



# ORTHODOXY AND HETERODOXY: SHAPING RELIGIOUS IDENTITY IN MEDIIEVAL RUS'

**[ba|sees]**  
british association for slavonic  
and east european studies

**Early Slavic Thematic Session at the BASEES Annual Conference**

**Fitzwilliam College – Churchill College, Cambridge on Monday, 4th April 2016**

**09:00-10:30 SESSION 7**

**7.1. Literature/Cultures: Orthodoxy and Heterodoxy – Shaping Religious Identity in Medieval Rus' 1**

Chair: Simon Franklin (University of Cambridge)

Papers:

Katie Sykes (University of Cambridge) 'What is a pagan? The usage of the term поганьи in the chronicles of early Rus'

Alexandra Vukovich (University of Cambridge) 'Mixed Cultural References in Early Rus': the case of promissory rituals'

Jana Howlett (University of Cambridge) 'The Role of Heresy in Shaping Orthodoxy in Early Muscovy'

**11:00-12:45 SESSION 8**

**8.1. Literature/Cultures: Orthodoxy and Heterodoxy – Shaping Religious Identity in Medieval Rus' 2**

Chair: Jana Howlett (University of Cambridge)

Papers:

Nicholas Mayhew (University of Cambridge) 'Problematising 'Orthodoxy': Paired Saint Culture in Kievan and Muscovite Rus'

Ágnes Kriza (University of Cambridge) 'The Iconography of Medieval Russian Sanctuary: A Visualized Concept of Orthodoxy'

Olenka Z. Pevny (University of Cambridge) 'The Visual Rhetoric of Orthodoxy in 17th-century Kyiv: Petro Mohyla's restoration of the Church of the Savior at Berestovo'

## ***Proposals***

### ***Katie Sykes – What is a pagan? The usage of the term *поганьи* in the chronicles of early Rus***

The past decade has seen increasing interest in the numerous ties – political, commercial, marital, and not least religious and ecclesiastical - between early Rus and its neighbours. Despite this, there remains little work on Russian perceptions of religious difference or 'otherness'. This paper will take as its focus the usage of the term *поганьи* (*poganyi*, generally translated as 'pagan') in early Russian chronicle-writing. It is often assumed that this term predominantly expressed a sense of religious difference, and that it tended to be used to label peoples who were neither Christian, Jewish or Muslim. This paper will argue that such definitions do not capture the term's multiple and complex meanings, proposing that the term *поганьи* is not so much a term expressing religious difference as a term which refers to enemies of the princes of Rus, whatever their religion. Thus, in particular generic contexts, which this paper will discuss, Christians and Muslims can be 'pagans'. In short, attentive reading of early Rus sources reveals that the term 'pagan' is linked less to religious 'otherness' than to a more complex form of difference which may have a religious component, but which is not predominantly a matter of religion.

### ***Alexandra Vukovich – Mixed Cultural References in Early Rus': the case of promissory rituals***

This paper examines the transformation of the oath-taking ritual of early Rus' based on pre-Christian evidence for promissory rituals in Rus'. By taking into account the contact between Rus' and neighbouring cultures, this paper will discuss how oath-taking rituals were formed and oath-taking was transformed with the advent of Christianity in Rus'. This paper engages current research that posits tensions arising between oath-taking practices in Rus' and the interdiction to the taking of oaths in patristic literature, and suggests a wider politico-cultural study of heterodox practices within the Christian culture of early Rus'.

### ***Jana Howlett – The Role of Heresy in Shaping Orthodoxy in Early Muscovy***

This paper deals with heresy – a system of ideas rejected by the Established Church as dangerous to Orthodoxy. Heresy, one of many aspects of heterodoxy, has been treated in this period as a manifestation of influences (mainly Jewish, Catholic or Protestant rather than Moslem) and not as a demonstration of Orthodoxy. This paper will suggest that such an approach needs to be re-thought.

