

## **Orthodox Education in the Lutheran Environment 1840–1890s<sup>1</sup>**

by Irina Paert

Classical studies of the Russian Empire's engagement with the Baltic region have focused primarily on the conflicts between the Russian central state policy and local particularism. In a volume written when the Baltic region was still part of the Soviet Union, Thaden and his co-authors analyzed the impact of Orthodoxy on “administrative” and “cultural” Russification from the 1860s to 1914, arriving at the unsubstantiated conclusion that “Orthodox proselytizing and Russified schools had very little impact on Estonians and Latvians”.<sup>2</sup> In recent years, the discussion of the Russian central state versus local particularism has been framed in the context of Empire, focusing on the ways in which nationalizing societies were caught between the central policies of Russification and processes of modernization.<sup>3</sup> Scholars have brought various cultural forms of power to light, including imperial imagination and mental maps.<sup>4</sup> Inevitably, despite the shift towards cultural history and new imperial history, historians continue to focus on the workings of power and responses to it by the national intelligentsia and the emerging civil society. While the new theoretical and methodological approaches have been very useful in invigorating the studies of the Baltic region, there is still a shortage of studies that focus on popular everyday practices in the context of colonial or imperial authority, and a lack of knowledge of the responses of ordinary people, including the rural and lower-class urban population to the imperial policies of ‘Russification’. Religion provides an important insight into the lives of ordinary people and their responses to the various identity projects imposed on them either by the colonizers or by their own national intelligentsia.

It has become traditional to identify the interests of the “people” with those of the national activists who spoke on their behalf. In reality, this has not always been the case. The recent literature on “national indifference” in various borderland regions in Central Europe, including Silesia and Bohemia, takes issue with the dominant theories of nationalism and emphasizes the problematic identification of a specific nation with a linguistic group in such

1 This article was written with the support of the Estonian Research Council (PUT 428).

2 Edward C. Thaden: Part One. The Russian Government, in: Idem (ed.): Russification in the Baltic Provinces and Finland, 1855–1914, Princeton, NJ 1981, pp. 13-108, here p. 55.

3 Cf. Toomas Karjahärm: Vene Impeerium ja rahvuslus. Moderniseerimise strateegiad [The Russian Empire and Nationalism. Strategies of Modernization], Tallinn 2012; Tõnu Tannberg, Bradley Woodworth (eds.): Vene Impeerium ja Baltikum. Venestus, rahvuslus ja moderniseerimine 19. sajandi teisel poolel ja 20. sajandi alguses [The Russian Empire and the Baltics. Russianness, Nationalism and Modernization 1850–1917], 2 vols., Tartu 2009/2010; Karsten Brüggemann, Bradley D. Woodworth (eds.): Russland an der Ostsee. Imperiale Strategien der Macht und kulturelle Wahrnehmungsmuster (16. bis 20. Jahrhundert) / Russia on the Baltic. Imperial Strategies of Power and Cultural Patterns of Perception (16<sup>th</sup>–17<sup>th</sup> Centuries), Wien 2012.

4 Cf. Karsten Brüggemann: Luft und Licht des Imperiums. Legitimations- und Repräsentationsstrategien russischer Herrschaft an der Ostseeküste im 19. und 20. Jahrhundert, Lüneburg 2017 [im Druck].

regions.<sup>5</sup> Some studies focus on the role of religion, which provided a stronger identity-building element than the nation, while other studies address the people's choice of the language of tuition in schools (different from the one spoken at home) as a factor that often goes against the expectations of the national activists.<sup>6</sup>

The 'national indifference' can be used as a methodological tool to the study of religion in the Baltic region: It was home to multilingual and poly-confessional communities, that had become objects of competing projects of cultural homogenization during the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. The Orthodox minority, as pointed out in a study of Estonian Orthodox music, "was marginalised within dominant national discourses at the end of the nineteenth century and, in many ways, Estonian Orthodoxy was the antithesis of such discourses."<sup>7</sup> Examples of the ways in which Orthodox Estonians and Latvians identified themselves with the interests of their respective national groups can be found in the studies by Rimestad and Schvak, both of which also indicate how problematic belonging to the Orthodox Church was in the context of Russification and nationalism.<sup>8</sup> For the sake of balance, it should be pointed out that the Lutherans faced a similar problem: it was religion that united the colonizers and the colonized, the masters and their former serfs. While for some leaders of national movement in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the Lutheran church was the national church, for others it was an institution of cultural hegemony.<sup>9</sup> This narrow view of religious identity fails to take into account the supra-ethnic aspects of religion, such as personal and communal faith, piety and religious education, in shaping faith communities. Also, neither the Lutheran nor the Orthodox Church in the Russian Empire, with their ecclesiastical structures covering more than one region, was monolingual.

The Baltic Orthodox schools in the Lutheran environment provide an important, but not well-studied, case for understanding how the competition between two confessions affected social behavior.<sup>10</sup> Churches were instrumental in organizing and financing primary educa-

5 Cf. Jeremy King: *Budweisers into Czechs and Germans. A Local History of Bohemian Politics, 1848–1948*, Princeton, NJ 2005; Pieter M. Judson: *Guardians of the Nation. Activists on the Language Frontiers of Imperial Austria*, Cambridge, MA 2007; James Bjork: *Neither German nor Pole. Catholicism and National Indifference in a Central European Borderland*, Ann Arbor, MI 2009; Tara Zahra: *Kidnapped Souls. National Indifference and the Battle for Children in the Bohemian Lands, 1900–1948*, Ithaca, NY 2008.

6 Cf. Bjork, *Neither German nor Pole* (see note 5); Zahra, *Kidnapped Souls* (see note 5).

7 Jeffers Engelhardt: *Singing the Right Way. Orthodox Christians and Secular Enchantment in Estonia*, Oxford et.al. 2015, p. 99.

8 Cf. Sebastian Rimestad: *The Challenges of Modernity to the Orthodox Church in Estonia and Latvia (1917–1940)*, Frankfurt a.M. 2012. See also the contribution by Toomas Schvak in this NOA issue.

9 Cf. Riho Saard: *Eesti rahvusest luterliku pastorkonna väljakujunemine ja vabarahvakiriku projekti loomine 1870–1917 [The Development of an Ethnic Estonian Pastor-class and the Creation of the Free People's Church Project, 1870–1917]*, Helsinki 2000.

10 The histories of education in the Baltic region are quite thorough, but deal separately with the individual "national" histories. For example: Aleksander Elango, Endel Laul et.al.: *Eesti kooli ajalugu. 2. köide: 1860. a 1917 a. [History of the Estonian School. 2nd volume: 1860–1917]*, Tallinn 2010; Leonards Žukovs: *Pedagogijas vesture. Pamatkurss [History of Education. Basic Course]*, Rīga 1999. An exception is the volume sponsored by BAHP: Iveta Kestere, Aīda Krūze et.al. (eds.): *History of Education and Pedagogical Thought in the Baltic Countries up to 1940. An Overview*, Riga 2013.

tion, training teachers, publishing textbooks and carrying religious instruction into schools. The Baltic provinces had the highest level of literacy in the whole of the Russian Empire, not least because of the importance of the written word in the Protestant creed. While the churches tried to use education for confessional aims, and the authorities for integration, the social attitudes have been driven by other motivations, among which confessional or cultural loyalties have not been in the first place.

