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**INSTITUTIONAL RUPTURE AND PERSONAL CONTINUITY:
APPROACHING THE "POST" IN POST-SOVIET RELIGION**

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Sonja Luehrmann is Associate Professor of Anthropology at Simon Fraser University. Her research engages questions of human transformability: how people live their lives through shifting socioeconomic

and political conditions, and how various religious and secular institutions appeal to the human capacity to change habits and convictions.

Geographically, she is particularly interested in multi-ethnic and multi-religious areas such as Russia's Volga region, where ideological transformations get bound up with changing perceptions of self and other.

She has published two books on Soviet atheism and its effects on post-Soviet religion and historical memory:

Secularism Soviet Style: Teaching Atheism and Religion in a Volga Republic (Indiana, 2011)

Religion in Secular Archives: Soviet Atheism and Historical Knowledge (Oxford, 2015).

Currently she is working on a book about anti-abortion activism in the post-Soviet Russian Orthodox Church, where activists attempt to transform popular attitudes toward past and present reproductive decisions.

Do post-Soviet religious groups consist of converted atheists or resurfaced underground believers? Do they rework Soviet experiences and infrastructures or bring back ancient norms that socialism tried to suppress? Such variations on the question of continuity versus rupture in religious biographies fuel debates among adherents as well as critics of religious denominations in former Soviet space. This paper argues that a more nuanced understanding of "post" in post-Soviet religion can help dissolve the apparent contrast between recuperation and reinvention of tradition.

Reviewing what we know from almost three decades of research on religion in multi-ethnic Russia, I argue that competing claims to legitimacy are possible because rupture at the level of institutions coexists with narrative constructions of biographical continuity. What makes twenty-first century religion in the Russian Federation "post-Soviet" is the lingering of individual sensibilities and the impossibility of erasing an immediate past era in order to restore access to a previous one. Comparable to the "post" in post-colonial, religion is post-Soviet due to its unstable and ambivalent relationship with the Soviet past, which is both part of the personal formation of believers and object of institutional distancing.