From the late 14th to the late 16th century – the period under consideration – the Russian Church underwent major reforms. It acquired a single centre and became Russian, rather than part of a 'universal catholic' entity. Unlike its Christian counterparts in the West, the Russian Church could not call on universities for theological truths, and it needed to develop its own doctrine. It is in the search for definitions that it turned to a tradition inherited from Byzantium. The negation of heresy, a negation of Orthodoxy, allowed the Church to affirm Orthodoxy. This is evident not only from the texts of the 'new Fathers', such as Iosif of Volokolamsk, but also from the papers of the Church administration of this period.

### ***Nicholas Mayhew* – Problematising ‘Orthodoxy’: Paired Saint Culture in Kievan and Muscovite Rus**

This paper explores the difficulties inherent in reconstructing the boundaries of ‘Orthodoxy’ and ‘Heterodoxy’ in Pre-Modern Russia. By focussing on a single type of cultural discourse, namely c of paired saints, I consider the instability of ‘Orthodoxy’ up until the seventeenth century. Using Bakhtin’s theory of the dialogic, I approach hagiographical materials as one strand of ‘Orthodox’ discourse, in constant communication with other ‘Orthodox’ discourses (for example, liturgical). My conclusion considers which factors appear to have prompted the stabilisation of ‘Orthodox’ pairs in Muscovite Rus, and suggests the impossibility of reconstructing inherent categories of propriety and impropriety in the religious culture of Kievan Rus. ‘Orthodoxy’, I contend, exists stably only in retrospect, when it is reconstructed selectively and subjectively.

The main primary sources for my investigation are: hagiographical and iconographic representations of SS. Sergius and Bacchus, Boris and Gleb, and Petr and Fevroniia, and what I term ‘kinship rites’ in liturgical books (‘brother-making’, birthing, betrothal and marriage rituals).

### ***Ágnes Kriza* – The Iconography of Medieval Russian Sanctuary: A Visualized Concept of Orthodoxy**

The history of medieval Russian sanctuary iconography starts with the St. Sophia Cathedral in Kiev which preserves the earliest survived apse decoration of Medieval Rus’. The significance of the Kievan mosaics indicates the strong influence which they exercised throughout the whole Russian Middle Ages and even beyond. In this paper, I will analyze these mosaics in the context of their closest iconographic parallel, the apse frescoes of the Ohrid Sophia Cathedral, commissioned by Archbishop Leo (1037-1056), a protagonist of the conflict between the Western and Eastern Churches in 1052-1054 which was going to lead to their Schism and mutual anathema in 1054. Leo’s Anti-Latin treatises, together with other Greek polemical writings, enable us to highlight the Anti-Latin content of those numerous innovative iconographic elements which are common in the two Sophia churches and which remain integral parts of later medieval Russian sanctuary decorations. This analysis raises questions regarding not only the dating of the Kievan mosaics, but also the concept of Orthodoxy visualized in medieval Russian sanctuaries: was the polemics against the Western Christianity encoded already in the earliest Russian monuments of art?

### ***Olenka Z. Pevny* – The Visual Rhetoric of Orthodoxy in 17th-century Kyiv: Petro Mohyla’s restoration of the Church of the Savior at Berestovo**

Petro Mohyla, Metropolitan of Kyiv, Halych and All-Rus’ from 1633 until his death in 1646, is hailed as the defender of the Rus’ Orthodox inheritance in Ruthenian society. His efforts included the preservation and renovation of key medieval ecclesiastical monuments in Kyiv. In fact, it is often claimed that the metropolitan was not simply renovating Kyiv, but returning the city to its appearance in the times of Prince Volodimer the Great. Mohyla’s use of visual language, however, was much more ambitious than a return to the forms of an outmoded medieval past. The metropolitan patronized architecture and imagery that competitively reframed the Byzantine visual inheritance in light of contemporary polemics, devotional and rhetorical practices and patterns of piety. Today, the architectural forms and wall paintings in the Church of the Savior in Berestovo best document Mohyla’s involvement with visual culture. In 1640-1642, the remains of this twelfth-century foundation were incorporated into a new church that bears little in common with the original medieval structure. The proposed paper will explore Mohyla’s renovation of the Church of the Savior and consider the purposeful, nuanced, and dynamic role of visual culture in Orthodox Slavic Reform.