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Information from the History of the Mongols on the Death of Grand Prince Yaroslav Vsevolodovich in the Context of Russian Sources of the Second Half of the 13th–15th Centuries

Abstract

The article analyzes the information about the death of Grand Prince Yaroslav Vsevolodovich presented in the *History of the Mongols* in the context of reports from Russian sources of the second half of the 13th–15th centuries, as well as the letter of Pope Innocent IV to Alexander Nevsky dated February 22, 1248. In historiography, scholars have traditionally placed confidence in the version of the prince's poisoning as presented in the work of John of Plano Carpini. At the same time, researchers often resort to synthesizing information from different (and frequently asynchronous) sources without paying sufficient attention to analyzing their origin and semantic orientation. The relevance



of this study lies in reconstructing the stages in the formation of the memory of events connected with Yaroslav's death. The aim of the present work is to assess the reliability of the information about the prince's death as reported in the surviving sources. The author arrives at the following conclusions: first, the interpretation of the prince's death established in historiography is based on the highly unreliable information reported by John of Plano Carpini, which was reproduced in the Galician-Volhynian Chronicle but was not reflected in the sources written at approximately the same time in Yaroslav's homeland – the Suzdal land. Second, over time, the prince's death accumulated details, usually of literary origin, indicating the desire of chroniclers to bestow upon Yaroslav the aura of a martyr who suffered at the hands of the "pagans" for Christians, rather than to report actual facts. Third, if one assumes a real basis for the report about slander against the Grand Prince by a certain Feodor Yarunovich, it is worth returning to the hypothesis of V. T. Pashuto, who suggested that under the names *Feodor Yarunovich* and *Temer* (mentioned in *History of the Mongols* and in the letter of Pope Innocent IV) the same person might have been concealed. In the papal bull he was described as a witness to Yaroslav's conversion to Catholicism. This information could have been perceived as damaging to the prince's "honor and dignity", which may have provided sufficient grounds for attempting to disavow it by accusing the boyar Feodor of slandering Yaroslav Vsevolodovich. Thus, this "slander" could not have been related to the death of the Grand Prince.

Keywords:

Grand Prince Yaroslav Vsevolodovich; Feodor Yarunovich; Temer; John of Plano Carpini; *History of the Mongols*; Suzdal land; Mongol Empire; Poisoning

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ussian sources report the circumstances of the death of Grand Prince Yaroslav Vsevolodovich with extreme brevity. First and foremost, this concerns the chronicles compiled in the second half of the thirteenth century — the Laurentian Chronicle (Codex) (hereafter Laur.) and the Hypatian Chronicle (Codex) (hereafter Hyp.). According to Laur., “that same autumn Prince Yaroslav, son of Vsevolod, *reposed among the heathen*, on his return from the Kanovichi, on the thirtieth day of September, on the feast of Saint Gregory”¹ (here and thereafter, italics are mine — V.R.). According to Hyp., meanwhile, the Tatars “*poisoned* Yaroslav, the Grand Prince of Suzdal, with a *potion*”². In later fifteenth-century sources — the *Life of Alexander Nevsky* in the version of the First Sophia Chronicle, senior recension (hereafter S1), and in the so-called Special recension, similar to S1, as well as in the chronicle and hagiographical works³

¹ ПСРА. Т. 1. М., 1997. Стб. 471. The reference is to the Hieromartyr Gregory the Illuminator (ca. 252–326).

² ПСРА. Т. 2. М., 1998. Стб. 808. According to modern scholars, the grand prince “did not die on the way home, but was still staying at the camp of Güyük’s mother, and his death occurred at a considerable distance from Karakorum.” See: Хаутала Р. Ездил ли Александр Невский в Монголию? Несколько замечаний о поездках Александра Невского и его отца к монгольским правителям // Александр Невский: личность, эпоха, историческая память. К 800-летию со дня рождения. М., 2021. С. 201–203.

³ See: Горский А.А. Об обстоятельствах гибели великого князя Ярослава Всеволодича // Горский А.А. «Бещисленные рати и великия труды...». Проблемы русской истории X–XV вв. СПб., 2018. С. 158; Духанина А.В. Рукописная и старопечатная традиция Жития Александра Невского // Благо-

dependent on them — new significant details of what occurred are reported, details that were not mentioned in the chronicle sources of the second half of the thirteenth century. In particular, it is said that before his death the grand prince was slandered before the Great Khan by a certain Feodor Yarunovich (“for he was *slandered* by Feodor Yarunovich to the tsar”), after which Yaroslav Vsevolodovich, “having *endured* for many days”, “died <...> in the Horde a *violent* death”⁴.

Given the scant informativeness of the Russian sources, in addressing the question of the circumstances of Grand Prince Yaroslav’s death, the historiographical tradition proceeds, first and foremost, from the extended account in John of Plano Carpini’s *History of the Mongols*, who during his journey of 1245–1247 visited Batu’s camp on the Volga and then the residence of the Great Khan Güyük in Mongolia. The *History of the Mongols* relates what happened far more fully and coherently: “At that time Yaroslav died, the great prince of a certain part of Rus’, which is called Suzdal. The mother of the Emperor had recently invited him and gave him food and drink with her own hand, as if doing him honor; he returned to where he was staying, immediately fell ill, and died twelve⁵ days later, and all his body turned an extraordinary shade of blue. Therefore, *everyone believed* that he had been poisoned there, so that they might freely and entirely possess his land”⁶ (hereafter italics are mine — V.R.). The value of this source is also due to the fact that de Plano Carpini personally met at the Great Khan’s camp with Yaroslav Vsevolodovich and many other persons mentioned in the *History*⁷. However, let us try to look at the Franciscan’s testimony

верный великий князь Александр Невский. Блистая славою на земле и на Небесах М., 2021. С. 99-112.

⁴ ПСРА. Т. 6. Вып. 1. М., 2000. Стб. 325-326, Мансикка В. Й. Жизнь Александра Невского. Разбор редакций и тексты. СПб, 1913. С. 13 (second pagination).

⁵ According to the Wolfenbüttel (W) manuscript; in the Cambridge (C) manuscript version—after seven days.

⁶ *Иоанн де Плано Карпини. История монголов. Текст, перевод, комментарии.* Под ред. А.А. Горского, В.В. Трепавлова. М., 2022. С. 185.

⁷ It has also been suggested that Plano Carpini personally attended the death of the grand prince and even performed the “last earthly rites according to the rules of the Roman Church.” See: Майоров А.В., Веселов Ф.Н. «Благочестиво

from another angle — from the standpoint of those meager reports in Russian sources of the late thirteenth through fifteenth centuries that recount Yaroslav Vsevolodovich's death. What can be trusted, and what parts of the Franciscan's account should one doubt?

Was there murder?

Scholars have repeatedly voiced doubts as to the reliability of de Plano Carpini's account. Above all, this concerned the motives for the prince's murder as reported by the papal envoy. N.M. Karamzin had already written that "the Mogols, strong with the sword, had no need to act with poison, the instrument of weak villains"⁸. Following him, S.M. Solovyov noted that "de Plano Carpini's conjecture as to the reason for Yaroslav's poisoning is implausible, for the death of Yaroslav alone did not change affairs in the north; consequently, it could not have been useful for the Tatars, who would have had to exterminate all the princes in order to rule Russia freely"⁹. Despite this, the founders of Russian historiography, and after them the majority of later scholars, treated with confidence the body of source evidence which, in their view, on the whole confirmed the version that the grand prince was poisoned¹⁰. J. Fennell took a more skeptical view of the traditional

отдал себя послушанию Римской церкви»: латинские источники о последних днях великого князя Ярослава Всеволодовича // Российская история. 2025. № 1. С. 11.

⁸ Карамзин Н.М. История государства Российского. Т. 4. М., 1992. С. 23.

⁹ Соловьев С.М. Сочинения. Кн. II. М., 1988. С. 147.

¹⁰ Эземпллярский А.В. Великие и удельные князья Северной Руси в татарский период, с 1238 по 1505 г. Т. 1. СПб., 1889. С. 18; Насонов А.Н. Монголы и Русь. М., Л., 1940. С. 32; Вернадский Г.В. Монголы и Русь. Тверь, 1997. С. 149; Папуто В. Т. Героическая борьба русского народа за независимость (XIII век). М., 1956. С. 205; Каргалов В.В. Внешнеполитические факторы развития феодальной Руси. Феодальная Русь и кочевники. М., 1967. С. 138-139; Матузова В.И., Назарова Е.Л. Крестоносцы и Русь. Конец XII в. — 1270 г. Тексты, перевод, комментарий. М., 2002. С. 267; Карпов А.Ю. Батый. М., 2011. С. 199; Селезнев Ю.В. Русские князья в составе правящей элиты Джучиева улуса в XIII-XV веках. Воронеж, 2013. С. 175; Почекаев Р.Ю. Батый. Хан, который не был ханом. СПб., 2018. С. 156 и др.



Yaroslav Vsevolodovich.
Fresco of the Archangel Cathedral of the Moscow Kremlin

interpretation of what occurred, rightly observing that “any explanation of these events can only be hypothetical”, and not excluding that “Yaroslav in fact simply died a natural death, unable to withstand the hardships of the return journey, as happened to many of his retinue on the road to Karakorum”. Nevertheless, even J. Fennell believed that the poisoning version advanced by de Plano Carpini “appears the most likely”, since the papal envoy “was there at the time, and it would not have been difficult for him to obtain information from Yaroslav’s companions¹¹”. One of the few works to cast doubt on the “classic” version of the grand prince’s poisoning was an article by L.V. Vorotyntsev and T.R. Galimov published a few years ago. In it they cited examples of de Plano Carpini’s deliberate distortion of information, since he “was interested in presenting the material in a way that could subsequently be used for the politico-diplomatic actions of the Catholic Church”, and they concluded that the report of the “alleged poisoning of Yaroslav Vsevolodovich” could have had a “politically engaged underpinning”¹².

¹¹ Феннел Дж. Кризис средневековой Руси. 1200-1304. М., 1989. С. 140.

