

WORKSHOP

PRODUCTIVE METHODS IN INTERDISCIPLINARY STUDIES OF WOMEN AND HOLINESS IN THE SLAVIC MIDDLE AGES

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ABSTRACTS

(According to the order of the presentations in the program)

THE SANCTITY AND THE CAPITAL: TRAJECTORIES OF WOMEN'S PROTECTION

Tsvetelin Stepanov,
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From the mid-13th century onwards St. Petka of Tŭrnovo (initially of Epibates, and later of Belgrade, and of Iași) became the patron saint of the capital city of the Second Bulgarian Kingdom following the model of The Holy Mother of God -- heavenly defender of Constantinople (most probably instituted soon after 626). The cult of St. Petka was firmly established in the Balkans as a cult of the capital city protector regardless of the *ethnoi* 'states' (Bulgaria, Serbia, Moldova), with which it was associated. However, at the dawn of the modern Bulgarian state (freed from the Ottoman empire), the medieval paradigm of the heavenly woman protector was paradoxically re-employed and enriched with new profane connotations in another former centre (though only a regional one, i.e., of a *vilayet*) - Russe, and in another cultural context, when, at the very beginning of the 1880s, St. Petka became the name of the town's Brewery Association.

HOW TO TRANSLATE "*POKROV BOGORODICHEN*" [INTERCESSION OF THE HOLY MOTHER OF GOD]

Catherine Pancheva-Dikova, Bulgarian Academy of Sciences

The paper examines the current ways for translating a term, specific for the Orthodox Christian tradition, but used in theological explorations, medieval studies, and even in popular literature and tourists' guides. The paper aims to provide the fullest possible picture of translation solutions for the term *Pokrov Bogorodichen* in English, German, and Italian. It further attempts to clarify the Orthodox understanding of the concept and to offer a comparison with its interpretations in other traditions.

WHY HAVE YOU COME? THERE ARE MONKS HERE, AND YOU ARE A WOMAN! (WOMEN AND MOUNT ATHOS IN BYZANTINE AND SLAVONIC SOURCES)

Ana Stoykova, Institute for Literature, Bulgarian Academy of Sciences

As is well known, a ban on women's access to Mount Athos has been imposed since the establishment of the famous monastic peninsula. The studies on canon law, on historical and liturgical monuments related to Athos have found an explanation of this fact. When and why, however, did the literary and the folk texts appear to justify the ban? The testimonies in

Byzantine written culture and their interpretation in the Slavonic manuscripts and folklore allow us to find answers to these questions.

CHILDBIRTH, MOTHERS, AND THE CHURCH:
WHAT CAN WE LEARN FROM MEDIEVAL *EUCHOLOGIA*?

Margaret Dimitrova

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The sources addressed in this paper are Greek and Slavonic *Euchologia* of the 14th-17th centuries. The author discusses what a researcher can learn from these sources about women's participation in Church rituals for mothers in the first days after the childbirth. Apparently, *Euchologia* (Rituals/Prayer Books) show the attitudes of the Church and duties of the priests towards the mothers, but not the attitudes of women towards those rites of passage. Still, these sources clearly indicate women's participation in the rituals. The diversity of prayers and instructions for the priests suggest that the church authorities and sometimes the ordinary priests searched for forms to express care for the mothers after childbirth and composed several forms of post-partum rites. In later manuscripts (the 16th-17th centuries) prayers read on the day of delivery or on the third day after the birth became more numerous and rubrics became more indicative of the rites. Sometimes prayers with other functions, such as prayers for polluted vessels were used. The variation in the format of the rites and the increased number of the prayers for mothers after childbirth suggests that the Orthodox Church, addressing a social need amongst the Slavs in the Balkans, took care of the mothers.

GENDER SPECIFICS OF FEMALE PATRONAGE AND CHARITY
IN LATE ANTIQUITY

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The study tries to answer the question whether there are specific forms and patterns of women's patronage and charity. Starting from the premise that the gender difference is fundamental, and not just socially and culturally determined, I will argue that it influences all areas of public expression of womanhood. Based on several significant examples, the study attempts to analyze the extent to which qualities considered as typically feminine such as altruism, vanity, compassion, suggestibility, etc., affect the behaviour of the women as patrons and benefactors.

