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**An Ideal Prince for the Times:
Alexander Nevskii in Rus' Literature**

Mari Isoaho, *The Image of Aleksandr Nevskiy in Medieval Russia: Warrior and Saint* (Leiden: Brill, 2006), viii, 417 pp. ISBN: 90-04-15101-7.

Portrayal of Prince Alexander Nevskii in the sources and historiography underwent significant changes over the centuries as new generations felt the necessity to rewrite the story of his life and the meaning of it for themselves. Every culture has its hero for all times, often a prince or king from an early period in a country's history, such as Gilgamesh in ancient Mesopotamia, King Arthur in Britain, or Charlemagne in France. Legends and myths accrete in the retelling of the exploits of the princely hero. Like these heroes the portrayals of Alexander Nevskii are infinitely malleable to fit the concerns of whatever the contemporary times are. Recently Frithjof Benjamin Schenk, surveyed these various portrayals of Alexander Nevskii to the year 2000.¹

The monograph under review here is devoted to an in-depth study of the portrayals during the first three-and-a-half centuries after Alexander's death, until the end of the sixteenth century. The author, Mari Isoaho is a lecturer in medieval historiography and early Russian history at the University of Oulu, Finland. She published articles previously under the name Mari Maki-Patäys. She had done her master's thesis and doctoral dissertation on the legend of Alexander Nevskii. Her book *The Image of Aleksandr Nevskiy in Medieval Russia* demonstrates a close acquaintance with both the scholarly literature and the primary sources, especially hagiographical works and chronicles.

The book begins with an Introduction in which Isoaho introduces the goals of the study — “not ... to discover a man behind the myth, but rather to identify and examine the material of which the legend was built” (2) — and methods — “attempts to look beyond the person of Aleksandr Yaroslavich himself, using historical image research as its leading method” (11). Besides describing in the Introduction the goals and methods of the study, Isoaho claims “the first part of her study penetrates to the core of the image of Aleksandr Nevskiy given in the First Edition of his *Life*” (20) and “demonstrates the weaknesses of the hypothetical theories concerning the authorship of the *Life*...” (21). The second part “evaluates the image of Aleksandr as it was modified over time in order to coincide with the ideals of each period in which it was rewritten and by means of historical image research it penetrates into the changes in the perceived portrait of Aleksandr Nevskiy as given in the hagiographic *Life*” (24). The third part she asserts “penetrates the image of Prince Aleksandr in the era of Metropolitan Makariy and Ivan

¹ See his *Aleksandr Nevskiy: Heiliger — Fürst — Nationalheld. Eine Erinnerungsfigur im russischen kulturellen Gedächtnis 1263-2000* (Cologne: Beiträge zur Geschichte Osteuropas, 2004). Schenk's book may have appeared too late for Isoaho to have incorporated its findings, for she mentions it in a footnote that seems to have been inserted at the last (22, fn. 64a).

IV..." (24). Finally, studying "the sixteenth-century Moscow editions of the *Life*... gives an opportunity to examine all the nuances and tones of the *Life* and to look at the image of Aleksandr as a whole, as a product of centuries of opinions and adaptations of the manifestation of an ideal prince" (26). Although she does not define exactly what "historical image research" is as a method, one can guess that it means determining when a change was made in the portrayal of Alexander Nevskii, then placing that change within its historical context.

The main text of the book is divided into three parts: (1) "The Medieval Image of the Ideal Ruler"; (2) "Changing the Image"; and (3) "Aleksandr Nevskiy as the New Miracle-Worker of Russia." Each part is divided into three chapters. *Part 1* discusses the combining of "the worldly and the biblical" in the descriptions of the battles of Alexander, the depiction of his image as a defender, and "the quest for a godly ruler" via an analysis of how he is portrayed in chronicles and the First Redaction of his *Life*. *Part 2* discusses how "the image of an ideal ruler" is modified in regard "to historical consciousness," how "anti-Mongol images" begin to show up in writings about Alexander in the second half of the fifteenth century, and how the tales of the Kulikovo cycle begin to make use of his image, especially in emphasizing Dmitrii Donskoi's relationship to him. *Part 3* discusses the sixteenth-century Muscovite image of Alexander Nevskii, the arrangement of "the imperial history of the Moscow tsars" particularly in the *Stepennaia kniga*, and the transformation of the image of Alexander Nevskii from a "tool of the imperial dynasty to a national myth." One finds a relative high degree of organization in Isoaho's book. Each chapter is divided into 3 subsections, except for chapter 1 of *Part 3*, which has only two subsections, and chapter 3 of *Part 3*, which has no subsections. The book also has a "Conclusions" chapter, a List of Abbreviations, extensive Bibliography, and an Index of Names. We can now examine the main text in more detail to see how well she fulfills the claims she makes in the Introduction.