¹² Воротынцев Л.В., Галимов Т.Р. «Нужная смерть» великого князя: к вопросу о причинах и обстоятельствах кончины Ярослава Всеволодовича осенью 1246 г.// Золотоордынское обозрение. 2023. Т 11. № 3. С. 570-572;

Indeed, despite the stance declared by the Franciscan — according to which “we, guided by truth, have written above what has been set forth — *everything that we ourselves saw or heard from others whom we deemed worthy of trust, the Lord being witness, consciously adding nothing*”¹³ — these words cannot be fully relied upon. Evidence of how the papal envoy worked with his sources of information is provided by a whole series of reports in the *History of the Mongols*.

There are cases where de Plano Carpini presented isolated events as manifestations of general tendencies. Thus, with reference to the case of Mikhail Vsevolodovich of Chernigov, the envoy reported that the Mongols “*seek pretexts for killing*” the rulers of other countries. Or that they “allow some to depart and release them, so that they may lure others”, while “*others they destroy with poisoned drinks*” (in this instance, the case of Yaroslav Vsevolodovich was probably meant — also unique in its kind). Of the same order is his report that “from those whom they allow to return they demand sons and brothers, whom *they never again release*, as was done with *Yaroslav’s son* and with *some Alan prince* and with many others”. Meanwhile, from Laur. it is known that the only “son of Yaroslav” whom his father had by that time sent to the Great Khan — Prince Konstantin Yaroslavich — “came from the Tatars from the Kanovich to his father with honor” in 1245, that is, even before Yaroslav Vsevolodovich’s departure for the Horde¹⁴. It follows that de Plano

Юрченко А.Г. Золотая Орда. Между Ясой и Кораном. Начало конфликта. СПб., 2012. С. 268.

¹³ Иоанн де Плано Карпини. Op. cit. С. 192.

¹⁴ Plano Carpini also mentions a certain “son of Yaroslav” when describing the execution of Mikhail of Chernigov, which took place at Batu’s camp on 20 September 1246. However, this account was recorded by the papal envoy after the death of Yaroslav Vsevolodich from hearsay, since Plano Carpini himself was at that time in Güyük’s camp in Mongolia. Various opinions have been expressed in scholarship as to who this “son of Yaroslav” might have been. One cannot exclude an error by the envoy, who may have called “son of Yaroslav” the grandson of Mikhail of Chernigov, the Rostov prince Boris Vasilkovich, who, according to Russian sources, was with his grandfather in the Horde at the moment of his execution. But Boris Vasilkovich did not become a Tatar hostage: after Mikhail’s execution he was sent by the ruler of



Prince Mikhail of Chernigov before Batu's camp. Artist Vasily Smirnov.
State Tretyakov Gallery

Carpini, who found himself at the Great Khan's court a year later, relied either on rumors he had not verified, or (given that the envoy had every opportunity to check this information with Yaroslav's men) consciously reported information he knew to be unreliable, clearly painting the picture in darker colors¹⁵. Possibly, the papal envoy's notion that one of Yaroslav's sons was "never again released" by the Tatars took shape after his meeting at Batu's camp (even before his visit to Karakorum) with an unnamed "son of Prince Yaroslav, who had with him one warrior from Rus' by the name of Sangor"¹⁶. However, the mere fact that a son of the grand prince was in the

the Ulus of Jochi to his son Sartaq, who, "having honored" the prince, "sent him back to his own land." ПСРА. Т. 1. Стб. 470-471. See: *Иоанн де Плано Карпини*. Op. cit. С. 213-215 (Commentary 6 to Chapter III), *Милютенко Н.И.* Сказания о Михаиле Черниговском // ТОДРА. Т. 64. СПб., 2016. С. 187.

¹⁵ See: *Воротынцев Л.В., Галимов Т.Р.* «Нужная смерть» великого князя... С. 571; *Романив В.Я.* Бату-хан и «центральное монгольское правительство»: от противостояния к соправительству // *Тюркологический сборник*. 2001. Золотая Орда и ее наследие. М., 2002. С. 93-94.

¹⁶ Most likely this was Prince Konstantin Yaroslavich. See: *Иоанн де Плано Карпини*. Op. cit. С. 334-335 (Commentary 62 to Chapter IX).

Horde should have given de Plano Carpini no grounds for drawing such far-reaching conclusions.

One may suppose that the papal envoy often uncritically (whether consciously or unconsciously is another question) accepted information and reproduced it in his travel report. Thus, for example, while reporting on a campaign to the West being prepared by the Great Khan Güyük against the Christian world (the beginning of which was allegedly scheduled by the Great Khan for almost the very day after Yaroslav Vsevolodovich's death, about which, as the envoy noted, "other *people who knew the truth told us*"¹⁷), at the same time de Plano Carpini (likewise with reference to sources that inspired his complete confidence) reported the Great Khan's desire... to embrace Christianity: "*Christians among his servants told us that they firmly believe that he will, it seems, become a Christian. And they have clear proof of this, in that he keeps Christian clerics with him and provides them with maintenance*"¹⁸. As a result, Güyük was depicted as a man simultaneously preparing a campaign "against the Church of God" and the entire Christian world¹⁹, and at the same time intending... to become a Christian.

An uncritical attitude toward sources of information also affected the "Rus' component" — including data relating to the circumstances of Yaroslav Vsevolodovich's death, which the papal envoy received from the grand prince's companions²⁰.

First of all, it is necessary to determine on what the belief that the prince had been poisoned might have been based. As far as I know, historiography has not analyzed the context of the papal envoy's report on Yaroslav Vsevolodovich's death. Meanwhile, immediately before this account, de Plano Carpini relates yet another poisoning. According to the *History of the Mongols*, on the eve of Yaroslav's death "*an aunt of this emperor (Güyük — V.R.) was seized, who by means*

¹⁷ Ibid. P. 165, 185.

¹⁸ Ibid. P. 188.

¹⁹ Plano Carpini's information concerning Güyük's aggressive plans toward Europe is not confirmed by other sources. See: *ibid.* P. 255. (Commentary 31 to Chapter V).

²⁰ See: Горский А.А. Об обстоятельствах гибели... С. 165-169.



Khan Güyük. Medieval miniature.
From open sources

of poison killed his father while their army was in Hungary, and because of this the army that was in the aforesaid region returned back from there; she and many others were tried, and they were killed. *At this same time* Yaroslav died, the great prince in a certain part of Rus' which is called Suzdal"²¹. This account in itself vividly demonstrates the particular way rumors spread in the capital of the Mongol Empire. For in reality it was not the “emperor’s aunt” who was executed, but only a close associate of his mother, Fatima-khatun, who was accused of poisoning not Ögödei — the father of the “reigning” great khan (he had died five years earlier, in December 1241) — but his brother Khodan (Godan)²². However, the information set forth by the papal envoy was not the product of his imagination: he merely retold what people were saying in Karakorum. In V.Ya. Romaniv’s view, “the version that Ögödei had been poisoned was disseminated by opponents of the newly elected khan” Güyük, and the Franciscans (besides de Plano Carpini himself, his companion Benedict the Pole²³

²¹ Иоанн де Плано Карпини. *Op. cit.* 184-185.

²² *Ibid.* P. 323 (Commentary 47 to Chapter IX).

²³ See: Христианский мир и «Великая Монгольская империя». Материалы францисканской миссии 1245 года. Критический текст, перевод с латыни «Истории Тартар» брата Ц. де Бридиа С. В. Аксенова и А. Г. Юрченко. СПб., 2002. С. 88, 113.

also set out his version of what happened) merely transmitted these rumors. That “rumors about a ‘treacherous’ woman” truly circulated at that time, and that these rumors were “nothing but malicious gossip”²⁴, may be judged from Rashid al-Din’s report, although he mentioned altogether different “poisoners”. According to his data, in Güyük’s entourage, they actively struggled against false information launched by someone to the effect that Khan Ögödei had been poisoned by a certain Ibaqa-beki and her son, who “presented the cup [of wine] and probably gave the qa’an poison”. At the same time, “Elijiday-noyan, who was the qa’an’s milk-brother and an influential emir from the Jalayir clan, said: ‘What nonsensical words are these? Ibaqa-beki’s son is a baurchi; he always presented the cup. And the qa’an always drank far too much wine. Why should [we] shame our qa’an [by saying] that he died from an attempt by others? His mortal hour came. No one should speak such words any more”²⁵. From this it follows that in Karakorum itself rumors of the poisoning of one or another high-ranking person, involving some treacherous woman with access to the very highest levels of the Mongol power pyramid, were not uncommon²⁶. And de Plano Carpini, it would seem, trusted them quite fully²⁷. He also believed the Rus’ companions of the Grand Prince of Vladimir, who evidently concluded that their lord, too, had been poisoned.

Of course, this opinion did not arise out of nowhere. One can imagine the psychological state of the people from Yaroslav Vsevolodovich’s entourage and the situation surrounding them. Almost a year earlier they had left their homeland, first reaching Sarai (for the second time in the last three years), then setting out

²⁴ Романив В.Я. Ор. cit. С. 92-93.

²⁵ Рашид ад-Дин. Сборник летописей. Т. II. М., Л., 1960. С. 42.

²⁶ Воротынцева Л.В., Галимов Т.Р. «Отравленные» ханы: феномен внезапной смерти правителей в ментальном восприятии средневековых монголов // Золотоордынское обозрение. 2024. Т. 12. № 2. С. 316.