THE BETROTHED AND THE BRIDE: FEMALE MARTYRDOM AS A
TRANSFORMATION OF SOCIAL ROLES

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Early Christian martyrdom is related to the transgression of certain social conventions characteristic of the late Hellenistic period. It is, however, important to address its nature. Did it come as a uniform behaviour of Christians refusing to obey pagan rules? Or could we talk about gender-specific patterns of expressing Christian identity? This presentation will look at examples of some early hagiographic text in which two social roles of women could be

disclosed—as betrothed and as bride—which, although at first glance appear closely related, are in fact representations and specific images of admittance into two different socio-cultural paradigms.

THE TEXTS ABOUT EVIL WOMEN: DEVIATIONS OF BIBLICAL STORIES

Anisava Miltenova
Institute for Literature, Bulgarian Academy of Sciences

The texts about the evil women represent a specific group with a complex history in the Byzantine tradition and in the medieval Slavonic literatures. This paper explores these works by tracking their evolution, as well as the nature of changes and modifications. It examines their roots and shows further the transformations of biblical narratives used in composing these texts.

THE REHABILITATION OF THE STEPMOTHER

Biliana Kourtasheva, New Bulgarian University

The text addresses the question of whether the stepmother was indeed as demonic as described in the fairy tales such as “Cinderella,” “Snow White,” and others. Was she the alleged wrongdoer in the patriarchal family “romance” of the late Middle Ages? The paper argues that in the image of the stepmother (the envious woman, the witch, the alien, etc.), the patriarchal imagination in fact stigmatizes the mother, who tries to delay the early marriage of the daughter, and who thus stands against powerful social norms. The studies of Sigmund Freud, Philippe Ariès, and some literary parallels (Shakespeare) will be taken into consideration in this exploration.

THEODORA THE QUEEN OF TŪRNOVO, BYZANTINE EMPRESS THEOPHANO AND THE BDISNSKI ZBORNIK

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The "Sermon on Theophano the Queen" in the *Bdisnski Zbornik* is perhaps the most enigmatic work in this collection of women saints' vitae commissioned in 1360 by Queen Anna of Bdin (Vidin). The text does not match the fictitious title, and is, in fact, a compilation of four independent short *Prolog* vitae of women saints. In the process of compiling the text, however, all the seceding indicators (titles, rubrics, initials, new paragraph, etc.) were carefully removed. The unusual content and structure of this part of *Bdisnski Zbornik* is often explained as an apparent interest of the compiler in the *Vita of Byzantine Empress Saint Theophano* (whose name Queen Theodora of Tŭrnovo, the mother of Ivan Stratsimir, received when she took monastic vow). It is assumed that since the compiler had not had the text of the long (extended) *Vita of St Theophano*, he added to her *Prolog* vita three similar texts on women-saints taken from the same source, namely the part of the "simple" *Prolog* with commemorations for December, which he has randomly selected. The compiler appears to have edited the texts in order to integrate the four texts into a relatively seamless composition. The paper examines data on the worship of St. Theophano in medieval Bulgaria and the penetration and distribution of her extensive vita, which, apparently, was known, but

was inaccessible in Bdin (Vidin) around the time that the anthology of the women saints' lives was compiled.

WOMEN INTELLECTUALS IN BYZANTIUM: ST. CATHERINE OF ALEXANDRIA

Prof. Elka Bakalova, Bulgarian Academy of Sciences

The cult of St. Catherine of Alexandria is evidence of the high esteem that educated women (and not only the empresses) received in Byzantium. This paper discusses the principles of the visual representation of the saint: chronology, attributes, and dissemination. The emergence of images of a particular saint marks the final phase in the shaping of his/her cult according to the Byzantine church system. Where, how, and how often a saint was depicted is evidence of the dissemination and role of his/her cult. The cult of St. Catherine of Alexandria, formed in the Sinai Monastery (which later received the name "St. Catherine"), is common in Orthodoxy and Catholicism. The iconography of this saint shows differences in Byzantium (and Bulgaria) and in the West in the Middle Ages, but in the period of the Bulgarian National Revival the influence of the western iconography can be identified.