Isoaho states that "the *Life of Aleksandr Nevskiy* is not a biography of a prince but a narrative that gives us an idealised image of a physically and morally virtuous prince" (52). She is, however, aware of the "dualistic nature" of the *Life* "so that one could classify it as belonging both to the genre of hagiographies of saints and to that of war tales" (52). She sees the models for the depiction of the image of Alexander Nevskii in the *Tale of Daniil Zatochnik* (34), Alexander of Macedon (34-36) (although that Alexander is not mentioned in the First Redaction), and the Emperor Vespasian (38-39) (who is mentioned). In addition, she finds the *Life's* recalling of biblical figures such as David (41-44), Solomon (44-45), and Hezekiah (44-48) to be especially significant in specifying the Old Testament antecedents of the godly ruler. She also discusses the views of Nikolai Serebrianskii and Serge A. Zenkovsky, who ascribed the First Redaction of the *Life* to two individuals — a separate author and redactor — providing the differing secular and hagiographic styles contained therein. She argues, however, that one should not be perplexed by the duality since wars were not seen as solely secular in Church writings. Non-recognition of this point explains why "so many researchers [have] been so bewildered by its seemingly confusing style" (52). She seems to subscribe to the view of B. A. Uspenskii that language and style are norms that reflect cultural history. Thus, she does not see anything strange, odd, or bewildering in the

juxtaposition of dissimilar styles in the *Life*. That may be so once an extant text appears and is copied, but that does not necessarily mean a single author wrote it that way. Just as the image of the ideal prince can be modified and added to, so too can a text. We may simply not have extant versions of all the intermediate stages.

She is critical of other historians who “have often failed to cite the specific hagiographic edition or version [of the *Life of Alexander Nevskii*] they have used, and have failed to take into account the importance of the date of each source” (16). The historians who she cites as examples of these failings are N. M. Karamzin, George Vernadsky, and V. T. Pashuto. She is also critical of the theory of D. S. Likhachev that he espoused in 1947 concerning the similarities between the *Galician Chronicle* and the *Life*, to the extent that they may have had a common author or commissioner. Likhachev suggested Metropolitan Kirill, who he accepted had served as the keeper of the seal, also named Kirill, under Prince Daniil Romanovich, to have been the possible author or commissioner of both. Isoaho writes that Likhachev’s theory “has enjoyed unquestioned authority ever since” (104), that “his theories about the authorship of both sources have dominated the field ever since” (105), and that “they influenced assumptions about the writer of the *Life of Aleksandr Nevskiy* to a decisive extent” (105). Instead, as I pointed out in an article I published in this journal last year, Likhachev’s argument about a possible common author of both the *Galician Chronicle* and the *Life* has been challenged by a number of scholars, including Iu. K. Begunov, Dmitrii Čyževskij, Gunther Stökl, and John Fennell. It was ignored by Likhachev in his own subsequent work as well as by N. F. Kotliar, who recently wrote an extensive commentary to, and articles on, the *Galician Chronicle*.²

Isoaho found that some of the similarities Likhachev claimed to have perceived “were both cursorily and incorrectly deduced” (105), the supposed similarity between singing songs is “a very common *topos*,” his seeing a parallel between the Pope’s envoys waiting for Daniil in the *Galician Chronicle* and Andreash waiting for Alexander in the *Life* “is equally not a good one” (106), and his analogies of the war descriptions are “unconvincing” (107). She concludes that “it is in many ways absurd to try to compare these texts at all” (109) and that Likhachev’s “theory is illogical at many points, as it contains numerous obscurities and contradictory ideas” (111). Her evaluations of particular “parallels” coincide closely to my own. When I wrote my article on the topic, I did not know of Isoaho’s book and her discussion of these parallels that Likhachev proposed. If I had, I would have incorporated her analysis.

Isoaho, however, may have confused the term “Chronicle of Daniil,” which L. V. Cherepnin used to designate that part of the *Hypatian Codex* that began with the entry for 1201, with the second part of the *Galician Chronicle* from 1247 to 1264, defined by O. P. Likhacheva as the *Chronicle of Ioann*.³ Likhacheva stated that Metropolitan Kirill

² See my “The Galician-Volynian Chronicle, the *Life of Alexander Nevskii* and the Thirteenth-Century Military Tale,” *Palaeoslavica*, vol. XV, no. 2 (2007), pp. 307-324.

³ D. S. Likhachev, *Russkie letopisi i ikh kul’turno-istoricheskoe znachenie* (Moscow—Leningrad: Akademiia nauk SSSR, 1947), p. 248; L. V. Cherepnin, “Letopisets Daniila Galitskogo,” *Istoricheskie zapiski*, no. 12 (1941), p. 228; O. P. Likhacheva, commentary to the “Galitsko-Volynskaia letopis’,” in *Pamiatniki*

wrote the first part of the Galician Chronicle (the *Letopisnyi svod of 1246*), and that the second part was written by the Bishop of Kholm Ioann. D. S. Likhachev, however, drew parallels between the *Life of Alexander Nevskii* and not only the first and second parts of the Galician Chronicle (as defined by Likhacheva) but with the Volynian Chronicle part of the Hypatian Codex as well to show they had the same literary origin.