²⁷ He mentioned the poisoning of Ögedei repeatedly in different parts of the *History of the Mongols*. See: Иоанн де Плано Карпини. Ор. cit. С. 166, 184-185. On the groundlessness of these rumors see in more detail: Ibid. P. 307-308, 323 (Commentary 2 to Chapter VIII, Commentary 47 to Chapter IX).

for distant Karakorum²⁸, losing many of their companions along the way²⁹. And now they were already preparing to return home (apparently, Yaroslav Vsevolodovich was paying a farewell visit to the Great Khan's mother), when suddenly the grand prince fell gravely ill and soon died. Moreover, in the days when he was dying, Karakorum was full of rumors about the execution of a certain "aunt of the emperor", allegedly implicated in the poisoning of the previous Great Khan. Having evidently suffered a shock after their lord's death, Yaroslav Vsevolodovich's men could well have interpreted his sudden passing as a death resulting from poisoning by Töregene, who must have inspired fear³⁰ in them even before this. They most likely shared these feelings with the Franciscan monks. It follows that the initial data underlying the poisoning version could quite possibly have been connected not with the specific circumstances of Yaroslav Vsevolodovich's death, but with their rather subjective interpretation³¹. As for de Plano Carpini's interlocutors' ideas about the plans of the Mongol rulers with regard to the Rus' lands, then, as A.A. Gorsky convincingly showed, their opinion on this matter was based most of all on the fear that "following Batu's devastation of 1237–1241 the conquerors would pass to direct dominion over all the Rus' lands"³².

However, in this case de Plano Carpini clearly did not confine himself to recording the opinion of the grand prince's companions. In the second part of his report he pointed out that *an additional "argument in favor of this* (that is, in favor of poisoning — V.R.) is

²⁸ Even in a straight line, the distance from Vladimir to Karakorum via Sarai amounted to 6,000 kilometers. See: Пауцто В.Т., Матузова В.И. Послание папы Иннокентия IV князю Александру Невскому // Studia historica in honorem Hans Kruus. Tallinn, 1971. С. 133.

²⁹ See: Иоанн де Плано Карпини. Оp. cit. С. 179.

³⁰ Töregene, apparently distinguished by cunning, cruelty, and love of power, received the most negative assessments from both contemporaries and later authors. See: Почекаев Р.Ю., Почекаева И.Н. Властительницы Евразии. История и мифы о правительницах Тюрко-монгольских государств XIII–XIX вв. СПб., 2012. С. 31–46.

³¹ Воротынецов Л.В., Галимов Т.Р. «Нужная смерть» великого князя... С. 575–576.

³² Горский А.А. Об обстоятельствах гибели... С. 165–167.



Yaroslav Vsevolodovich.
Miniature from the Tsar's Titulary, 17th century

that she (the emperor's mother — V.R.), *while his* (Yaroslav's — V.R.) *people knew nothing*, immediately, in haste, sent an embassy to Rus' to his son Alexander, so that he should come to her, because she wished to grant him his father's land; he wanted to go, but remained [at home]. And meanwhile she gave letters to his men so that he himself would come and receive his father's land. *Everyone, however, thought* that if he came, she would either kill him or keep him in captivity forever"³³. It is obvious that de Plano Carpini could not have learned all this while in Karakorum. Since it concerned events and phenomena of considerable duration, he could have received the relevant information at different times, including after he had already left the imperial capital and reached Batu's camp³⁴. Hence, the "arguments in favor" of the poisoning version were already *the envoy's own arguments*, arrived at by him on the basis of additionally obtained information, and *not merely the arguments of Yaroslav's companions*. At the same time, the ultimate aim of Törege's ac-

³³ Иоанн де Плано Карпини. Оp. cit. С. 185.

³⁴ That is, in the interval between November 1246, when Plano Carpini's embassy left the capital of the Mongol Empire, and 9 May 1247, when the Franciscans reached Batu's camp. See: Иоанн де Плано Карпини. Оp. cit. С. 327-329 (Commentary 48 to Chapter IX).

tions clearly escaped the Franciscan monk's understanding: on the one hand, it seemed that she wanted to grant Alexander Yaroslavich "his father's land", while on the other hand, in the view of de Plano Carpini's informants ("*everyone, however, thought*"), which he most likely shared, this was only a ruse, and in reality Töregene proceeded from the premise that "if he (Alexander — V.R.) comes, she will either kill him or keep him in captivity forever"³⁵. As we see, the papal envoy's additional "arguments" added little from the standpoint of an *evidentiary* basis for accusing Töregene of involvement in Yaroslav Vsevolodovich's death: both initially and subsequently, the envoy relied only on rumors and conjectures, which, apparently, arose in abundance among the Europeans traveling "to the Tatars" and back. Nevertheless, it is evident that de Plano Carpini purposefully sought additional arguments to confirm the poisoning version, and his informants from among the Rus' whom he met at Batu's camp were ready to help him in this: in the envoy's words, they "*themselves willingly told us everything, sometimes without [our] questions, some because they knew what we wanted*"³⁶. This may mean that the papal envoy's interlocutors often provided him with precisely the information in which he himself was interested, and which corresponded to the viewpoint that had already formed in him.

“Reposed among the heathen”

At first glance, the version set out by de Plano Carpini is corroborated by the account in the Galician–Volhynian Chronicle³⁷. However, the information reflected in this source could well have had the same origin as the narrative in the *History of the Mongols*. At the very least, upon his return to Rus' the papal envoy, by his own testimony, had the opportunity for an "entire week" to speak personally with Princes Daniel and Vasylo Romanovich, as well as people from

³⁵ Ibid. P. 185.

³⁶ Ibid. P. 186.

³⁷ ПИЧА. Т. 2. Стб. 808.

their entourage³⁸, from whom information about how Prince Yaroslav died could have entered local chronicle writing³⁹. An indirect argument in favor of this is that the poisoning version of Yaroslav Vsevolodovich's death appears only in the chronicle writing of those places through which the papal embassy passed. At the same time, in the grand prince's Suzdal homeland, which lay away from the route of the Franciscan monks, they most likely did not know that the prince had been poisoned. Laur. describes the events of those years very sparingly; nonetheless, it accurately records everything connected with the princes' journeys to the Tatars: the composition of the embassies, the route (to Batu or "to the Khan"), the outcomes (released "with honor", "having assigned each to his patrimony", "having granted seniority over all the brothers", etc.), and it also clearly distinguishes the circumstances of the deaths of Mikhail of Chernigov and Yaroslav Vsevolodovich⁴⁰.

The origin of the account of Mikhail of Chernigov's death in Laur. is more or less clear: the story of the execution that took place at Batu's camp could have been told by his grandson, the Rostov prince Boris Vasilkovich, who returned home safely. But how is one to explain the absence in Laur. of information about Yaroslav's poisoning? If one adheres to the generally accepted version according to which the grand prince's body was delivered to Vladimir for burial, it follows that the people accompanying the prince had the opportunity to tell their compatriots about the circumstances of his death⁴¹. This means that either, upon arriving in the Suzdal land, they no longer believed the prince had been poisoned, or that the

³⁸ *Иоанн де Плано Карпини*. *Op. cit.* С. 190.

³⁹ See: *Воротынцев А.В., Галимов Т.Р.* «Нужная смерть» великого князя... С. 565.

⁴⁰ ПСРА. Т. 1. Стб. 470-473.

⁴¹ The late 19th-century church historian M. I. Khitrov, author of a popular biography of Alexander Nevsky, wrote that the companions of Yaroslav Vsevolodich "undoubtedly told everything in detail to his sons," referring to the version of the prince's poisoning. However, the way the Laur. presents the circumstances of the prince's death suggests rather the opposite. See: *Хитров М.И.* *Святой благоверный великий князь Александр Ярославич Невский*. СПб., 1899. С. 159-160.

poisoning version from the outset was the version of de Plano Carpini alone and was not supported by the grand prince's companions.

Given that from the vicinity of Karakorum the prince's body would have had to be transported to his homeland for burial over the course of several months (the prince died on 30 September — thus, at a minimum, until the end of 1246), one cannot wholly exclude that he was buried near the place of his death and not in Vladimir at all. In that case, the absence in Laur. of reports of his poisoning can be explained only by the fact that the prince's companions, for some reason, never reached the capital of the Suzdal land: they perished on the road, or decided not to return⁴² because they themselves were not from those parts (it is quite possible that on his last journey to the Tatars Yaroslav Vsevolodovich set out not from Vladimir but from Kiev)⁴³. As is known, the grand prince's tomb is located in the Dormition Cathedral in Vladimir. At the end of the nineteenth century the local historian Archimandrite Porfiry (Porphyrius) noted that Yaroslav Vsevolodovich's body “was brought from the Siberian steppes to Vladimir and buried in the cathedral church, mourned by Alexander Yaroslavich who had arrived from Novgorod, by Yaroslav Vsevolodovich's other sons, and by his brother Sviatoslav”, but he did not indicate what this conclusion was based on⁴⁴. Yet Laur. contains no indication of the place and time of his burial; it reports only that, “*having heard*” of his father's death, the grand prince's son Alexander Yaroslavich came from Novgorod to Vladimir, “and wept for his father together with his uncle Sviatoslav and with his brothers”, after which “that same year Sviatoslav, prince, son of Vsevolod, sat in Vladimir on the throne of his father, and he placed his sons in the towns, as their father Yaroslav had arranged for them”⁴⁵. Obviously,

⁴² That the companions of the grand prince returned home was reported by Plano Carpini himself: “All of them returned to the Suzdal land in Rus’, and from them the truth may be learned if necessary.” See: *Иоанн де Плано Карпини*. Оp. cit. С. 191.

⁴³ *Хаутала Р.* Оp. cit. С. 203.

⁴⁴ *Порфирий ([Виноградов]), архим.* Древние гробницы во Владимирском кафедральном Успенском соборе и погребенные в них князья и святители. Владимир, 1890. С.35–42.

⁴⁵ ПСРА. Т. 1. Стб. 471.

this passage is not about a burial: the princes gathered in Vladimir when they received *news* of Yaroslav’s death, not when the body was delivered to the homeland. It should be noted that Laur. very carefully recorded not only the fact of death but also the places of burial of princes and hierarchs of the Church. In just a quarter-century — from the time Batu devastated the Suzdal land (1238) to the death of Alexander Yaroslavich (1263) — it records nine princely deaths and one bishop’s death (that of Bishop Kirill of Rostov). Of these ten cases, only in the case of Yaroslav Vsevolodovich and his brother Sviatoslav (who probably died in Yuriev, where he ruled after being expelled from the grand-princely throne) is there no indication of the place of burial⁴⁶. In the remaining cases such indications were present, even when the burial was not in Vladimir (for example, in Ugliche Pole, Yaroslavl, and Rostov) and even outside the Suzdal land (in Ryazan)⁴⁷.