This article focuses on the Orthodox popular education that developed in the region dominated by Lutheran educational traditions. The article sprung from a number of archival cases that seemed to contradict what I had read or construed about the role of confession in the history of the region. The study of the Orthodox schools which I began in 2013 had shown that the activities of the Orthodox Church are intertwined with the institutions and practices of the Lutheran church in the Baltic. While this article does not aim at a comprehensive survey of Lutheran, or even Orthodox education, it hopefully enables an examination of the hypothesis regarding the disparity between the intentions of the elites and the actual needs and practices of the ordinary people. The method used in this article is a combination of social history and microhistory, the social microscope that allows an insight into the practices and motivations of the subaltern subject, who is arguably mute or lacks his or her own language.<sup>11</sup> The article is divided into two major parts, the first of which contextualizes the story of the Orthodox schools in the Lutheran environment, focusing on the acculturation of Orthodoxy and the intentions of the Russian officials with regard to the schools. The second section deals with cases of confessional mixing in both types of schools and cases of school mergers. These cases are treated as windows providing insight into the situation on the ground, attempting to understand the ordinary people's attitudes, motivations and tactics of resistance.

### **Orthodox Schools in the Lutheran Educational Environment**

The relationship of the Orthodox Church to Lutheranism in the Baltic might not have been as tense in the nineteenth century as its relationship with Catholicism, but neither was it free of rivalry.<sup>12</sup> Throughout the 1840s to 1880s the Orthodox clergy appealed to the government that their interests had been neglected, feeling justified when 129 Lutheran pastors were prosecuted between 1884 and 1894 for administering sacraments to members of the Orthodox Church.<sup>13</sup> However, confessional competition does not rule out exchange and mimesis, and we must follow Gregory Freeze's lead in exploring the ways in which the Russian Orthodox Church adopted ideas and practices of the contemporary Protestant

11 See the writings of Ginzburg, for example: Carlo Ginzburg: *The Inquisitor as Anthropologist*, in: *Idem: Clues, Myths, and the Historical Method*, Baltimore, MD 2013, pp. 141-148.

12 On Orthodoxy and the Roman Catholic church see Mikhail Dolbilov: *Russkii krai, chuzhaia vera. Etnokonfessional'naia politika imperii v Litve i Belorussii pri Aleksandre II* [Russian Land, Foreign Faith. Ethnoconfessional Imperial Politics in Lithuania and Belarus under Alexander II], Moskva 2010.

13 Cf. Karen Weber: *Religion and Law in the Russian Empire. Lutheran Pastors on Trial 1860–1917*, PhD dissertation, University of New York 2013.

churches, in particular Lutheran pastoral and parish organization models.<sup>14</sup> In the Baltic, this process of creative borrowing and adaptation was both a matter of necessity and an expression of the Orthodox missionary approach that adapted to local cultures.<sup>15</sup>

This adaptation was particularly visible in the sphere of education. The Orthodox schools in the Baltic provinces had been set up in the mid-1840s with the aim to provide education for Estonian and Latvian converts to Orthodoxy. By 1906 the number of these schools in the three Baltic provinces reached 493 (373 in Livland alone), constituting around one fifth of all primary schools.<sup>16</sup> In Livland the proportion of these schools was highest in Saaremaa (38%) and in South Estonia (25%).<sup>17</sup>

The Orthodox schools in Livland followed the model of a Lutheran rural school, and by the time of Orthodox conversions in the 1840s a network of these schools had expanded in all three Baltic provinces. An imperial edict of 1850 determined that Orthodox schools had to be opened in every area where there were at least 500 Orthodox members; this was based on a law of 1819 relating to Livland peasants that regulated the work of Lutheran schools.<sup>18</sup> As in the Lutheran schools, the priest was responsible for coordinating the work of the parish school, but he was rarely involved in teaching, which was carried out by cantors (Est. *kõster*, Lat. *ķesteris*, Rus. *Prichetnik* or *psalomshchik*). The Orthodox cantors had often studied in the Riga Orthodox Seminary, but not all of them completed the full course necessary for ordination. Cantors as a rule were of local origin, Estonian and Latvian-speaking, and many came from the families of clergy.<sup>19</sup> The schools also had teachers (Est. *koolimeistrid*). In the Orthodox schools, teachers were initially recruited from among the converted peasants and former Lutheran teachers, but later came from the graduates of parish schools or special teachers' seminaries. In the Baltic, there were three seminaries that prepared teachers for the Orthodox elementary schools: in Riga, later Goldingen (Kuldīga); Dorpat (Tartu); and Arensburg (Kuressaare), which mainly prepared teachers for the Orthodox schools in Ösel (Saaremaa). This, too, was similar to the Lutheran system, where parish schools and special teachers' seminaries prepared future teachers for village schools.<sup>20</sup>

14 Cf. Gregory L. Freeze: *Lutheranism in Russia. Critical Reassessment*, in: Hans Medick, Peer Schmidt (eds.): *Luther zwischen den Kulturen. Zeitgenossenschaft – Weltwirkung*, Göttingen 2004, pp. 297-317, here p. 297.

15 Cf. Alison Kolosova: *Narodnost' and 'Obshchechelovechnost' in Russian 19<sup>th</sup> Century Missionary Work. N.I. Il'minskii and the Christianization of the Chuvash*, PhD dissertation, University of Durham 2015.

16 Cf. *Otchet o sostoianii pravoslavnykh narodnykh uchilishch Pribaltiiskikh gubernii za 1904–05 uchebnyi god*. [Report on the Situation of the Orthodox People's Schools in the Baltic Provinces for the Academic Year 1904–1905], supplement to "Rizhskiie eparkhial'nye vedomosti", 11-12 (1906), Riga 1906, p. 15.

17 Cf. Elmar Ernits: *Õigeusu koolid 1840. aastatest 1880. aastate koolireformideni* [The Orthodox Schools from 1840 to the School Reforms of the 1880s], in: *Nõukogude kool* 31 (1973), no. 10, pp. 847-854, here pp. 851-853.

18 *Lihvlandi-ma Tallorahva Seädus* [The Law of the Livland Peasantry], Tartu 1820.

19 *Rahvusrhiivi ajalooarhiiv* (EAA): f. 5437, op. 1, d. 67. (Õigeusu kõstrid Eestis). No page numeration.

20 Cf. Lembit Andreen: *Eestonskie narodnye shkoly v XVII–XIX vv.* [The Estonian National Schools 17<sup>th</sup>–19<sup>th</sup> Centuries], Tallinn 1980, p. 135.

