being imposed on it, that is, it saw here a direct identification of the tsar with God, which it could only regard as sacrilege.<sup>85</sup> In the polemical Old Believer treatise “A Collection from Holy Writ About the Antichrist” it says of Peter: “And this false-Christ began to exalt himself beyond all so-called gods, that is, the anointed.”<sup>86</sup> It is not difficult to take this as a response to Feofan Prokopovich’s words quoted above, when Feofan calls Peter (as the anointed one) god and Christ, which the Old Believers took to be the realization of the prophesy that the antichrist would be revealed as one who will “exalt himself over everything that is called God or is worshiped, so that he sets himself up in God’s temple, proclaiming himself to be God.”<sup>87</sup>

We find another example of this sort of response to Baroque texts of an analogous political tendency in the anonymous Old Believer *Testimony of a Spiritual Son to a Spiritual Father* (1676) in which the death of Aleksei Mikhailovich is reported: “They did not expect this death, [as] their very own published books [called] him immortal. They have a new book—‘Nikon’s Sabre,’ which they call ‘The Spiritual Sword,’ by the Chernigov Bishop Baranovich. And in the preface of the book there is a picture of the tsar, and tsaritsa, and all their offspring, cunningly done, in a picture. And right there they exalt him criminally, poor ones, saying ‘You, sovereign tsar, reign here as long as the sun is in its orbit, and in the world to come reign without end.’”<sup>88</sup> The reference is to the book by the Bishop of Chernigov Lazar Baranovich, “The Spiritual Sword”; on the second page of the preface is an engraving of Aleksei Mikhailovich and

his family. The Old Believer's objection is evidently to Baranovich's words: "There is no end to the Kingdom and its tsar, indeed the Kingdom of Your Serene Majesty abides forever."<sup>89</sup>

Thus two traditions, the southwestern and Great Russian, clashed, but it is important that the collision took place on Great Russian soil. This created the potential for, one might say, the realization of the metaphor, that is, any Baroque image could begin to be perceived not as a convention but literally. Therefore the comparison of God and tsar could be interpreted in a direct and non-figurative sense, and not be dismissed as mere rhetoric. Two kinds of facts testify to this. On the one hand, there is the response to this practice as blasphemous, implying that the tsar's power was that of the antichrist (as in the examples cited above);<sup>90</sup> on the other there is the evidence of religious adoration of the monarch, about which we will speak below. Here we should also note that both of these perceptions were grounded in the same world-view.

## II. THE SACRALIZATION OF THE MONARCH AS A SEMIOTIC PROCESS

### 1. *Semiotic Attributes of the Monarch: Tsar and God*

1.1. The orientation on foreign cultural traditions had a clearly expressed semiotic character. In the process of borrowing, borrowed forms themselves take on a new function: namely, they indicate a connection with the corresponding cultural tradition. A German wearing a cloak means nothing, while a German cloak on a Russian is transformed into a symbol of adherence to European culture. In the sphere under investigation this sort of process acquires special significance. This is the case with a whole series of phenomena, in particular, with the various ways of naming and addressing the monarch. The Russian monarch could be addressed in the same way as a Byzantine basileus or as a European emperor. The primary function of these new denominations was to symbolize a corresponding cultural and political orientation, that is, to testify to the new status of the Russian monarch. In the cases when these titles were connected to the semantics of holiness, in the Russian cultural context they could be taken literally. This literalism could have two results: if taken in the positive sense, it could lead to the sacralization of the monarch's power, if in the negative, to the rejection of the entire state system, insofar as attributing sacred attributes to the tsar could be perceived as blasphemy. Naturally, this

latter attitude could be seen as disloyalty and be persecuted by the state. Moreover, apologists for state power insisted on the appropriateness of sacral attributes, which made the external marks of sacralization a matter of state policy. Thus sacralization of the tsar turned into a state cult. As a result of this development, the history of these external attributes of the tsar's power was directly connected to the struggle between church and state and to associated ideological controversies. Hence the disputes that arose from these conflicts are especially significant, insofar as they expose the different types of semiosis that set the two opposing sides apart.

In the following section, we will examine the various attributes of the tsar's power that were connected in one way or another with the semantics of holiness, focusing particularly on linguistic behavior as most revealing in this respect. Our discussion naturally falls into two parts. First we will look at those attributes which are directly related to the tsar's personal charisma and then at those attributes of sacralization which depend on his perception as head of the church.

**1.2.** We will begin by analyzing the history of calling the tsar "holy." This epithet (*sviatoi*, ἅγιος) was part of the title of Byzantine emperors. This fact was more or less known in Russia, as evidenced both by the fact that this epithet was applied to Byzantine emperors in documents from Constantinopolitan patriarchs to Russian grand princes and metropolitans, and by fact that Russian grand princes and metropolitans themselves used the phrase in relation to the Byzantine emperor.<sup>91</sup> At the same time, neither before nor after the fall of Constantinople was this epithet used for Russian tsars and grand princes, neither by Russian tsars and grand princes themselves nor by Russian metropolitans and patriarchs.<sup>92</sup> On the other hand, after the fall of the Byzantine monarchy Greek hierarchs began to address Muscovite tsars and grand princes as "holy."<sup>93</sup> Addressing the Russian tsar in this way was characteristic not only for the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries but also for the eighteenth.<sup>94</sup> In particular, we may note that in the letters of the Eastern patriarchs of 1723 recognizing the establishment of Synodal administration, it says that the Synod was founded "by the holy Tsar of all Moskovia, Little and White Russia and ruler of all northern countries, Sovereign Peter Alekseevich, Emperor, beloved in the Holy Spirit and our most adored brother."<sup>95</sup>

The Greek hierarchs' form of address, however, did not influence Russians' usage until a particular moment. In this connection, it is quite characteristic that the epithet "holy," introduced into the tsar's titles by Patriarch Jeremiah