The local chronicler would hardly have had any reason to omit information about the circumstances of the grand prince’s death from his narrative, had he possessed it. J. Fennell, to be sure, advanced the hypothesis that by his laconic notice the compiler of the Laur. account of Yaroslav’s death sought “to avoid any mention of Tatar involvement in his death — a typical manifestation of unwillingness to offend the Tatars or to include in the chronicle any information that could be construed by the Tatars as insulting”⁴⁸. But N.I. Serebryansky believed that “the chronicler could have had no motive for keeping silent about facts. There was no Tatar censorship over Rus-

⁴⁶ Archimandrite Porphyrius believed that the surviving tomb of Yaroslav Vsevolodich “may have appeared in the time of Empress Catherine II.” At the same time, the inscription on the tomb cited by him — “The relics of the Right-Believing Grand Prince Yaroslav Vsevolodich were placed in this spot in the year 6755 on September 30” — cannot be regarded as reliable: the grand prince, who died in the central part of present-day Mongolia, could not have been buried in Vladimir on the very day of his death. See: *Порфирий (Виноградов)*, архим. *Op. cit.* С. 35–42; *Георгиевский В.* Город Владимир на Клязьме и его достопримечательности. Владимир, 1896. С.68. Cf.: *Седов В.В.* Погребения «святых князей» и архитектура княжеских усыпальниц Древней Руси // *Востоchnoхристианские реликвии.* М., 2003. С. 447–481.

⁴⁷ See: ПСРЛ. Т. 1. Стб. 467–477.

⁴⁸ *Феннел Дж.* *Op. cit.* С. 140.

sian writings, and Russian writers of the thirteenth century spoke of the Tatars very freely and sharply”⁴⁹. The validity of J. Fennell’s interpretation is doubtful also because in the same chronicle entry Laur. reported the death in the Horde of Mikhail Vsevolodovich of Chernigov. This account was plainly critical toward the conquerors, who are called there “impious”⁵⁰. If one compares the two narratives (Hyp. and Laur.) of Mikhail of Chernigov’s death in the Horde, it turns out that, despite some divergence in details, they are similar to one another in the tone with which the Tatars are described. At the same time, the accounts of Yaroslav Vsevolodovich’s death in the two chronicles do not coincide⁵¹. This means that Laur. presented not a censored version, as J. Fennell supposed, but simply a *different* version of the prince’s death.

Nothing about Yaroslav’s poisoning was reported either in the Russian articles of Patriarch Nikephoros’s *Letopisets vskore*, included in the parchment *Novgorod Kormchaia* of the late thirteenth century and apparently of Rostov provenance⁵². The compiler of the text clearly distinguished the causes and circumstances of princes’ deaths (“the Tatars *killed* Prince Yury and Vasylo and many others”, “Gleb, having returned *from* the Tatars <...> , *died*”). Nevertheless, the death of Yaroslav Vsevolodovich (“Yaroslav *died among the Ta-*

⁴⁹ *Серебрянский Н.И.* Древнерусские княжеские жития. Обзор ред. и тексты. М., 1915. С. 172–173. С. 173.

⁵⁰ ПСРА. Т. 1. Стб. 471.

⁵¹ Cf.: *Ibid.* Т. 2. Стб. 795, 808.

⁵² The “Brief Rostov Chronicle of the 13th Century” was considered by A.N. Nasonov to be “almost the most ancient surviving chronicle compilation.” See: *Насонов А.Н.* Летописный свод конца XV в. (по двум спискам) // *Материалы по истории СССР. II. Документы по истории XV–XVII вв.* М., 1955. С. 279. According to M. N. Tikhomirov, the source of the Russian articles of the “Chronicle” was “a chronicle close in composition to the Laur., but by no means identical with it. The brief notices at the end of the chronicle, relating to the 1260s and 1270s, are the rarest records composed by a contemporary of the events.” The *Kormchaia* containing the *Letopisets vskore* was written around 1280, in any case no later than 1294, when Grand Prince Dmitry Alexandrovich, at whose commission the manuscript itself was created, died. See: *Тихомиров М.Н.* Забытые и неизвестные произведения русской письменности // *Археографический ежегодник за 1960 г.* М., 1962. С. 234.

tars”) was reported in exactly the same way as the deaths of other princes—both those who died in Rus’ (“after Alexander’s death, his brother Yaroslav [ruled] ten years and *died*; his brother Vasily [ruled] four years and died”) and those who died a natural death in the Horde. Thus, of Prince Boris Vasilkovich it is said that he “ruled forty years and *died among the Tatars*”⁵³ — that is, his death was described in the same terms as Yaroslav’s.

Taking all these circumstances into account, it can be maintained that we have no firm proof of the reliability of de Plano Carpini’s information about the poisoning of Yaroslav Vsevolodovich. This version could have arisen, first, as a result of a distorted perception by people from his entourage of the circumstances of the prince’s death, and second, from de Plano Carpini’s description of this death, accepted uncritically or presented with bias. Later, the poisoning version was reflected (possibly with the participation of the papal envoy) in the Galician–Volhynian Chronicle (one of the two early Russian chronicle sources that relate the grand prince’s death), yet it was not reproduced in the chronicle of the Suzdal land, close to the grand prince’s descendants. This does not mean that the poisoning of Yaroslav Vsevolodovich could not have occurred at all; however, the probability of it seems to me roughly equal to the probability derived from the alternative version found in Laur.

“Violent” death in the Horde

Of great importance for assessing the poisoning version are the late, fifteenth-century versions of the *Life of Alexander Nevsky* in the S1 recension and in the so-called Special recension, similar to S1. An important feature of these and all subsequent narratives is, first, the absence of direct mention of the prince’s poisoning; second, the information they contain that prior to his death he was “*slandered*” before the Great Khan by a certain Feodor Yarunovich, after which, “having endured for *many days*”, he reposed “in the Horde by a vio-

⁵³ Ibid. P. 239.



Mikhail of Tver departs for the Horde.
Miniature from the Illustrated Chronicle Compilation, 16th century

lent death”⁵⁴; and third, the drawing of a direct analogy between the *Life’s* main protagonist, Prince Alexander Yaroslavich, and his father, Yaroslav Vsevolodovich⁵⁵.

As for the new information about Yaroslav Vsevolodovich’s death, then, as V.A. Kuchkin has shown, one of its sources was most likely the Expanded recension of the hagiographic *Tale of Mikhail of Tver*, composed in Tver at the very end of 1319–the beginning of 1320⁵⁶. In the scholar’s view, “the notice of Yaroslav Vsevolodovich’s violent death” found in S1 “goes back to Metropolitan Photius’s compilation of 1423, but its source is the *Tale of the Death in the Horde of Mikhail of Tver*”, and the notice of this event is “the earliest

⁵⁴ ПСРА. Т. 6. Вып. 1. Стб. 325–326, Мансикка В. Й. Опр. cit. С. 13 (second pagination).

⁵⁵ Конявская Е.Л. Александр Невский в исторических источниках // Александр Невский. Государь. Дипломат. Воин. М., 2010. С. 214.

⁵⁶ Кучкин В.А. Повести о Михаиле Тверском. Историко-текстологическое исследование. М., 1974. С. 234.

in the literature of North-Eastern Rus' ”⁵⁷. As V.A. Kuchkin believes, the fact that the S1 version goes back to the *Tale of Mikhail of Tver* is “attested by a brief commentary on the notice of Yaroslav’s death, extremely close to the analogous commentary on Mikhail’s death; even the same verse — John 15:13 — is quoted”⁵⁸. True, the text of the *Tale of Mikhail of Tver* contained neither indications of the cause of Yaroslav’s death nor mention of persons involved in it. At the same time, its compiler introduced into the narrative a fundamentally new detail: “this blessed, ever-memorable, and God-loving Grand Prince Mikhail was the son of Grand Prince Yaroslav, and the grandson of the grand prince and blessed Vsevolodovich⁵⁹, who ended by a *violent death* in the *Horde for the Christians*”⁶⁰. Thus, already at this stage there began to take shape an understanding of the grand prince’s death as ascetic and suffering: Yaroslav Vsevolodovich, as it were, became the forerunner of his grandson — Prince Mikhail Yaroslavich of Tver — who, according to the hagiographic tale, likewise accepted “*violent suffering*”⁶¹ in the Horde⁶². Another possible source was Laur. or a chronicle close to it; from there, the source of S1 could have taken the indication of the date of the grand prince’s repose — 30 September⁶³.

The S1 narrative of Prince Yaroslav’s death was to a large extent constructed by fusing (on the basis of the hagiographic *Tale of Mikhail of Tver*) the images of the two princes, grandfather and grandson, and for that reason it is made up of the same “building blocks”. The chief of these is the Gospel quotation cited there, as

⁵⁷ Ibid. P. 85, 226.

⁵⁸ Ibid. P. 226. Footnote. 25

⁵⁹ In the text only the patronymic of Grand Prince Yaroslav is indicated; his name is omitted.

⁶⁰ Кучкин В.А. Пространная редакция Повести о Михаиле Тверском // Средневековая Русь. Вып. 2. М., 1999. С. 130.

⁶¹ That is, “suffering,” “torment.” See: Словарь древнерусского языка XI–XIV вв. Т. 11. М., 2016. С. 599; Словарь русского языка XI–XVII вв. Вып. 28. М., 2008. С. 141; Живов В.М. Святость. Краткий словарь агиографических терминов. М., 1991. С. 105.

⁶² Кучкин В.А. Пространная редакция ... С. 126.

⁶³ Cf. ПСРА. Т. 1. Стб. 471; Т. 6. Вып. 1. Стб. 326.