THE SEMANTICS OF BOOK COMPILATION OR TOPICS AS A KEY IN COMPOSING CALENDAR-ORIENTED COLLECTIONS

Dilyana Radoslavova, Institute for Literature, Bulgarian Academy of Sciences

This presentation offers a discussion on a possible approach for analyzing the macrostructure of calendar collections in the mediaeval Balkan tradition. According to this approach, the selection of feasts and saints and the order of the texts might be interpreted as determined by a certain theme(s) or thematic fields. This survey comprises a review of *Panegyrika* and *Cheti-menaia* with selected works both for the movable calendar cycle and for the immovable one, such as the thirteenth-century *Mihanović Homiliar* and *Jagić Zlatoust*, the fourteenth-century *Miscellany of Germanos*, and many others. Attention is also paid to the so-called "thematic miscellanies" containing works devoted to the Theotokos, e.g., the fifteenth-century *Miscellany of Mara Leševa*; collections of texts on women saints, such as the 1360 *Bdinski Zbornik* (known to us in a fifteenth-century copy); and codices containing texts dedicated to anchoresses, etc. This aspect of study was inspired by the analysis of the calendar-thematic composition of Damaskenos Studites' anthology *Thesaurus* and its transformations in the seventeenth- and the eighteenth-century Bulgarian tradition and aims at searching for similar models.

THE REPERTOIRE AND THE TOPOI OF WOMEN'S HOLINESS

Dr. Iliana Chekova, Faculty of Slavic Studies, Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski"

In texts dedicated to women saints in *Slavia Orthodoxa* one could easily find common elements in the key poetics of holiness. There are a number of stable plot *topoi* and virtues associated with the woman saint such as wisdom and insight, care for people and the nation, masculine courage and other characteristics—which are in contrast to presumed female weakness, the journey with its physical and moral dimensions, and *imitatio* (explicit or implicit) of the Biblical Holy Mothers (e.g., Sarah, Rahab, Queen of Sheba, etc.), of the Virgin Mary, Queen Helena, and others. The poetics of women's holiness present a similar

stylistic concept developed in the comparison of the righteous with the light bearers (Lucifer, the stars, the light), or portraying the woman saint as "Christ's bride" or "disciple of Christ," i.e., as a follower of the light of the Gospel.

THE RHETORIC OF WOMANHOOD: WOMEN IN HAGIOGRAPHICAL AND MEDICAL DISCOURSE IN THE SLAVIC ORTHODOX MIDDLE AGES

Adelina Angusheva-Tihanov, University of Manchester, UK

Describing the life of the righteous on earth, Abbas Isaiah compares it with the womb of the mother from which the pious will be delivered directly to the heaven. The paper takes this image as its starting point to explore the way in which the woman's body, its parts and functions are represented, discussed and used as trope within the hagiographical and the medical discourses in the Byzantine and in the Orthodox Slavic medieval cultures. The study focuses on Slavic original hagiographical and rhetorical works, and medical texts (in a broad sense) translated from Greek. As, in contrast to Byzantium, the medical discourse is fragmented and poorly attested, the paper specifically discusses the production of such tropes in the context of unevenly developed discourses. It further explores the methods which could help us understand the mechanism behind the production of such tropes.

ABBAS ZOSIMAS FROM THE VITA OF ST. MARY OF EGYPT

Maria Yovcheva,
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The paper is dedicated to St. Zosimas whose cult appears in connection with the veneration of St. Mary of Egypt. It studies the scarce hagiographical and hymnological sources (Byzantine and Slavonic) written in his commemoration. The excerpted data (the distribution of his calendar commemoration, the content of the hagiographical writings and hymnological works dedicated to him) shows that in the church tradition the cult of the Elder Zosimas fails to disengage itself from the devotion to the Egyptian recluse and remains fully in her shadow.

THE SPECIFICS OF WOMEN'S HOLINESS IN THE ORTHODOX TRADITION: THE QUESTION OF SAINT PROSTITUTES

Maria Schnitter, University of Plovdiv "St Paisii of Hilandar"

The paper explores the reception of the motif of the 'saint-whore' in the Orthodox hagiographical *corpus*. It studies the reasons for the lack of an original, indigenous tradition in the Slavic cultures. It also explores the shifts in the interpretation of this topic in the mass perception. Women's holiness is contextualized within the traditional patriarchal culture of the Balkans.

