



## 5<sup>th</sup> INTERNATIONAL COLLOQUIUM OF GENEALOGY, HERALDRY, AND VEXILLOLOGY (ICGHV5)

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Theme: “The State and Noble Families:  
Political, Social, and Cultural Heritage”



### **The Romanovs’ Griffin as a Threat to the Baltic States: Dynastic Succession and Muscovy’s Claims to Livonia**

**Rostyslav Kasyanenko (Ukraine / Germany)**

**The lecture will be delivered in English.**

#### **Summary**

The personal coat of arms of the Romanov-Gottorp dynasty – a red griffin on a silver field, an inversion of the traditional Livonian motif – served as more than a dynastic emblem. It codified imperial continuity, emphasising the Russian Empire’s historical ties to the regions of Vidzeme and Latgale in Livonia, which had been under its control since the eighteenth century. This silver-and-red motif also appears in the historical coat of arms of Sevastopol, which authorities sought to restore following the annexation of Crimea in 2014.

Equally illustrative is the griffin of Kerch, where the city’s coat of arms features a key beneath the creature, symbolising control over the entrance to the Sea of Azov. Historically, the key pointed towards Crimea; in the 1994 version produced by pro-Russian heralds, it faces Russia – demonstrating how heraldic symbols can encode territorial claims.

Through inversions of tincture, positioning, and iconography, heraldic devices transmit dynastic and imperial messages. As in the Middle Ages, these motifs function as instruments of imperial logic and ideology. The repeated presence of the same symbols – from Romanov dynastic arms to regional heraldry – reveals a continuity of imperial claims, where symbolism often precedes and anticipates political and military action.

#### **CV**

Rostyslav Kasyanenko is a historian specialising in medieval heraldry of Central and Eastern Europe. His research interests encompass the territorial heraldry of Rus’ from the princely era to the nineteenth century, the heraldic identity of Western Slavs – particularly the Obodrites and Rügen Fürsten – the German genealogy of the Romanov dynasty, and the heraldic traditions of Eastern Europe.

He has investigated the transmission, adaptation, and symbolic meanings of heraldic motifs across regions, and has published on the evolution of Pomeranian heraldry during and after Christianisation, the parallels between symbolism and myth in Hryhorii Skovoroda’s thought, and the cultural debates of the post-war Ukrainian diaspora.

Kasyanenko is a member of the Ukrainian Heraldry Society and the Association of German Archivists, a curator of heraldic teams, and editor of *Herboznavstvo* (“Heraldry Studies”) and the *Armiger Report*. As archivist of the Ukrainian Free University, he was awarded a NUMO scholarship from the German Library Association for his project on Ukrainian refugees in DP camps. In 2025, he was the sole participant from Ukraine at the XXIII Colloquium of the International Academy of Heraldry, receiving the Antti Matikkala Bursary awarded by the Societas Heraldica Scandinavica.

## **Romanovų grifas kaip grėsmė Baltijos šalims: dinastinė įpėdystė ir Maskvos pretenzijos dėl Livonijos**

**Rostyslav Kasyanenko (Ukraina / Vokietija)**

**Pranešimas bus skaitomas anglų kalba.**

**Santrauka**

Romanovų-Gotthorpų dinastijos herbas – raudonas grifas ant sidabrinio fono, inversija tradiciniam Livonijos motyvui – simbolizavo imperinę tęstinumą ir Rusijos ryšį su Vidžemės bei Latgalės regionais. Tas pats spalvų derinys matomas ir Sevastopolio herbe, kuri siekta atkurti po Krymo aneksijos 2014 m.

Kerčo herbe po grifu esantis raktas simbolizuoja kontrolę prie Azovo jūros įėjimo, o 1994 m. versijoje jis rodo į Rusiją, atskleidžiant, kaip heraldika gali perteikti teritorines pretenzijas. Heraldiniai motyvai, per spalvų inversijas ir ikonografiją, perduoda dinastinius ir imperinius signalus, dažnai pirmaujant politiniams ir kariniams veiksams.

### **CV**

Rostyslav Kasyanenko – vidurio ir rytų Europos viduramžių heraldikos specialistas. Tyrinėja Rusios teritorinę heraldiką nuo kunigaikščių laikų iki XIX a., Vakarų slavų heraldiką, Romanovų dinastijos genealogiją ir Rytų Europos heraldikos tradicijas.

Jis yra Ukrainos heraldikos draugijos ir Vokietijos archyvų asociacijos narys, heraldinių komandų kuratorius, „Herboznavstvo“ ir „Armiger Report“ redaktorius. 2025 m. dalyvavo XXIII Tarptautinės heraldikos akademijos kolokviume, gavęs Antti Matikkala stipendiją.