The teaching of religion was a central element of both Lutheran and Orthodox schools, at least until the last decades of the old regime. The core of the Lutheran elementary school curricula in the 1840s to 1860s was reading holy texts, prayers, liturgical singing and catechism. The word of God was both the content and the method.<sup>21</sup> In 1848 in North Estonia, which had the most developed school network, writing was taught only in 50% of schools, while counting was taught in 36 out of 146.<sup>22</sup> In addition to reading and catechism, the Orthodox schools were required to teach arithmetic, writing and Russian.<sup>23</sup> In the 1850s religion occupied up to 30% of the curriculum in some Orthodox schools.<sup>24</sup> The Lutheran schools emphasized that their main aim was to prepare children for confirmation.<sup>25</sup> Before the 1870s there was a greater variety within the curricula of different Orthodox schools than was the case for the Lutheran schools.

Before the creation in 1870 of the special Council for the Affairs of the Orthodox in Riga that coordinated the Orthodox schools, the main responsibility for the church's educational activities was on the dean who oversaw several parish schools in his deanery and reported to the Riga Spiritual Consistory. Each parish had a parish council (*popechitel'stvo*), which consisted of the parish priest and some active parishioners, and was responsible for the material provision of the schools, attendance and teachers' credentials. The appointment of teachers had to be approved by the parish priest and by the dean; this practice was different from that in the Lutheran church where the appointment of teachers had to be approved by the landlords.<sup>26</sup>

The Orthodox schools were poor, in relation to the Lutheran ones. Unlike the Lutheran schools, the Orthodox schools did not receive funding from local taxes, nor did they have the support of the nobility. Lutheran peasant education was funded by a combination of local taxes, tuition fees, donations, and support of teachers with food. Many schools enjoyed the possession of land.<sup>27</sup> Teachers' salaries were paid from the school taxes. The average school tax per peasant was about 78 kopeks, and per peasant plot of land 2 rubles 69 kopeks (for volost schools); some schools charged parents an average of 6 rubles per study winter, and if studies were continued in the summer months, another 5 rubles.<sup>28</sup> The landlords contributed to the maintenance of the schools, but their share in 1867/68 was almost the

21 The New Testament was used as a reading aid. Cf. *ibidem*, p. 138.

22 Cf. *ibidem*, p. 139.

23 *Pravila dlia pravoslavnykh prikhodskikh shkol v Lifliandskoi gubernii* [The Regulation of the Orthodox Parish Schools in the Livland Province], S.-Peterburg 1846.

24 EAA: f. 1931, op. 1, d. 280, no page numeration (1859). The program developed for Ösel (Saaremaa) Orthodox parish schools in the late 1850s demonstrates the prevalence of the confessional element in teaching: Religion (*Zakon Bozhii*, Catechism, Sacred History) occupied 30% of the curricula (6 days a week, 5 hour teaching day); Russian 30%; Arithmetic, Reading and Writing 40%.

25 *Materialy k izucheniju polozheniia evangelichesko-ljuteranskikh zemskikh narodnykh shkol v Lifliandii* [Materials for the Study of the Situation of the Evangelical-Lutheran Peasant Schools in Livland], Riga 1884, p. ix.

26 On Lutheran practice and the conflicts between landlords and pastors over the appointment of teachers see Karen Weber: *Disputes of Parish School Administration in the Late Nineteenth Century. The Case of Pastor Trei*, unpublished paper presented to ASEEEES, Boston 2013.

27 *Materialy k izucheniju* (see note 25), p. xvii.

28 *Ibidem*, p. xv.

same as that of the volost peasant councils (46.7%), and in the 1880s it decreased to an average of only 19% (compared to 63% from peasants).<sup>29</sup> In addition, the schools charged pupils fines for every school day missed, between 5 to 50 kopeks per day. The names of the “debtors” were sent to the provincial Higher School Court, which had the authority to order the families of truants to pay the fines.<sup>30</sup> The Orthodox schools tried to implement similar fines, yet they lacked the authority of the court. As a result, many schools had poor attendance. In 1869, inspectors pointed out that the total time missed due to truancy at the Orthodox schools could amount to up to 2.5 months.<sup>31</sup>

Establishing Orthodox schools according to the Lutheran model had its limitations. Moreover, the educational reforms in Russia in the 1860s affected both Lutheran and Orthodox schools. Already in the late 1860s the central government expressed an intention to place all elementary schools under the control of the Ministry of Education.<sup>32</sup> The threat of Germanization of Estonian and Latvian peasants that was hotly debated in the Russian press in the 1860s had been linked with the Lutheran schools, some of which began to dedicate more time to German.<sup>33</sup> In the early 1870s, the provinces had to adopt new laws that centralized and unified teaching programs: both Lutheran and Orthodox schools had received centrally approved programs with a fixed number of lessons for the individual subjects.<sup>34</sup> However, compared to Lutheran schools the Orthodox school curricula of the 1870s was poor, lacking such subjects as natural science, geography and history. And more lessons were devoted to Russian and arithmetic.<sup>35</sup>

In his letter to Count Tolstoy in 1868, Governor General P.P. Albedinsky pointed out the unsatisfactory condition of the Orthodox schools, arguing that over the eight years from 1860 to 1868 their conditions had not improved, and that the peasants had lost interest in Orthodoxy at a time when the Lutheran clergy’s attention to pastoral care had increased. The Bishop of Riga, Veniamin (Karelin), in 1869 also commented that, compared to the Lutheran schools, the Orthodox schools had a long way to go.<sup>36</sup>

29 Ibidem, p. xviii.

30 EAA, f. 2738, op. 1, d. 627. The court could absolve parents from penalties in cases when children missed classes because of illness, lack of warm clothes, children’s work. See Maie Männik, Elvi Kullamägi et.al.: Kaks sajandit Vaeküla kooli [Two Centuries of the Vaeküla School], Vaeküla 2007, pp. 24 f.

31 Russian State Historical Archive (RGIA), f. 733, op. 170, d. 537, l. 31. It is difficult to know whether this is a combined number of missed days, or some extreme cases.

32 Cf. Andrezen, *Estoniskie narodnye shkoly* (see note 20), p. 149.

33 On the polemic in the press see Sergei G. Isakov: *Ostzeiskii vopros v russkoi pečati 1860kh godov* [The Baltic Question in the Russian Press of the 1860s], Tartu 1961. On German-language teaching in the Lutheran schools see Andrezen, *Estoniskie narodnye shkoly* (see note 20), pp. 146 f.

34 Cf. Liivimaa *Lutheriusu maakoolide õpetuse plaanid* [The Curricula of the Lutheran Peasant Schools in Livland], Riia 1874; Liivimaa *Lutheriusu Maakoolide Säädus* [The Law on the Lutheran Peasant Schools in Livland], Riia 1874. In Northern Estonia the law was adopted in 1878: *Koolipidamise seadus Eestimaa evangeeliumi Lutheruse usu maakoolidele* [The Law on Keeping the Lutheran Peasant Schools in Estland], Tallinn 1878.

35 Cf. Endel, Laul et.al., *Eesti kooli ajalugu* (see note 10), p. 149. However, teaching of geography and history was included in the so-called *rodinovedenie* (similar to Heimat teaching).