V.A. Kuchkin already noted. In the hagiographic *Tale*, Mikhail Yaroslavich “accepted *violent suffering, laid down his soul for his friends*, remembering the Lord’s word, which says: ‘*If anyone lay down his soul for his friends*’, he shall be called great in the Kingdom of Heaven”, whereas Yaroslav Vsevolodovich in S1 “reposed <...> by a *violent death*. For, as Holy Scripture says: ‘*If anyone lay down his soul for his friends*’, *this same grand prince laid down his soul for all the people of the Rus’ land*. And the Lord numbered him among His chosen flock”. This quotation defined the *meaning* of Mikhail of Tver’s deed, and after him that of Yaroslav Vsevolodovich as well. Just like the “*patient in soul*” Mikhail in the hagiographic *Tale*, Yaroslav in S1, “*having endured for many days*”, suffering at the hands of the Tatars. Moreover, the chronicle exposition developed the idea from the *Tale of Mikhail of Tver* that Yaroslav accepted death “for the Christians”: according to S1 he lays down “his soul for *all the people of the Rus’ land*”, for whose sake he goes to the Horde — “to the great ruinous Tatar land”⁶⁴. It follows that the only unique information in S1 may be considered the mention of Feodor Yarunovich, who “slandered” Yaroslav Vsevolodovich before the “tsar”; all the rest is no more than a development of a hagiographic plot pertaining to the biography of another person — Mikhail of Tver.

Agreeing with A.A. Gorsky’s opinion that “there are no grounds to suspect this notice of unreliability”, since “a figure by the name of Feodor Yarunovich is mentioned nowhere else, and introducing him into the narrative could carry no semantic load”⁶⁵, one should clarify: if the mere introduction of this character into the narrative indeed carried no semantic load, the *action* he performed, on the contrary, had a very intelligible meaning, since it endowed Yaroslav Vsevolodovich with additional traits of resemblance to Mikhail of Tver, who prior to his death was likewise “slandered” before Khan Uzbek⁶⁶. Historiography has repeatedly noted the specificity of hagiographic works devoted to prince passion-bearers, the very des-

⁶⁴ ПСРА. Т. 6. Вып. 1. Стб. 337-338.

⁶⁵ Горский А.А. Об обстоятельствах гибели ... С. 159. Прим. 3.

⁶⁶ Кучкин В.А. Пространная редакция... С. 139.

ignation of which “primarily <...> refers to those saints who accepted a martyr’s end not from persecutors of Christianity, but from their co-religionists — owing to their malice, treachery, conspiracy”⁶⁷. In this case, the slain passion-bearer “is mostly recognized as a saint not by his own deeds, but by the actions of the murderers”. Therefore, “for the situation of the killing of an innocent ruler, characteristic of the written Lives of prince passion-bearers, what is essential above all are the saint’s antagonists”, who may be “people close to the saint, obliged by their position to remain with him in love and peace, or to obey him”. The circle of such persons is extremely broad: brothers and more distant relatives, simple subjects and grandees — in general, compatriots⁶⁸. In the *Tale of Mikhail of Tver*, the close person becoming the saint’s antagonist was his “nephew” (*сыновец*) — the Moscow prince Yury Danilovich — as well as those who joined him, “all the Suzdal princes and boyars from the towns and from Novgorod”, who at the prompting of the khan’s envoy, “the lawless accursed” Kavgadyi, “wrote many *lies*, bearing witness against the blessed Mikhail”. Relying on these false testimonies, Kavgadyi thereafter “slandered” the saint in the eyes of the Horde “tsar”, which in the end led to the death of Mikhail Yaroslavich⁶⁹. In this context, the introduction into the account of Yaroslav Vsevolodovich’s death of a co-tribesman who acted toward the prince in exactly the same way as those who “slandered” Mikhail of Tver acted toward him, could have been dictated not only and not so much by a desire to convey the true course of events as by an inclination to confirm the typological similarity of these two deaths — that of the passion-bearer grandson and that of his grandfather, who, from the writer’s point of view, evidently was likewise worthy of glorification.

It has already been noted above that the information about Yaroslav Vsevolodovich’s death reported in the hagiographic *Tale of Mikhail of Tver*, and then in the *Life of Alexander Nevsky* in the S1

⁶⁷ Живов В.М. Оp. cit. С. 105.

⁶⁸ Ранчин А.М. Вертоград Златословный. Древнерусская книжность в интерпретациях, разборах, комментариях. М., 2007. С. 115, 121, 126.

⁶⁹ Кучкин В.А. Пространная редакция ... С. 138-139.



recension and the so-called “Special” recension, does not contradict the version of the grand prince’s poisoning. But does it confirm it? For, when reporting a “violent” death, the writers did not specify how exactly the prince died.

First of all, it is necessary to understand whether they could have done this and, if they could, why they did not. With regard to the S1 account, the first part of the question should rather be answered in the affirmative: the compiler of Metropolitan Photius’s codex (the protograph of S1) had at hand the text of the Galician–Volhynian chronicle narrative that has come down to us as part of Hyp. This is evidenced, if only, by the chronicle account of Batu’s invasion in S1, which was composed chiefly on the basis of Laur., but with the addition of certain items from the senior recension of the Novgorod First Chronicle (NFC) and Hyp. (for example, from the latter were borrowed the unique accounts of the taking of Kozelsk, Pereiaslavl, Chernigov, and Kiev)⁷⁰. This means that, had he wished, the compiler of Photius’s codex could have constructed the account of Yaroslav Vsevolodovich’s death on the same principle, supplementing Laur.’s information with the data contained in Hyp. But he did not. The reason for such a decision can be explained only by the fact that in this case the aim of the author of the narrative that has come down in S1 (and also, apparently, of the author of the *Tale of Mikhail of Tver*) was far from that of conveying *as many details as possible* about Yaroslav Vsevolodovich’s death. Otherwise, having related Feodor Yarunovich’s involvement in his death, the writer would also have reported the fact that the prince was poisoned.

If this is so, then the aims of the compilers of Hyp. and Laur., on the one hand, and of the compiler of S1, on the other, were different. The early chronicles reported a *particular case* — simply a *fact of the grand prince’s biography* (“killed (him) with a potion” — Hyp., or who “reposed among the heathen” — Laur.). S1, by

⁷⁰ Насонов А.Н. История русского летописания. XI — начало XVIII века. Очерки и исследования. М., 1969. С. 182-184. Cf.: Лурье Я.С. Общерусские летописи XIV-XV вв. Л., 1976. С. 99.

contrast, placed Yaroslav's death in *a broader context*, describing not the fact but the meaning of what happened, marking his end as righteous and his life as worthy of glorification, and in doing so did not immerse itself in details (how exactly he died, on the feast of which saint, etc.) that for the chronicle-writer proved secondary. On the contrary: since the matter concerned the glorification of a ruler's Christian qualities, the main emphasis was placed not on his unique but rather on his typical features. For a description of a saint's life "is not so his *biography* as a story about his *path* to salvation, the type of his holiness"⁷¹: after all, all passion-bearers, in one way or another, died a violent death, whatever meaning might be presupposed by that definition. In this respect, the description of the Christian feat of Saints Boris and Gleb in the *Tale of Bygone Years* under the year 6623 (1115), in the account of the translation of their relics, is very revealing: "You are praise to our princes and defenders of the Rus' land, you who *trampled down the glory of this world* and loved Christ, choosing to follow in His footsteps — good lambs of Christ, who when led to the slaughter did not resist, nor flee the *violent death*. Therefore, you have reigned with Christ unto eternal joy and, having received from our Savior Jesus Christ the gift of healing, you bestow it unceasingly upon the infirm who come in faith to your holy church, as *champions of your fatherland*"⁷². As can be seen, this text does not say what particular death the saints accepted (Boris, according to the same Tale, was pierced with spears and then finished off with a sword, and Gleb was cut down with a knife⁷³), that is, the concept of "violent death" here has a collective meaning, being a synonym for the Christ-like death of the passion-bearer brothers.

At the same time, the sources contain fairly clear indications that in the understanding of chronicle-writers of the early fifteenth century the phrase "reposed by a violent death" was not always a full syn-

⁷¹ Живов В.М. Оp. cit. С. 10.

⁷² ПСРЛ. Т. 2. Стб. 281-282. Повесть временных лет. Подготовка текста, перевод, статьи, комментарии Д.С. Лихачева. Изд. 2-е испр. и доп. СПб., 1996. С. 128.

⁷³ Ibid. P. 59-61.

onym of murder⁷⁴. For this it suffices to compare the brief notices in the Moscow Academy Chronicle (МАС)⁷⁵: “Mikhalko of Chernigov was *killed*, <...> Yaroslav *reposed* among the Tatars by a *violent death*; that same year Mikhail Yaroslavich was *killed* by the Lithuanians”⁷⁶. In this example it is also noteworthy that the Tatars are not named as the source of Yaroslav’s death: it is only said that he died on their territory, “among the Tatars”, whereas in the notice of the death of his son Mikhail Yaroslavich the culpable are named with a different preposition – “by the Lithuanians”.

At the same time, if in the fourteenth–fifteenth-century works under consideration, the traits of his holy grandson, Grand Prince Mikhail Yaroslavich of Tver, were imparted to Yaroslav Vsevolodovich, then in the *Life of Alexander Nevsky* (in the S1 recension and in the so-called Special recension) a similar device was already applied to Alexander Yaroslavich. In this connection it is telling that in S1 the deaths of both – Yaroslav and Alexander – are depicted as the outcome of prolonged suffering. The fa-

⁷⁴ In addition to the meanings “connected with coercion, violence,” the term *nuzhnaya* (“compelled, forced”) in relation to death also implied a “grievous,” “heavy,” as well as “cruel,” “terrible,” “tormenting” demise. (See: Воротынцев Л.В., Галимов Т.Р. «Нужная смерть» ... С. 565) This is confirmed by dictionary examples in which, among other things, “forced death” refers to death in a fire, by drowning in a river, during the Flood, and also at the time of a Tatar invasion. See: Словарь русского языка XI–XVII вв. Вып. 11. М., 1986. С. 446–447; Словарь древнерусского языка (XI–XIV вв.) Т. V. М., 2002. С. 444.

