

Vicissitudes of One Portrait, or Fluctuating Boundaries between Propaganda, Research, and Art

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In this presentation, I focus on one object: a portrait of Father Simeon, a founder of Russian Old Believer (a dissenter group of Russian Orthodox Christians that appeared in the mid-17th century) monasteries in Eastern Siberia taiga. In 1951, Soviet security forces raided the far-away monastic settlements, displacing most of its inhabitants and arresting the leaders, including Father Simeon who died in captivity. His portrait (photo) was allegedly extracted from the secret investigation documents and published in a Soviet antireligious journal *Science and Religion* in 1963. Later, ROB obtained a copy of the portrait through a Novosibirsk based researcher Nikolai Pokrovskii and multiplied a corrected version of it, which was then studied by researchers as an example of contemporary Old Believer folk art. Thus, I observe how relocation of the portrait shifted boundaries between conflicting spheres of antireligious propaganda, commemoration, art, and research.