36 Cf. RGIA, f. 733 (Ministry of Education), op. 170, d. 342, l. 27.

The Ministry of Education became particularly concerned about the Orthodox schools in the Baltic provinces in the late 1860s. In 1869, the councilor (*statskii sovetnik*) Mozhnevsky was commissioned to inspect Orthodox schools in several parishes in Livland. His report as a school commissioner on Laudon parish, which had 3,000 Orthodox Latvians, was very critical of the educational achievements of the Orthodox Church. The schools were poorly attended, truancy was high, material conditions dire (there was a lack of specially designated buildings and equipment such as desks, blackboards, textbooks), and academic achievement was very low (students did not know subtraction, and did not master Russian). The inspector described the method of teaching children to read in auxiliary schools (schools that had one teacher): “Children learn to read at home in their native language. In the classroom they recite homework which is based on different textbooks. They do it all together and very loudly. Such reading aloud has an intoxicating effect on the visitor.”<sup>37</sup> The inspector pointed out that writing skills were also poor and that mechanical memorizing dominated. The number of girls at schools was insignificant. The boys who had learnt to read and write a little were occasionally removed from school by their parents before the full school term. The reason for the poor standards, according to Mozhnevsky, lay in the clergy’s lack of pedagogical qualifications, as well as in their lack of commitment. He pointed out that of 37 cantors who carried out teaching duties, only 7 had pedagogical skills.<sup>38</sup> Others knew neither subtraction nor mental arithmetic. The narrowness of the students’ intellectual horizons, too, was striking: the inspector asked a boy whether the sun was bigger than his head, the answer was “no”.<sup>39</sup> In some schools, children had no idea which was the nearest town. The priests only shrugged their shoulders: since it was the boys’ fathers who traveled to towns, this information was quite superfluous for the children.<sup>40</sup> The situation described by Mozhnevsky was probably not much different from many Lutheran schools, where the method of collectively reading aloud was widely practiced, while writing had only been introduced in some schools in the 1850s.<sup>41</sup> In contrast to Russia, however, which had taken a huge leap forward in the development of popular education in the 1860s based on contemporary progressive pedagogy, the situation in the Baltic appeared quite outdated.

While the plans to transfer the Lutheran schools to the Ministry of Education in the 1860s and 1870s did not materialize due to the resistance of the Baltic nobility, the Russian central government tried to strengthen the Orthodox schools as a medium of a very thin pro-Russian base in the Baltic. General Governor Albedinsky’s report and proposals were discussed by the Learned Committee of the Ministry of Education. As a result of these discussions, a new governing body over Orthodox schools in the Baltic provinces, the Council for the Administration of the Orthodox Peasant Schools and the Baltic Teacher Seminary had been set up in Riga in 1870. Further, the graduates of parish schools who passed qualification exams (in Russian) became entitled to a reduction in the number of

37 RGIA: f. 733, op. 170, d. 537 (On the subordination of the Orthodox country schools to the Ministry of Popular Enlightenment (1870–1874)), l. 30-31 ob.

38 Cf. RGIA: f. 733, op. 170, d. 537, l. 35.

39 Cf. *ibidem*, l. 39.

40 Cf. *ibidem*, l. 39-39 ob.

41 Cf. Andrezen, *Estoniskie narodnye shkoly* (see note 20), p. 141.

years military service they had to serve.<sup>42</sup> In 1870, the schools received a lump sum of 800,000 rubles and 925 desiatin (about 2500 acres) of state land, and in 1884 a further 2087 desiatin (5217 acres).<sup>43</sup> The Council received an annual budget of 42,190 rubles from both the Ministry of Education and the Synod towards support of the Orthodox. This funding was used for translation into native languages and publication of textbooks, for building and maintaining school buildings and hiring teachers.

By providing financial support, the Ministry of Education tried to ensure control over the academic standards of these schools: The Director of Alexander City school (a “gymnasium” or grammar school) in Riga and a representative of the Curator of the Teaching District were expected to participate in the meetings of the Council. In 1870, the Minister of Education, D. Tolstoy, introduced special inspectors of Orthodox schools for the Latvian and Estonian parts of the province; these inspectors reported to the Curator of the Dorpat Teaching District.<sup>44</sup> These attempts at control over church schools were resisted by the clergy: bishops made complaints about the interference of the Curator in the affairs of the Orthodox schools.

However, it can be argued that the support provided by the central state from 1870 onwards made the Orthodox schools in the Baltic academically stronger and more competitive with the Lutheran schools than they had previously been. As will be shown below, the number of non-Orthodox students in the Orthodox schools grew substantially in the 1870s and 1880s. The efforts of the central government to centralize the system of elementary education in the Baltic provinces in the 1860s and 1870s and to offset the German cultural influence with Russian influence overlapped with the indigenous Estonian and Latvian movements for cultural autonomy. Some representatives of the national activists (known in Russian as *mladolatyski* and *mladoestonski*) demanded that the Lutheran schools be transferred to the Ministry of Education and that national language schools be permitted. At the same time, as opposition to the German influence, some leaders of the national awakening (Karl Jakobson, Krišjānis Valdemārs) were sympathetic to the expansion of the Russian influence in education. Taking into account the national activists’ alliance with the Russian state in the 1860s and 1870s, perhaps they perceived the Orthodox schools as a substitute for the ideal of the “people’s school”, free from the influence of the Lutheran church and German landlords. There is not sufficient evidence to argue this case, even though some indirect evidence suggests that for some Orthodox Estonians and Latvians it was indeed a possibility. The most visible example of the influence of national activists on Orthodox education is the popularity among the Orthodox of the textbooks by Carl Robert Jakobson, a progressive pedagogue and promoter of Estonian-language education. The “Estonian Reader” (2 parts) by Jakobson, free from religious texts but filled with the poetry of na-

42 Cf. *Pravila dlia vydachi svidetel'stv o znanii kursa nachal'nykh uchilishch* [Regulation for the Release of Certificates of Knowledge in Primary School Classes], in: *Prilozhenie N 2 k tsirkuliarov po Derptskomu uchebnomu okrugu za 1887 g.* [Supplement no. 2 to the Circular on the Dorpat Teaching District from 1887], pp. 1-8.

43 Cf. S. Karpukhina: *Pravoslavnye tserkovno-prikhodskie shkoly na territorii Latvii v XIX v.* [Orthodox Church-Parish Schools on Latvian Territory in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century], in: A.V. Gavrilin (ed.): *Pravoslavie v Latvii* [Orthodoxy in Latvia], Riga 1993, pp. 7-26, here p. 13.

44 Cf. RGIA, f. 733, op. 170, d. 537.



tionalist Lydia Koidula, was banned from the Lutheran schools but recommended for use in the Orthodox schools.<sup>45</sup> St George's Orthodox school in Dorpat operated from the premises that belonged to the Trade Shipping Society 'Linda', many members of which were active national leaders, suggesting at least an indirect link between Orthodox schools and the national activists.