⁷⁵ In this part, the Moscow Academic Chronicle (МАС) transmits a fragment of the shortened Rostov Episcopal Chronicle Compilation, which was continued up to 1419. See: Клосс Б.М. Предисловие к изданию 1997 г. // ПСРА. Т. 1. С. К–L. According to А.А. Shakhmatov, the Rostov Episcopal compilation was composed at the beginning of the 15th century on the basis of the Rostov Chronicle and an all-Russian chronicle compilation preceding the “Polychron of 1423” (i.e., the compilation of Metropolitan Photius). See: Шахматов А.А. Обзорение русских летописных сводов XIV–XVI вв. М., Л., 1938. С. 223–228; Насонов А.Н. Летописный свод XV века (по двум спискам) // Материалы по истории СССР. II. Документы по истории XV–XVII вв. М., 1955. С. 276–277. Reports of the death of Yaroslav Vsevolodovich in the Ustiug Chronicle and in the Short Compilation of 1493 apparently derive from the same Rostov source. (ПСРА. Т. 37. Л., 1982. С. 70; Т. 27. М., Л., 1962. С. 235). See: Словарь книжников и книжности Древней Руси. Вып. 2 (вторая половина XIV–XVI вв.). Ч. 2 (Л–Я). Л., 1989. С. 47.

⁷⁶ ПСРА. Т. 1. Стб. 523.

ther “suffered *much*” and “endured for *many days*”, and in essence the son experienced the same: the tsar “detained” him, “did not let him go to Rus”, as a result of which the prince “wintered in the Horde, and *there* fell ill”. Alexander Yaroslavich’s illness, accordingly, also lasted a long time, since from the Horde he “reached Nizhny Novgorod” and then Gorodets⁷⁷. In the original recension of the hagiographic tale this episode was presented somewhat differently: “the grand prince Olexander departed from the heathen and reached Nizhny Novgorod, and *there was not well*, and, *having reached Gorodets, fell ill*”⁷⁸. That is, according to the original recension of the hagiographic tale, the illness developed swiftly (he began to feel unwell near Nizhny Novgorod, and “fell ill”⁷⁹ already in Gorodets, located about 50 km from Nizhny) — within 2–3 days, and not over the course of one or two months required to reach the Suzdal land from the capital of the Ulus of Jochi⁸⁰. Thus, in the version of Alexander Yaroslavich’s death that has come down in the S1 recension and the Special recension of his *Life*, the same tendency is observed as in the account of Yaroslav Vsevolodovich: in fifteenth-century texts, the death of his son was described as long and painful, as a kind of Christian martyrdom of a man who had resolved to “lay down his soul for his friend”. Most likely, in this case we are dealing with a common technique of medieval hagiography — the transfer of the same image from one hagiographic text to another, telling the fate of one saint by emphasizing his

⁷⁷ ПСРА. Т. 6. Вып. 1. Стб. 338; Т. 25. М., 2004. С. 144; Т. 10. М., 2000. С. 143. The version of the *Life of Alexander Nevsky* in S1 appears to have been based on the Novgorod First Chronicle (NFC), which was available to Photius: “Prince Alexander went to the Tatars, and Berke detained him, not allowing him to return to Rus’; and he wintered among the Tatars and fell ill <...> Prince Alexander came from the Tatars very sick in the autumn and arrived at Gorodets, and took monastic vows on the 14th day of the month of November, on the feast of the holy Apostle Philip. That same night he passed away.”. See: ПСРА. Т. 3. М., 2000. С. 83.

⁷⁸ Бегунов Ю.К. Памятник русской литературы XIII века «Слово о погибели русской земли». М., Л., 1965. С. 193.

⁷⁹ That is, “fell seriously, gravely ill.”. See: Словарь русского языка XI–XVII вв. Вып. 21. М., 1995. С. 142

⁸⁰ See: Селезнев Ю.В. Op. cit. С. 159.



Pope Innocent IV.
From open sources

resemblance to another. The analogy that arises is “the model to which the hagiographer follows when creating the image of the glorified ascetic”: thereby “the author ... elevates the image to the prototype or sacred model”⁸¹. Mention of the saint’s pious forebears (father, mother, or, as in this case, grandfather), comparing him with them, in essence performed the same function⁸². In this context, death becomes not merely a point in the earthly journey but also the most important marker of Yaroslav Vsevolodovich’s own ascetic feat. It is not surprising that after some time – already in texts of the mid–second half of the sixteenth century – the grand prince’s death was described as a saintly feat⁸³.

⁸¹ Руди Т.Р. Толика русских житий (вопросы типологии) // Русская агиография. Исследования. Публикации. Polemika. СПб., 2005. С. 63.

⁸² See: Пауткин А.А. Древнерусские святые князья. Агиологический тип как культурно-историческая система // Герменевтика древнерусской литературы. Т. 7. М., 1994. С. 213.

⁸³ See: Рудаков В.Н. «Все полагали, что он был отравлен»: формирование памяти о кончине великого князя Ярослава Всеволодовича (середина XIII – XVI в.) // Российская история. 2025. № 1. С. 30–33.

“For he was slandered by Feodor Yarunovich”

As noted above, the only unique information on Yaroslav Vsevolodovich’s death in fifteenth-century sources is the notice in the *Life of Alexander Nevsky* in the S1 recension and in the “Special” recension, about a certain Feodor Yarunovich, who “slandered” Yaroslav Vsevolodovich before the “tsar”. Feodor Yarunovich himself is not mentioned in any other source, and therefore historiography has offered a wide variety of opinions as to who this man might have been⁸⁴. A.A. Gorsky put forward a well-grounded hypothesis according to which Feodor Yarunovich was the son of Yarun, a voevoda of Prince Mstislav Mstislavich (Udatnyi)⁸⁵, who is mentioned⁸⁶ three times in the Russian chronicles. Among other things, Yarun is named as one of the participants in the Battle of the Kalka River in 1223, during which he was sent “as a scout” at the head of a detachment of Cumans (“they sent Yarun with the Cumans as scouts”). However, Yarun’s detachment met with misfortune: “then Yarun engaged them, wishing to fight, and the Cumans fled back without achieving anything, and in fleeing they trampled the camps of the Rus’ princes, for they had not had time to form up against them; and all was thrown into confusion, and there was slaughter, evil and fierce”⁸⁷. In A.A. Gorsky’s view, “one may assume that Feodor Yarunovich fought on the Kalka together with his father and was taken captive during that very attack by the Mongols on the vanguard led by Yarun that turned the course of the battle, of which the Novgorod chronicle account speaks. Subsequently, he entered the service of the Chinggisids and, being in 1246 at the Great Khan’s camp, acted as an interpreter-negotiator in contacts between his

⁸⁴ See: *Горский А.А. Об обстоятельствах гибели...* С. 160.

⁸⁵ See: *Матузова В.И., Назарова Е.А. Ор. cit. С. 267; Горский А.А. Об обстоятельствах гибели...* С. 160.

⁸⁶ ПСРЛ. Т. 2. Стб. 733; Т. 3.С. 55, 63. A.V. Kuzmin considers Yarun to have been the brother of the slain boyar Konstantin Vasil’evich, who, according to the Нур., died in battle with the Cumans in 1168. (ПСРЛ. Т. 2 Стб. 540). See: *Кузьмин А. В. Торопецкая знать в XIII в.// Russia Mediaevalis. München, 2001. Т.10. Fasc. 1. P. 63-65, 71.*

⁸⁷ ПСРЛ. Т. 3. С. 63.



court and Yaroslav”⁸⁸. What exactly Feodor Yarunovich’s “slander” consisted in (in passing to the Mongols information about Yaroslav’s negotiations with de Plano Carpini, or something else), A.A. Gorsky thinks, is difficult to judge; however, he believes, “it may be supposed that Feodor, mindful of his father Yarun’s enmity toward Yaroslav, played his role in shaping the Great Khan’s and his mother’s attitude toward him, which resulted in the poisoning of the grand prince”⁸⁹.

Yaroslav Vsevolodovich’s relations with representatives of Rome are traditionally judged on the basis of Pope Innocent IV’s bull to Alexander Yaroslavich (Nevsky) of 22 February 1248, by means of which the pontiff intended to spur the grand prince’s son to convert to the Catholic faith — “abandoning the path of sin leading to eternal damnation”, to reunite “with that Church which, for those who venerate it, undoubtedly leads to salvation by the straight path of its instruction”. Innocent IV appealed to the act of Yaroslav Vsevolodovich himself, who, in the pontiff’s words, at the end of his life, “ardently desiring to be transformed into a new man, humbly and devoutly gave himself over in obedience to the Roman Church, his mother <...> And soon all people would have learned of this, had death not so unexpectedly and happily snatched him from life”⁹⁰. The pope referred to information received from his envoy (“as has become known to us from the report of our beloved son Brother John of Plano Carpini of the Order of Friars Minor, our agent sent to the Tatar people”), and noted that Prince Yaroslav’s conversion occurred precisely “through this brother” — that is, with the assistance of de Plano Carpini himself, who, however, did not mention this event in his *History of the Mongols*. In addition, Innocent IV wrote that the conversion of the ruler of the Suzdal land to the Catholic faith took place “in the presence of Jemer, a military adviser” (Jemeris militis)⁹¹. As A.V. Maiorov and F.N. Veselov convincingly showed, “the name of the knight Jemeris <...> arose as a result

⁸⁸ Горский А.А. Об обстоятельствах гибели... С. 164.

⁸⁹ Ibid.

⁹⁰ Матузова В.И., Назарова Е.А. Оp. cit. С. 262, 264.

⁹¹ Ibid.

of an overly free handling of the primary source”. Neither the authentic text of Innocent IV’s registers nor “the best-to-date Vatican edition of Innocent IV’s letter to Alexander Nevsky” contains such a name. In the papal registers and the Vatican edition it reads: “de conscientia tremens militis consiliarii sui”. The researchers believe that “in the original of the letter the adviser’s name appeared in the same form as in the papal envoy’s written report, better known as the *History of the Mongols – Temerus*”⁹².