THE HISTORY OF THE CULT OF ST. PETKA OF TŪRNOVO (PARASKEVA OF EPIVAT) ACCORDING TO SOUTH SLAVIC WRITTEN SOURCES

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The complex study of the cult of a particular saint should answer the following questions: How did it appear? How was the worship established? How did it change through time? How were the liturgical commemorations of a saint revised and modified in the church ritual? It should also attempt to answer the questions when and for what purposes new texts were composed. Therefore, this presentation will analyze the types of written sources on St. Petka of Tŭrnovo (noted in *Synaxaria*, commemorative texts, the chronicle narrative from 1234, the vitae in the *Prologue* and the *Menaia*, offices) within the broader cultural and historical context and within the specific environment in which they appeared and were popular. The socio-cultural and textological methods for the comparative study of the plethora of generically diverse hagiographical texts, with different liturgical function, written in glorification of this woman saint will help us outline the history of the saint's cult in the South Slavic context. This will aid the creation of a more complete picture of the operation and the poetics of various genres, and will further disclose the similarities in the portrayal of the different types of saints, the stylistic differences of each genre in any specific time.

BYZANTINE HYMNOGRAPHIC WORKS OF ST. PARASKEVE OF EPIVAT AND THEIR SLAVONIC TRANSLATION

Evelina Mineva, University of Athens

Byzantine prototypes are the necessary corrective in the critical exploration of the Slavonic translation of the hymnological works of the saint, as the Slavic manuscript tradition appeared to be less stable, and more exposed to omissions, errors, and deviations than the Byzantine one. Therefore the discovery of some hitherto unknown Byzantine originals calls for a review of the earlier conclusions about the different "types" or cycles Slavic services dedicated to St. Petka of Epivat. A distinction is made between the translated works dedicated solely to St. Petka, and those devoted to other saints that were used in other services.

SECULAR AND CHURCH GEOGRAPHY IN THE IMAGINATION OF THE PERIOD OF THE BULGARIAN REVIVAL

Desislava Lilova, CAS, Sofia

The presentation focuses on one of the forgotten debates in the Bulgarian Revival press, initiated by the newspaper *Pravo* in 1871 with a proposal for a territorial reform of the Exarchate and the transformation of dioceses in the matrix of the Ottoman administrative system. The aim of the paper is to problematize the systematic opposition of early Bulgarian nationalism against historical geography. The core subject of the analysis is the set of criteria for a territorial division which this debate questioned and juxtaposed: political expediency vs. canon law, the mobile geography of the traveling man vs. the fixed geography of sacred places, the mechanics of the modern clock time vs. the eternity of the historical past.

IDENTITY TRANSFORMATIONS OF THE WOMEN SAINT IN BULGARIAN LANDS AT THE TIME OF THE LATE REVIVAL PERIOD

Vladimir Dimitrov New Bulgarian University

The iconographers and the benefactors in the late years of the Bulgarian Revival were proponents of the nationalistic ideas which had captivated the minds of the Bulgarians at that

time. The society of the Revival period commissioned images of those historical events and holy men and women to be represented in the churches that would mobilise the national spirit and reinforce the formation of the national ideology. The commemoration of the important events of the distant past and the creation of new figures of veneration betray a further Revival attempt to legitimize the national cause to Bulgarian population, on the one hand, and to the 'world' on the other. It was these transformations that ultimately led to the emergence of "new" saints in the monumental church ensembles of the late nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth centuries.

RECEPTION AND IDEOLOGY: THE "TURKISH TALES" IN *BULGARIAN BOOKLETS (BŪLGARSKI KNIZHITSI)*

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The paper discusses the question of the Ottoman cultural legacy in Bulgarian literature using as a study case a translation done by Elena Muteva, which was first printed in the journal *Bulgarian booklets (Bŭlgarski knizhitsi)* in 1858. Decades before the collections of Bulgarian folk tales appeared in print, the journal presented a valuable Arabian fairy tale cycle from the fourteenth century, which has become very popular in the West, and was translated into Russian with the title *The Tales of the Forty Viziers and the Queen* (in *Moskvitianin*, 1844). In the study we consider this publication in Bulgarian as an educated attempt to rethink and admire the Arab cultural tradition and the crucial role of the national ideology in ignoring similar representations of the 'Turkish' and the 'female.'

MAIDEN IN PRISON: WOMEN'S MARTYRDOM IN THE TIME OF THE OTTOMAN RULE – THE HISTORICAL REALIA AND THE LITERARY-FOLK FICTIONS

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The paper attempts to (1) contrast what is reliably known from documents about women's conversions during the Ottoman period with the representation of the topic in literature (the *Vita of Zlata Mŭglenska*) and folklore (the motif of *Maiden in Prison*); It will further try (2) to show the obvious inconsistencies; and finally (3) to define the reasons for this discrepancy.