The propensity towards ethnic nationalism in the accounts of educational history of the Baltic provinces often tended to underestimate the confessional factor. The development of elementary education is firmly linked to the narratives of progressive secularization and nationalization. The presence of the Orthodox schools in the educational landscape has been treated as a minority education issue, and, with some rare exceptions, dismissed as insignificant.<sup>46</sup> The archival material, however, presents a rich and complex picture, showing how politics, culture and religion are all intertwined. Moreover, it is obvious that the history of education cannot be compartmentalized, as the Orthodox schools were integrated in local peasant society. In the following section we shall be looking at the problem of the mixed confessional makeup of both Lutheran and Orthodox schools, trying to determine what peasants made of the schools and how they made use of them. It is quite clear that, notwithstanding the intentions of the education managers and activists, the peasant schools were places that also responded to the expectations of the users, and were not simply the instruments of policies and ideologies. Focusing on what education meant for ordinary people, parents and their children and how they tried to shape the schools according to their own needs means that different kinds of questions have to be asked.

### **A Strange Case of Confessional Indifference? The Confessional Mix and School Mergers**

#### *Lutherans in the Orthodox Schools, Orthodox Pupils in the Lutheran Schools*

Both the Orthodox and Lutheran schools had a confessional mix of students. In the 1860s and early 1870s there was a significant number of Orthodox students attending the Lutheran schools, a fact that worried the Russian authorities. In 1873 Bishop Veniamin of Riga had sent a secret circular requesting priests to collect evidence about the Orthodox students studying in the Lutheran schools. The data varied from parish to parish. In some parishes it was a case of individual children only, but in others there were dozens.<sup>47</sup> The reasons given by peasants were primarily material considerations. The distance from home to school was important. Since many schools were boarding schools, children had to be provided with food and clothing. Therefore, if a school was within walking distance, confessional considerations were largely insignificant for poor peasants. An Orthodox orphan, Ioann Bauer from Kokenhusen parish, attended the Lutheran school which was about 200 meters from his house (or the house of his masters) and had his meals at home rather than at the school.<sup>48</sup> He pointed out that the nearest Orthodox school was 7.5 km from his home.

45 Cf. EAA: f. 1655, op. 2, d. 2118 (1876).

46 Elango, Laul et.al., *Eesti kooli ajalugu* (see note 10).

47 In Fellin deanery there were 208 Orthodox children in Lutheran schools in 1873.

48 Cf. Latvijas Valsts Vēstures Arhīvs (LVVA): f. 7466, Op. 1, D. 11, l. 3 ob.

In Uexküll parish, 90 Orthodox children studied in the Lutheran schools because there was not a single Orthodox school in the five townships served by this parish, while the number of Lutheran schools was 20.<sup>49</sup> The economic dependency of the Orthodox landless peasants on their Lutheran masters was another reason for them to choose Lutheran schools. The Fellinn dean Popov reiterated a familiar argument that the Lutheran masters prevented the poor Orthodox children who worked as servants from attending the Orthodox schools despite the demands of the Orthodox parish.<sup>50</sup> Yet, from the accounts of other priests we learn that some Lutheran masters were kind and charitable. Countess Medem, the patroness of a school in Stockmanshof, provided students with free school utensils, breakfast and lunch and treated children and parents kindly.<sup>51</sup> Some priests also pointed out a cultural motivation in the peasants' choice of a Lutheran school, such as the importance of learning German in order to adapt better to German culture and Lutheranism.<sup>52</sup>

What was the impact of this choice of education on confession? According to the priests, many of the Orthodox pupils who studied in the Lutheran schools were nominally Orthodox, but secretly Lutherans, i.e. apostates.<sup>53</sup> In practice, instruction in Orthodox religion was not provided either in Lutheran schools or outside the schools. Therefore, the priests reasoned that the Orthodox children studying in the Lutheran schools were lost for the Orthodox church. The tolerant policy of the government towards the baptism of children of mixed marriages in Lutheran churches during the reign of Alexander II has also been cited as a reason for parents choosing Lutheran schools.<sup>54</sup>

In the 1870s there was clearly an attempt to reverse this situation and to make the Orthodox schools more competitive and attractive for both Orthodox and Lutheran peasants. Indeed, the establishment of the Council for rural Orthodox schools in Livland in 1870, which strengthened academic programs in the parish schools, the establishment of the Baltic Teachers Seminary in Riga and the financial support for the growing network of Orthodox schools had their effects. By the early 1880s the number of Lutherans studying in the Orthodox schools had grown. In some areas, such as Fellin township, Lutheran students constituted 36% of all students at Orthodox schools; on the island of Ösel (Saaremaa) they constituted 11%.<sup>55</sup> In Estland (in 1881, before conversions) the Lutherans prevailed in the Orthodox schools: 57.3% in parish schools and 55.6% in village schools.<sup>56</sup>

In 1872, the central government had officially confirmed the right of the Lutheran children to study in Orthodox schools. This legislation provoked protests from the Lutheran church and nobility. There was concern about the traditional association between schooling and confirmation. There were also fears about Orthodox indoctrination. The central government pointed out that permission to study in the Orthodox schools did not relieve students

49 Cf. LVVA: f. 7466, op. 1, d. 11. l. 6-6 ob.

50 Cf. EAA: f. 1655, op. 2, d. 1763. n.p. (Report from S. Popov to Bishop of Riga Veniamin, 19.12.1873).

51 Cf. LVVA: f. 7466, op. 1, d. 11, l. 3 ob.

52 Cf. *ibidem*.

53 Cf. *ibidem*.

54 Cf. *ibidem*, l. 6-6 ob.

55 Cf. Ernits, *Õigeusu koolid* (see note 17), pp. 851-853.

56 Cf. *ibidem*.

from religious instruction which had to be organized outside school hours.<sup>57</sup> Some peasants complained that the Lutheran school councils charged their children for non-attendance, regardless of the fact that they attended the Orthodox school.<sup>58</sup>

All in all, the evidence of Lutheran families voluntarily choosing the Orthodox schools without converting to Orthodoxy is quite substantial. The reasons for this choice were varied, with the confessional character of the schools playing a subsidiary role. As in the case with the Orthodox students in Lutheran schools, the material circumstances, the question of distance and other practical considerations were quite significant. Another reason was the milder discipline and weaker control of these schools. The reputation of the Lutheran schools as “schools of punishment” persisted even in the era of progressive pedagogy.<sup>59</sup> Physical punishment and shaming practices continued to be used despite numerous prohibitions by the educational authorities.<sup>60</sup> It would be unfair to represent the Orthodox schools as free of punishment, but it appears that unkind teachers and cantors were quickly reported by peasants and severely reprimanded by the deans.<sup>61</sup> Peasants may have felt that they had more influence over the Orthodox schools, as the structure of Lutheran education was more rigid.

One of the reasons for the popularity of Orthodox schools frequently mentioned in the reports was the provision of the Russian language. Indeed, according to the 1850 statute on Orthodox schools, Russian had to be taught and teachers had to be fluent in Russian. Perhaps, despite the low quality of Russian tuition some peasants were attracted by the Orthodox schools precisely because they were regarded as “Russian”. Teachers who had graduated from the Russian-based Baltic Teacher seminary and Riga Spiritual seminary had more appeal for students who aimed to learn the language. An Inspector of Riga Teaching district, named Zaionchkovsky, emphasized that the Lutherans who lived within a radius of 25-100 km from Weisenberg (Rakvere) sent their children to the Orthodox parish school in town, precisely because they wanted them to master Russian.<sup>62</sup> Yet, evidence also suggests that the quality of Russian taught in the Orthodox schools varied considerably. The father of a future Orthodox priest, Khristofor Vink, had to move his son from the parish school

57 Cf. G. Fal'bruk, V. Charnolusky: *Narodnye uchilishcha Pribaltiiskogo kraia* [The Peasant Schools in the Baltic Provinces], S.-Peterburg 1903, p. 30 (31 July 1872).