At one time, V.T. Pashuto suggested that “Temer, a warrior of Yaroslav Vsevolodovich, well known to Carpini, who used him as an interpreter, is Feodor Yarunovich of our chronicle”. V.T. Pashuto offered no arguments in support of this view, but expressed the opinion that Feodor Yarunovich might have informed the Mongols that Yaroslav Vsevolodovich “had agreed to negotiations with the Curia”, and that this was precisely the “slander”, after which the prince’s “violent death” followed, as fifteenth-century sources wrote⁹³. The attempt to identify Temer with Feodor Yarunovich met with skepticism from scholars, who advanced as a counterargument that the name Temer (Timir) is more likely of Eastern origin (“its bearer probably came either from the Cumans or from the ‘Black Klobuks’”⁹⁴), whereas “Yarun” is Slavic⁹⁵.

It seems that reluctance to identify Feodor Yarunovich of the Russian sources with Temer of Plano Carpini’s work/Pope Innocent IV’s bull is premature. We know extremely little about these persons, but what is known allows one to conclude that in fact we may be dealing not with two different people, but with the same person.

⁹² Майоров А.В., Веселов Ф.Н. «Благочестиво отдал себя послушанию Римской церкви»: латинские источники по последним дням великого князя Ярослава Всеволодовича // Российская история. 2025. № 1. С. 5.

⁹³ Пауто В.Т. Очерки по истории Галицко-Волынской Руси. М., 1950. С. 269; Пауто В.Т., Матузова В.И. Ор. cit. С. 135.

⁹⁴ Горский А.А. Об обстоятельствах гибели... С. 160; Isoaho M. Polovtsy contacts in the house of Vladimir-Suzdalia — John of Plano Carpini’s Account of Prince Yaroslav Vsevolodovich’s retinue in 1246 // ROSSICA ANTIQUA. 2014 (2). С. 59.

⁹⁵ Матузова В.И., Назарова Е.Л. Ор. cit. С. 267.

First, their social status brings them closer. Researchers have noted that “a patronymic in -vich indicates Feodor’s noble (boyar) origin”, which would hardly have corresponded to the duties of a mere “interpreter”⁹⁶. Apparently, Temer was not merely Prince Yaroslav’s interpreter at the court of Güyük: both in the *History of the Mongols* and in the papal letter he is referred to as *miles*. In the *History of the Mongols*, John of Plano Carpini used the term *miles* to describe a close associate of another Russian prince, Michael of Chernigov, who was killed together with him at the court of Batu Khan. From Russian sources it is known that this man’s name was Feodor and that he was a boyar⁹⁷. One may assume that Temer had the same status. At the same time, both Temer and Feodor Yarunovich were close to Grand Prince Yaroslav and had access to the Mongol khan, which follows, on the one hand, from de Plano Carpini’s report and Pope Innocent IV’s letter, and on the other, from S1’s information.

Second, they are brought closer by their linguistic competence and their function. In A.A. Gorsky’s view, Feodor Yarunovich, having spent many years among the Mongols, surely mastered their language and could perform the function of an interpreter for Yaroslav Vsevolodovich. Temer, by Plano Carpini’s own admission, was the interpreter of the Franciscan mission “both in translating the emperor’s letter to the pope and in delivering speeches and the answers to them”, that is, he knew Latin, Russian, and, apparently, the Turkic language that served as a kind of lingua franca in the Mongol Empire⁹⁸.

⁹⁶ Ibid.

⁹⁷ See: Майоров А.В. Александр Невский, римский папа и монгольский хан: к вопросу о «выборе» между Западом и Востоком // Древняя Русь. Вопросы медиевистики. 2021. № 4 (86). С. 7; Иоанн де Плано Карпини. Op. cit. С. 335 (Commentary 62 to Chapter IX); Майоров А.В., Веселов Ф.Н. Op. cit. С. 6.

⁹⁸ Иоанн де Плано Карпини. Op. cit. С. 186, 191. “The Mongolian language, as the language of the ruling dynasty, was the principal official language of the empire. Alongside Mongolian, the Uyghur or Turkic language also became widespread, initially acquiring the status of an official language.” The position of the Mongolian language in the Ulus of Jochi was from the outset limited by the small number of Mongolian speakers on the western periphery of the empire: “the ethno-linguistic predominance of Turkic-speaking peoples

Third, most likely, they are brought closer by their affiliation with the Orthodox confession: Temer, despite the Turkic name by which he was known to the Franciscans, like Feodor Yarunovich, could well have been a Christian. To judge by Plano Carpini's report, cases of this sort were not isolated. Thus, in the papal envoy's words, "at Batu's we met a son of Prince Yaroslav, who had with him one *warrior from Rus'* by the name of Sangor. He was *by origin a Cuman, but now a Christian, as was another Rus' man* from the Suzdal land, who at Batu's was our interpreter"⁹⁹. Two conclusions follow from this report. First: though a Cuman by origin, Sangor became a Christian while retaining his Turkic name (it is obvious that he also had a baptismal name; however, in the Tatar milieu he probably did not use it, and therefore Plano Carpini did not know it). And second: this Christian, though Cuman by birth, nevertheless, from the Franciscan's point of view, was not merely a "warrior from Rus'", but in the full sense of the word, a "Rus' man". It is quite possible that all these definitions could also have applied to Temer: he could have borne a Cuman name, yet have been a Christian, and perceived not merely as Yaroslav's "warrior", but also as a Rus' man¹⁰⁰.

in the Ulus of Jochi determined the functional development of only one of the state's official languages." Moreover, "the Mongols themselves often knew both languages." At the same time, "the traditional language of Rus'-Horde contacts was the Turkic-Tatar language. It is entirely possible that this was already the case at the initial stages of the formation of relations between the Horde and the Russian principalities." See: Абзалов Л. Языки официального делопроизводства и канцелярская культура Золотой Орды // Золотая Орда в мировой истории. Казань, 2016. С. 217-220.

⁹⁹ Иоанн де Плано Карпини. Op. cit. С. 191.

¹⁰⁰ It is noteworthy that among the 18 witnesses of his journey (besides the European merchants encountered in Kiev), Plano Carpini names 17 people from Rus', including 7 princes. (See: Горский А.А. Об обстоятельствах гибели... С. 163). Of the remaining ten, four were Cumans and six were Rus' men proper. The Turkic names of three are mentioned — Sangor, Temer, Kokteban; the fourth, discussed above, is not named but is described by the Franciscan as "another Rus' man," and at the same time a Cuman who had become a Christian. See: Иоанн де Плано Карпини. Op. cit. С. 191, 334-336 (Commentary 62 to Chapter IX). Plano Carpini separately emphasized that "*all of them returned to the Suzdal land in Rus'*, and from them, if necessary, the truth can be learned." See: Иоанн де Плано Карпини. Op. cit. С. 191.

If so, then the name “Feodor” could well have been Temer’s baptismal name. This fully corresponds to A.A. Gorsky’s supposition about Feodor Yarunovich’s origin. If one proceeds from the assumption that the chronicle Yarun, as voevoda of Prince Mstislav Udatnyi, was Feodor’s father, the choice of a baptismal name can be explained. With a high degree of probability, one may suppose that Prince Mstislav’s heavenly patron was Saint Theodore Tiron¹⁰¹, and this name, as a baptismal name, could have been chosen for the son of his closest boyar as well (the prince could even have been Feodor Yarunovich’s godfather, “granting” him at baptism the name of his own heavenly protector)¹⁰². Prince Mstislav Udatnyi himself was fairly closely connected with the Cuman elite: his wife Maria was the daughter of the Cuman prince Kotyan (Köten) Sutoevich, at whose request, conveyed through his son-in-law, the Rus’ princes took the Cumans’ side in the Battle of the Kalka. The daughter of Mstislav and Maria – Feodosia Mstislavovna – was the wife of Prince Yaroslav Vsevolodovich (married no earlier than 1213 and no later than 1215¹⁰³) and the mother of Alexander Yaroslavich (Nevsky)¹⁰⁴. Yarun, judging by what we know of his participation in the Battle of the Kalka, like his lord, could well have had matrimonial ties with the Cumans (for example, he might have been married to a Cuman

¹⁰¹ Янин В.А. Актовые печати Древней Руси. Т. 1. М., 1970. С. 113-114, 125, 206-207, 235; Янин В.А., Гайдуков П.Г. Актовые печати Древней Руси X-XV вв. Т. 3. М., 1998. С. 47, 53, 140-141. Хорошкевич А.А. Конные печати Мстислава Мстиславича Удалого — источник по истории международных отношений Руси начала XIII в. // Славяне и их соседи. Международные отношения в эпоху феодализма (сборник тезисов). М., 1989. С. 24-27. See: Литвина А.Ф., Успенский Ф.Б. Выбор имени у русских князей в X-XVI вв. Династическая история сквозь призму антропониимики. М., 2006. С. 585.

¹⁰² Such cases of “name-giving” are known from Scandinavian material. See: Успенский Ф.Б. Имя и власть: Выбор имени как инструмент династической борьбы в средневековой Скандинавии. М., 2001. С. 26, 92-93; Литвина А.Ф., Успенский Ф.Б. Русские имена половецких князей. Междинастические контакты сквозь призму антропониимики. М., 2013. С. 14.

¹⁰³ Литвина А.Ф., Успенский Ф.Б. Выбор имени у русских князей... С. 301.

¹⁰⁴ Кучкин В.А. К биографии Александра Невского // Древнейшие государства на территории СССР. 1985. М., 1986. С. 71-80; Кучкин В.А. Александр Невский — государственный деятель и полководец средневековой Руси // Отечественная история. 1996. № 5. С. 18-19.

woman), and this could have been one of the reasons why he was entrusted with commanding the joint scout detachment with the Cumans within the combined Rus'–Cuman host. It is interesting that in a later chronicle writing this fact was unequivocally perceived as a sign of Yarun's own belonging to the Cumans. Thus, in S1 and chronicles dependent on it, it is said that at the Kalka there acted "Yarun and *other* Cuman regiments"¹⁰⁵, and in the Nikon Chronicle it is even mentioned that "the *Cuman prince Yarun with the Cumans* fought fiercely against the Tatars"¹⁰⁶.