58 Cf. *ibidem*. The Dorpat Curator on 20 April 1886 issued a circular explaining that fining the students attending Orthodox schools for missing classes was illegal.

59 Jaan Adamson remembered that his mother taught him to read at home for fear that he would be sent to school where children were subjected to punishment. Cf. V. Reimann: *Jaan Adamson*, in: *Eesti kultura II*, Tartu 1913, p. 5.

60 In 1907 the case of a pupil who died because he was punished by being forced to stand in one place for eight hours was cited by school inspectors as a warning against using any form of physical punishment for children in elementary schools. Cf. EAA: F. 4723, op. 1, d. 11 (Uue Vändra Saalema Algkool), l. 48.

61 Cf. LVVA: f. 4754, op. 1, d. 794 (Complaints of the parishioners about cruel attitudes of the teacher, 1878), ll. 1-2 ob.

62 Cited in V. Pliss: *Istoricheskaia zasluga i prodolzhaishcheesia znachenie pravoslavnoi nachal'noi shkoly v Pribaltiiskom krae dlia pravoslavno-russkogo dela* [The Historic Service and Continuing Knowledge of the Orthodox Primary Schools in the Baltic Provinces for the Russian-Orthodox Case], in: *Pravoslavnye narodnye shkoly v Pribaltiiskikh guberniiakh. Istoricheskoe znachenie ikh i sovremennoe bedstvennoe polozhenie* [Orthodox Peasant Schools in the Baltic Provinces. Knowledge of Their History and Current Sad Situation], S.Peterburg 1914, p. 29.

in Ilmjärve to Salaku (Puka parish, Valga county) because of the poor Russian language taught in Ilmjärve.<sup>63</sup>

The discussion above suggests that educational strategies cut across the confessional divide, showing that religious loyalties played a less significant role in education than other considerations of a practical, cultural or academic character. Undoubtedly, there were peasants who felt strongly about their confession but the fact that a high proportion of peasants switched from one confessional school to another suggests a more flexible approach. It can be argued that in the nineteenth century Estonian and Latvian peasants had already developed a pragmatic attitude to their choice of schools.

Confessional identity was still important, but sometimes it was used by aspiring Estonian and Latvian families as a leverage in order to achieve educational goals. From the 1860s onwards more peasants were able to get education in city schools, seminaries and even universities. However, for a family with several children the cost of education beyond village school level was quite prohibitive. Konstantin Päts' grandfather who converted to Orthodoxy in the 1840s moved to Fellin (Viljandi) from the countryside because of harassment by his landlord. When Jakob Päts, Konstantin's father, moved to Pärnumaa (Tahkuranna) the family faced a dilemma with regard to affordable education for his five sons and a daughter. On the advice of a family friend, the Orthodox priest Mikhail Suigusaar, the two older boys were sent to Riga Orthodox Seminary, which provided competitive scholarships for Estonian students.<sup>64</sup> The future president of the Estonian Republic, Konstantin Päts, studied at the seminary between 1887 and 1892, after which he enrolled in Pärnu City School ('Gymnasium') and the University of Tartu. His brother Nikolai graduated from the Riga Seminary in 1894 and was ordained a priest in 1899.<sup>65</sup> While his education at Riga Seminary led Nikolai Päts to a career in the church, Konstantin simply saw it as a step towards a secular education.

The generation of Estonians and Latvians that grew up after the school reforms of the 1880s, which involved the building of ministerial schools, the introduction of Russian as the medium of teaching and the transfer of the Lutheran schools to the Ministry of Education (1886), had a more acute perception of the language issue and of the increased control that the imperial central authority had over education. The sense of opposition to "Russified schools" increased when the Russian language was promoted as an instrument of cohesion in the Russian Empire. The new generation of intelligentsia (teachers, journalists, writers), criticized the shortcomings of the imperial school policy and the educational system that was in place, especially the ministerial schools and the power of the school inspectors. The centrality of Russian language in teaching was obviously one major obstacle for the development of a truly people's school (*rahvakool*) in Estonia and Latvia.<sup>66</sup> This perception of the imperial school in the non-Russian provinces was largely formed during the last years

63 Nõmme Museum (Tallinn), "The family chronicle of K. Vink (1956)", l. 18-19. Thanks to Toomas Schvak for this reference.

64 Cf. Eesti rahvuslikud suurmehed [Estonian National Heroes], vol. 4 (1938), no 19.

65 Cf. Anu Raudsepp: Riia Vaimulik Seminar. 1846–1918 [Riga Orthodox Seminary. 1846–1918], Tartu 1998, p. 131.

66 Cf. Ilmar Kopso: Eesti rahvasliku koolielu tekke eelloost [The Preface to the Development of Estonian National School Life], in: Eestikeelne keskharidus 100 [Estonian Secondary Education 100 Years], Tartu, pp. 26-30.

of the old regime, and was promoted in the writings of educated Estonians (and Latvians) during the independent republic. It would be misleading, however, to extend their views to the earlier period, or to assume that these views were shared by the majority of people.

What was the position of the Orthodox Estonians and Latvians towards the linguistic Russification of the schools? Russian was the language of administration, and the language of city schools and universities throughout the Empire. It cannot be denied that learning Russian was a major social goal, particularly in light of the high migration rate of Estonians and Latvians. The demand for a curriculum taught entirely through the means of Estonian or Latvian was never put forward at the diocesan councils, not even during the 1905 uprisings.<sup>67</sup> The main demand was to provide more opportunity for teaching local language and religion by means of a local language. The clergy emphasized the importance of teaching Russian. Somewhat surprisingly, the priests, participants at diocesan conferences, made a proposal to introduce German in the Orthodox schools. The priests argued that since knowledge of German was often a prerequisite of finding work, children would benefit from learning German at parish schools, even as an extracurricular subject.<sup>68</sup> Multilingualism was the norm not only among the elites but also among the ordinary people living in the borderlands. Switching between languages was an everyday reality, and a condition for survival. In Riga spiritual seminary the students learned several languages (Russian, Slavonic, Estonian or Latvian, Greek, Latin, German, and optionally French).<sup>69</sup> Given that the students came from a generally low social background we can surmise that this remarkable capacity for language learning was due to the multilingual environment in which they lived.

#### *Scholl Mergers in the Context of School Reforms in the 1880s*

In support of the thesis that confessional differences mattered less in the field of elementary education we would like to discuss the cases of school mergers. This had become possible due to the reforms of Alexander III in the 1880s and 1890s, showing the vulnerability of confessional segregation in the rural school network. As before, material and academic considerations often prevailed over confessional loyalties. The co-existence of two parallel elementary school systems was cumbersome and expensive. Since conversions to Orthodoxy created confessional patchiness, Lutheran and Orthodox parish and educational landscapes overlapped. It was not unusual for two parish schools to coexist within 200 meters of each other. In the late 1840s and 1850s, there was some hope that, due to conversions to Orthodoxy, some empty Lutheran school buildings could be transferred to the Orthodox church but, as a rule, the Lutheran church and landlords quite successfully resisted this option.<sup>70</sup>

67 Cf. XXVI s'ezd deputatov dukhovenstva Rizhskoi eparkhii 1905 [The 26<sup>th</sup> Session of the Riga Diocesan Council]. Riga 1905.

68 Cf. *ibidem*, pp. 201 f.

69 Cf. RGIA: f. 802, op. 9, d. 25 (On the introduction of the new teaching programs in Riga seminary and school, 1867), ll. 1-67; f. 802, op. 9, d. 72 (1877), l. 27 ob.

70 MVD instruction (1849) as cited in Karpukhina: *Pravoslavnye tserkovno-prikhodskie shkoly* (see note 43), p. 12.

The policies of Alexander III had provided the legal basis for transferring lands and buildings that were in private use to the Orthodox Church. According to “The Rules on the procedure for alienation and occupation of private immovable property for the use of the Orthodox Church, congregations, cemeteries, pastorates and schools in the Baltic provinces” (1886), if the owner refused to give or sell his property to the Orthodox church, the state could force the owner to sell it through the court, at a price determined by the buyer. It is doubtful whether this quite unprecedented law was applied widely, because of the protests it raised on the part of the landowners. In the light of this political and legal change, we are able to understand why there was a large number of petitions in favor of the merger of Orthodox and Lutheran schools. In Palzmar (Palsmane, Walk county) where 3,000 peasants lived, the Lutheran and Orthodox schools operated within 200 meters of each other. Some representatives of the local volost council supported the Orthodox priest, Aleksandr Vitol, in his attempt to merge the two schools into an Orthodox one. The peasants voted in favor of the merger on the basis that resources would be saved, but set the condition that religion would be taught separately to Lutheran and Orthodox children in their respective mother tongue. One of the arguments the priest used to raise sympathy for his request with the authorities was by drawing attention to the bullying local manor lord who called those in favor of the merger “members of the Russian gang”.<sup>71</sup>

The saving of resources had also been used as an argument in the case of Suislepa parish school in Fellin (Viljandi) uезд in 1889. The Orthodox school founded in 1861 was regarded as more popular and better equipped, while the Lutheran school had only one teacher and one pupil who also worked as a shepherd for the schoolteacher. The petitioners deemed that the teacher’s use of the school land for his work was too good a pay for teaching just one student.<sup>72</sup> Unlike Palzmar, Suislepa was a small parish. The proportion of converts in the 1840s in both Uus Suislepa and Vana Suislepa was only 1.1%.<sup>73</sup> However, between the 1850s and 1880s the number of Orthodox had grown so that by 1890 Suislepa had its own Orthodox church designed by the architect A. Edelson, who designed several Orthodox churches in the 1890s.<sup>74</sup> While the Orthodox by then made up about half of the taxpayers to Suislepa township, they were not represented equally in the township assembly, where they were outnumbered 3 to 11 by the Lutherans. The Orthodox priest Viktor Polistovsky argued that the prevalence of Lutheran members in the council meant that the question of the merger of the Lutheran with the Orthodox school was doomed to fail, even if a large number of Lutherans were to support the merger. He even proposed legal pressure to increase the number of Orthodox members in the assembly.<sup>75</sup>

While the curator of Riga Teaching District Mikhail Kapustin was in favor of the merger of the Suislepa Lutheran school with the Orthodox one, the Ministry of State Properties was cautious, pointing out that the Lutheran school had been built by the uезд school council,

71 LVVA: f. 7454, op. 1, d. 27, ll. 22-23.

72 Cf. *ibidem*, l. 50.

73 Cf. Hans Kruus: *Talurahva k  rimine l  una-Eestis XIX sajandi 40. aastail* [The Peasant Unrest of the 1840s in South Estonia], Tartu 1930, p. 363.

74 Cf. Jaanus Plaat, Arne Maasik: *  igeusu kirikud, kloostrid ja kabelid Eestis* [Orthodox Churches, Monasteries and Chapels in Estonia], Tallinn 2011, p. 746.

75 Cf. LVVA: f. 7454, op. 1, d. 27 (On the merger of Lutheran and Orthodox schools), l. 51.

which could lead to legal contestation.<sup>76</sup> But neither this caution, nor the lack of majority in the assembly prevented the authorities from closing down the Lutheran school and passing the land to the Orthodox Church.<sup>77</sup> In 1895/96 Suislepa Orthodox parish school had 62 students, of whom more than two thirds were Lutherans.<sup>78</sup> The number of students declined over the years, falling to 27 by 1913. Not all Orthodox were in favor of the merger of Orthodox and Lutheran schools. The deputies of the Orthodox Riga Diocese conference in 1886 objected to mergers as this would lead to the erosion of the confessional character of a school.<sup>79</sup>

The conversion movement in Western and Northern Estonia in the mid-1880s had led to additional demands to replace Lutheran schools with Orthodox ones in the existing Lutheran school buildings. In 1886, peasants of Vihterpalu (Risti parish, Estland province) petitioned Mikhail Kapustin arguing that because of their conversion to Orthodoxy they were entitled to use the building of the “empty” Lutheran school, in which only eight students studied. The petitioners pointed out that the majority of the Orthodox and Lutheran peasants were in favor of this, with the exception of the volost elder and the scribe who was also the teacher.<sup>80</sup> The peasants guaranteed that they would provide the school with timber for heating and lighting, probably expecting that the expenses for the teacher would be covered by the Orthodox Church.<sup>81</sup> Kapustin wrote to Bishop Donat, asking him to liaise with the governor of Estland to facilitate the transfer of the school. He argued that as long as the number of Orthodox peasants prevailed over the number of Lutherans, they had a right to have the school transferred.<sup>82</sup>

The discussions on the mergers of Lutheran and Orthodox schools must be viewed in the context of the educational reforms of the 1880s and 1890s. These reforms included the strengthening of Russian as a compulsory medium of instruction and a transfer of all Lutheran schools from Lutheran Church control to the Ministry of Education. They often encountered resistance from manor lords on the one hand and divided peasant communities on the other. While the promise of state subsidies for the maintenance of elementary schools appealed to the peasants, economic pressure exerted by the manor lords made the everyday life of schools and teachers very difficult. The cases in which manor lords resisted the decisions of local councils have been documented in the literature.<sup>83</sup> The nobility’s withdrawal of financial resources from schools and teacher seminaries was part and parcel of their boycott of central policy. One specific act of resistance by local authorities against the transfer of Lutheran schools to the Ministry of Education was to stop collecting fines

76 Cf. LVVA: f. 7454, op. 1, d. 27.

77 Cf. RGIA: f. 859, d. 175538, k. 4788 (RGIA catalogue). The author only saw the summary of the decision in the RGIA catalogue. The file has yet to be found. It is interesting that in the Riga Orthodox Consistory case (the Orthodox Spiritual Consistory) the Ministry of State Properties refuses to complete alienation, but eventually the case is resolved in favor of the Orthodox school.