Proceeding from this, one may suppose that Feodor Yarunovich could well have been of mixed parentage (Russian on his father's side and Cuman on his mother's), and among the Cumans he may have been known under the name "Temer". If, following A.A. Gorsky, one assumes that Yarun was taken captive at the Kalka and that his son spent decades (from 1223) among Mongols and Cumans, then it is entirely possible that in a Turkic-speaking milieu it was more convenient for him to use his Cuman name. Even if he did not fall into captivity, then in any case, finding himself together with Yaroslav Vsevolodovich at the khan's camp, he could have presented himself to the Franciscans in the same way — as, for example, a certain Sangor did: "*by origin a Cuman, but now a Christian*", as Plano Carpini described him, or "Yaroslav's man", as the Galician chronicler called Sangor when recounting Prince Daniel Romanovich of Galicia's journey to Batu¹⁰⁷.

¹⁰⁵ ПСРЛ. Т. 6. Вып. 1. Стб. 281. Ср. ПСРЛ. Т. 1. Стб. 508; Т. 25. С. 120. See: Шахматов А.А. Ор. cit. С. 222-230; Лурье Я. С. Генеалогическая схема летописей XI–XVI вв., включенных в «Словарь книжников и книжности Древней Руси» // ТОДРА. Л., 1985. Т. 40. С.190–205.

¹⁰⁶ ПСРЛ. Т. 10. С. 91.

¹⁰⁷ "And when a man of Yaroslav, named Snegur, came (to Daniel — V.R.), and said to him: 'Your brother Yaroslav bowed to the bush and you must bow as well.' And Daniel said to him: '*The devil speaks from your mouth. May God shut your mouth, and your word shall not be heard.*' At that time, summoned by Batu, he was delivered by God from their evil frenzy and sorcery. And he bowed according to their custom and entered his tent." See: ПСРЛ. Т. 2. Стб. 807; Иоанн де Плано Карпини. Ор. cit. С. 335 (Commentary 62 to Chapter IX). Daniel of Galicia's visit to Batu dates to 1245. See: Горский А.А. Гибель Михаила Черниговского в контексте первых контактов русских князей в Орде // Горский А.А. «Бещисленные рати и великия труды...». Проблемы русской истории X-XV вв. СПб., 2018. С. 145.

What could the “slander”¹⁰⁸ have consisted in, committed (if one believes the fifteenth-century Russian sources) by Feodor Yarunovich? One can answer this only hypothetically. S.M. Solovyov, calling him the “main actor” who slandered the grand prince to the khan, wrote that at the head of the “intrigue” stood “certain people who wished to obtain Yaroslav’s lands”. “Who were these people? Of course, someone among the Rus’ princes, most likely the Rostov Konstantinoviichi”, Solovyov believed. At the same time, the historian wrote that the slander to the khan “did not succeed fully”, and then the slanderers “resorted to the easiest means of freeing themselves from Yaroslav: he was poisoned by the hands of Töregene Khatun herself”¹⁰⁹. However, the historian does not specify what precisely the slander consisted in. A.E. Presnyakov wrote of a “vague report about some denunciation” against the grand prince. Likewise not specifying details, he nonetheless rejected the suggestion of Rostov princes’ involvement in Yaroslav’s death, supposing that “there were more grounds (though still insufficient for a definite conclusion) to correlate this dark story with the Yaroslavichi’s hostility toward their uncle Sviatoslav and with the fact that, judging by our chronicles, Yarunovich’s denunciation coincided with Sviatoslav’s first arrival in the Horde, when the princes all together appeared before the khan”¹¹⁰. A.N. Nasonov supposes that the grand prince was poisoned at the camp of the Great Khan Güyük as a supporter of Batu, but he mentioned the “slander” version involving Feodor Yarunovich only in a footnote¹¹¹. As noted above, one of the first to formulate the guess that Feodor Yarunovich could have informed the Mongols that Yaroslav Vsevolodovich “had agreed to negotiations with the Curia” was V.T. Pashuto¹¹². V.I. Matuzova and E.L. Nazarova thought likewise, noting that “the prince’s consent could

¹⁰⁸ “Slander,” “denunciation,” “false accusation.” See: *Словарь древнерусского языка (XI–XIV вв.)*. Т. 5. М., 2002. С. 468–469.

¹⁰⁹ *Соловьев С.М. История отношений между русскими князьями Рюрикова дома*. М., 1847. С. 262–263.

¹¹⁰ *Пресняков А.Е. Образование Великорусского государства*. Пг., 1918. С. 51–52. Прим. 3.

¹¹¹ *Насонов А.Н. Монголы и Русь*. М., Л., 1940. С. 31–32.

¹¹² *Пащито В.Т. Очерки по истории Галицко-Волынской Руси*. М., 1950. С. 269; *Пащито В.Т., Матузова В.И. Op. cit.* С. 135.

have concerned not so much a change of faith as the question of joint actions against the Mongol threat”. Disagreeing with V.T. Pashuto’s view that Temer and Feodor Yarunovich were the same person, they nonetheless did not exclude that “Yaroslav’s warrior and interpreter Temer”, being “aware of Yaroslav’s intentions”, betrayed them to “Tsar” Güyük¹¹³. However, regarding the essence of these “intentions” and the possible content of negotiations, to which the prince merely “gave consent”, scholars preferred to write with considerable caution. This is understandable: in the only document that has come down to us — the letter of Pope Innocent IV to Alexander Nevsky — there is only a mention of Yaroslav Vsevolodovich’s conversion to Catholicism and a request to his son “without delay inform <...> the brothers of the Teutonic Order residing in Livonia” about a new Tatar invasion, if he should learn of it¹¹⁴.

Despite the fact that in recent decades historiography has viewed the circumstances of Yaroslav Vsevolodovich’s death primarily through the prism of his relations with Rome and Karakorum’s desire to prevent those relations from developing, it seems important to me to draw attention to the following point. If we allow that the report about Feodor Yarunovich’s involvement in the grand prince’s death had a real basis, then it is worth attaching significance to the terminology used in that notice. The word *obada* (“slander”) was apparently not used by the chroniclers by chance: the accusation brought against the prince most likely looked false and slanderous, not only and not so much in the eyes of the “tsar” as in the eyes of those who wrote about it. Therefore, if one is to assume the reality of the very fact of the *obada* directed toward the grand prince, then the following picture seems more probable.

¹¹³ Мамузова В.И., Назарова Е.А. Оp. cit. С. 266-267.

¹¹⁴ Ibid. P. 265. It is difficult to agree with A.V. Maiorov’s opinion that “Yaroslav Vsevolodovich’s readiness to submit to the Roman Church, attested in the above-cited letter of Innocent IV to Alexander Nevsky,” since, first, the letter does not speak of “readiness to submit,” and second — no less importantly — the author of the letter was not Yaroslav Vsevolodovich but Pope Innocent IV, who could well have presented wishful thinking as fact. Therefore, whether he can in this case be considered a reliable witness is a major question. See: Майоров А.В. Александр Невский, римский папа и монгольский хан... С. 10.

Under the names *Feodor Yarunovich* and *Temer* there could well have been one and the same person. In the grand prince's homeland, they learned of his role in the events connected with the last days of Yaroslav Vsevolodovich's life from the papal bull, from which it followed that the boyar was not only a witness to Yaroslav's conversion to Catholicism, but was also ready (at least, Pope Innocent IV assured Alexander Nevsky of this) to confirm it publicly and thus take Rome's side. Information about Yaroslav Vsevolodovich's conversion to the Catholic faith, which became known to Alexander Nevsky and his entourage thanks to the pontiff's letter, in itself (and, all the more, in the conditions of a final rupture in relations with Rome¹¹⁵) could be perceived as tarnishing the "honor and dignity" of the deceased ruler of the Suzdal land. This, in turn, could have been sufficient grounds for an attempt to disavow the information reported in the papal bull by accusing the boyar Feodor of an obvious slander (*obada*) against the grand prince. The situation was made especially acute by the fact that Rome was trying to use this slander to achieve its political aims, which by that time had clearly diverged from the aims of Alexander Yaroslavich.

Such an *obada* (and not reports passed by Feodor Yarunovich about some obscure "intentions" of the grand prince with regard to the papal envoys) touched, in the eyes of the prince's descendants, upon essential notions of Yaroslav Vsevolodovich as a pious Orthodox ruler. This could have been a serious motive to ensure that the specific content of this "slander" was concealed. It was precisely the strategy of silence, adopted by Yaroslav's descendants, that gave rise to far-reaching conjectures by scholars, who began searching for the causes of the grand prince's death either in internal political or in geopolitical conflicts of that time. Meanwhile, the religious component of the act which, if one trusts Pope Innocent IV's information, Yaroslav Vsevolodovich committed, was in

¹¹⁵ A.A. Gorsky believes this occurred after Alexander's return from Mongolia in 1250; according to A.V. Maiorov, "the complete break of Alexander Nevsky with the papacy apparently occurred in 1252." See: Горский А.А. Два «неудобных» факта из биографии Александра Невского // Горский А.А. «Безчисленья рати и великия труды...». Проблемы русской истории X–XV вв. СПб., 2018. С. 188; Майоров А.В. Александр Невский, римский папа и монгольский хан... С. 17.

fact not taken into account, although there was direct testimony to it in a source drawn up in Rome on 23 January 1248. Because the recipient of the papal letter, as well as his descendants, were clearly interested in a hushed-up handling of the matter about which the pontiff wrote, the memory that Yaroslav had somehow been slandered by Feodor/Temer remained, while the details were hidden. In this form the information about the slander was recorded in written sources, thanks to which it has come down to us in one of the late recensions of the *Life of Alexander Nevsky*. It kept silent about what exactly the boyar Feodor Yarunovich accused (slandered) the grand prince of, and it also reported nothing about the circumstances of Yaroslav Vsevolodovich's death. As a result, the semi-detective story which the Franciscan John of Plano Carpini set out in detail and, seemingly, quite consistently for his Western European readers, in reality turned out to be far more confused. It remains so to this day.

Conflict of interests

The author declares no relevant conflict of interests.



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