78 Cf. EAA: f. 1655, op. 2, d. 1784, no page numeration.

79 Cf. LVVA: f. 7454, op. 1, d. 27, l. 22-23.

80 Cf. *ibidem*, l. 29.

81 Cf. *ibidem*, l. 29 ob.

82 Cf. *ibidem*, l. 30.

83 Cf. Andrejs Plakans: Part Three. The Latvians, in: Thaden (ed.), *Russification* (see note 2), pp. 205-284, here pp. 237-239.

for schooldays missed by pupils.<sup>84</sup> As a result, some schools were under threat to lose all their pupils, as in the case of Suislepa school.

In the Estonian part of the Baltic provinces alone, 50 schools were closed or merged into Orthodox ones. From 1886 to 1894 the number of elementary schools in Estland declined by 14% and in Livland by 18%. Withdrawal of support by the nobility had placed a heavier burden on the peasantry to sustain the schools. Orthodox schools, unlike the Lutheran ones, remained under the jurisdiction of the State Church. The transfer of schools to the Orthodox Church was, thus, a sign of the complex processes of the disintegration of the traditional system of education which was taking place in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century. The motivations for, and configurations of, such developments could vary from one case to another, on the whole, as illustrated by the examples of mergers of Lutheran and Orthodox schools. The peasants and the institutions (such as the volost councils) which represented them played an assertive role in deciding what form of school they wanted.

The “positive” impact of educational reforms on the Orthodox schools should not be exaggerated. There may initially have been an expectation among the authorities that reforms would benefit Orthodox schools, as they had more Russian-speaking teachers than Lutheran ones. However, by the 1890s the Ministry of Education already looked unfavorably on the Orthodox schools, criticizing their academic achievements and the inadequate role of the clergy in running them.<sup>85</sup> In 1893, the sum of money spent per pupil in Orthodox schools was lower than in the other types of schools (on average 4.89 rubles per pupil compared to 21.15 in town schools).<sup>86</sup>

## Conclusion

The general understanding of the Orthodox schools in the Baltic region is based on several assumptions: the schools of the “Russian faith” were “Russified” more than the Lutheran schools, at least until the 1880s; they provided much lower standards of teaching; and generally they were not essential for the building of the nation through popular education. Most of these assumptions are based on the marginalization of Orthodoxy within the Estonian and Latvian national history narratives, and the negative evaluations of the educational policy of the Russian state in the late imperial period. The cases discussed in this article make it possible to modify this picture.

The confessional divide between Orthodox and Lutheran education in the nineteenth-century Baltic provinces was not as clear cut as it appeared. The members of both confessions studied in each other’s schools, with a very substantial Lutheran presence in the

84 Cf. S.P. Sakharov: *Narodnoe obrazovanie v Jur’evskom uезде* [Education in the Jur’ev county], Jur’ev 1917, p. 7. Partly due to these fines the Baltic provinces had the highest levels of school attendance. In 1880 in the group of 7-14 year old boys the schoolchildren constituted 39.3%, of all girls of the same age group 29.0%. In European Russia this number was 13.8% for boys and 3.3% for girls. Cf. V.I. Pokrovskii (ed.): *Odnodnevnaia perepis’ nachal’nykh shkol v imperii* [A Census of the Primary Schools in the Empire] (18.01.1911), vol. IX, part 1, Petrograd 1914, p. 2.

85 Cf. Irina Paert: *Orthodox Primary Schools in the Baltic Provinces: Confessional and Ethnic Identity 1870s–1914*. Paper presented to the ASEES convention, Boston, November 2013.

86 Cf. Pokrovskii (ed.), *Odnodnevnaia perepis’* (see note 84), p. 3.



Orthodox schools. This situation was a result of multiple factors, including the adaptation of the Orthodox religious institutions to the local cultural environment, the financial support of the central state, school culture, local control and language. As we have argued, the motivations of peasants regarding their choice of schools depended on a variety of factors, among which confession and the cultural orientation of the school were not prevalent.

The impact of the schools cannot be totally equated with that of the parish: Children spent three to five years at school, and Lutherans could be exempted from the lessons in Orthodox religion. Therefore, as the cases presented here demonstrate, the confessional character of the school was not necessarily an obstacle for parents when deciding which school their children should attend. This can also be compared to today's popularity of denominational or church-run schools among non-church goers. The cases of mergers in the Baltic, however, demonstrate that for the rural communities the question of control was perhaps more important than confession. In this respect, our case supports the findings of historians who have pointed out that resistance to Ministry of Education policy was not so much a matter of the Russian language but of loss of control over schools by peasants.<sup>87</sup> The Orthodox schools therefore could have represented a niche that made it possible to avoid the direct control of the Ministry of Education, and allowed local communities to control their own schools.

The problem of the language of tuition has been overstated: The rural schools often struggled to help peasants obtain a practical knowledge of Russian. Sometimes the struggle to retain the Estonian or Latvian language of tuition was more likely to be a confessional concern than a nationalist one. We should also allow for the fact that there was a greater diversity of needs and motivations among school-users than has otherwise been considered in the literature.

The Russian press portrayed the Baltic peasants as victims of the Lutheran pastors and landlords, while the Baltic German pamphlets represented the Orthodox converts as being manipulated by the Orthodox priests. Yet, as the documents relating to Lutheran and Orthodox schools demonstrate, peasants made rational choices, demonstrated solidarity in collectively defending their interests, and skillfully communicated with the authorities playing the stereotypes which the authorities assigned them in order to achieve their aims.

### *Zusammenfassung*

In diesem Beitrag steht die orthodoxe Volksbildung im Mittelpunkt, die sich in dem von lutherischen Bildungstraditionen beherrschten Ostseeraum im Zeitraum von 1840–1914 entwickelte. Dabei wird die These von einer Diskrepanz zwischen den Absichten der Eliten und den tatsächlichen Bedürfnissen und Praktiken der „einfachen Leute“ diskutiert. Der Beitrag ist in zwei wesentliche Teile gegliedert, im ersten wird die Geschichte der orthodoxen Schulen im lutherischen Umfeld zwischen 1840 und 1914 in einen Kontext gesetzt,

87 Cf. Ben Eklof: *Russian Peasant Schools. Officialdom, Village Culture, and Popular Pedagogy, 1861–1914*, Berkeley, CA 1990; Steven T. Duke: *Educating Non-Russians in Late Imperial Russia. An Historical Study of Educational Development in a Multiethnic Setting, 1885–1914*, PhD dissertation, Indiana University 1999.

wobei ein Schwerpunkt auf die Akkulturation der Orthodoxie und die Absichten der russischen Amtsträger im Hinblick auf die Schulen gelegt wird. Im zweiten Abschnitt werden Fälle konfessioneller Vermischung in beiden Arten von Schulen und in Fällen von Zusammenschlüssen von Schulen in den 1880er Jahren verhandelt.

In dem Beitrag werden die negativen Annahmen bezüglich der orthodoxen Bildung hinterfragt, die auf der Marginalisierung der Orthodoxie in den nationalen estnischen und lettischen Geschichtsnarrativen beruhen.

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