She cites with approval Michael Cherniavsky's formulation of Alexander Nevskii as both a saintly prince and a princely saint (129). When Nevskii defends Orthodoxy, such as turning town the envoys of the pope in the First Redaction, he is accordingly the saintly prince, and when he submits to the khan for the good of the land, he is a princely saint.⁴ This formulation is important for understanding the later portrayals of Nevskii as an ideal type. All princes, insofar as they are fulfilling their duty to protect the bodies and souls of their subjects, are both princely and saintly, but Alexander Nevskii was chosen by the Rus' churchmen as the archetypal strong and pious prince.

Isoaho goes on to discuss the historical context and significance of later redactions of the *Life*. She writes that the date of composition of the Second Redaction "is unresolved" but that "[t]he ideal of political sacrifice was fully adopted into the image of Aleksandr Yaroslavich, as the ideals of the fourteenth-century martyr princes, originating in Tver, came to be reflected in his image in the Second Edition of the *Life*, which highlighted the sufferings of Aleksandr and his father in the Golden Horde" (222). Isoaho sees "no justification" in V. I. Okhotnikova's statement "that the *Life* of Aleksandr in the *Sophia I Chronicle* reflects a specific all-Russian edition from the hypothetical all-Russian chronicle edition, which both the *Sophia I* and *Novgorod IV chronicles* were supposed to reflect" because "the treatment of Aleksandr Nevskiy's image in" them differs significantly and "it is certain they did not use mutual sources in their treatment of his life and image" (233). She faults David Miller for putting too much emphasis on Metropolitan Makarii alone for revising the image of Alexander Nevskii in the sixteenth century so that "he earned sainthood above all by humiliating himself before the Mongols and by giving his life to save his people, rather than through his victories over the Swedes and the Germans." Isoaho points out that "[a]lthough Makariy made huge efforts to unite the Russian hagiographic tradition into one single collection, the *Great Menology*, it was not Makariy himself who invented this tradition, for the collection was based on material that had developed in the course of the previous centuries" (316).

Isoaho cites favorably and discusses my contention that the Rus' Church began to adopt an anti-Tatar position in its writings from the mid-fifteenth century on (316-318). It fits in well with her arguments about the adoption of anti-Mongol formulations in later redactions of the *Life*. She correctly describes my proposal as based on the ending of the alliance between the Byzantine Empire and the Ulus of Jochi (a.k.a. Qipchaq khanate or Golden Horde) as well as the breakdown of communication between the Rus' bishops and the patriarch of Constantinople especially after the appointment of Isidor as metro-

literaturny drevnei Rusi: XIII vek, ed. L. A. Dmitriev and D. S. Likhachev (Moscow: Khudozhestvennaia literatura, 1981), p. 565.

⁴ Michael Cherniavsky, *Tsar and People: A Historical Study of Russian National and Social Myths* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1961), 5-43; see also Charles J. Halperin, *The Tatar Yoke* (Columbus, OH: Slavica, 1985), 57-61.

politan of Rus' by the patriarch. Upon his return from the Council of Florence-Ferrara, Isidor was arrested by the Muscovite authorities in 1441 and then allowed to flee. Nonetheless, it took the Muscovite grand prince Vasiliï II and Rus' bishops another six years to reach an agreement on the election of Iona, the archbishop of Rostov, as metropolitan without the approval of the patriarch. A vital part of those negotiations involved the claims that either Vasiliï II or his rival Dmitriï Shemiaka was pro-Tatar. Vasiliï II apparently agreed to support Iona in return for Church support of his rule. One of the consequences was the adoption of a decidedly anti-Tatar ideology on the part of Rus' Church writers, which was reflected in rhetorical flourishes that had not appeared in Rus' writings since the thirteenth century.⁵

Isoaho erroneously writes, however, that “[o]ne of the arguments for Ostrowski’s theory of an alliance between Russia and the Qipchaq khanate up to 1448 was his claim that anti-Mongol material first appeared only in the *Nikon Chronicle*... Ostrowski interpreted the words of Andrey Yaroslavich as the first example of a changed attitude towards the steppes” (317, 318). For the record, I did not claim it was “an alliance between Russia and the Qipchaq khanate” but between Byzantium and the Qipchaq khanate until the mid-fifteenth century that precluded anti-Tatar slurs and rhetoric in Rus' Church writing. During the time of Mongol/Tatar hegemony, there was no “Russia” to make an alliance, but a number of separate Rus' principalities, including Chernigov, Galicia, Iaroslavl', Kiev, Moscow, Nizhnii-Novgorod, Perm', Pskov, Riazan', Rostov, Smolensk, Suzdal', Tver', Velikii Novgorod, Viatka, Volynia, and others. The Ulus of Jochi through the khan in Sarai was the political suzerain over most of the Rus' principalities from the middle of the thirteenth century until the fifteenth century, and the khan granted a *iarlyk* to rule to the prince of each of these principalities. As a result, those princes were obliged to follow the policies of their overlord. There was no question of an “alliance” between overlord and tributary.

At the same time, the Byzantine Church through the patriarch of Constantinople was the ecclesiastical suzerain of Rus'. The patriarch and basileus accepted, at least in theory, a harmony of powers between themselves. As long as the basileus maintained an alliance with the Jochid khan, and as long as the Church saw no threat in that alliance to the salvation of the souls of their Christian subjects, then the patriarch was obliged to support the policy of the basileus. The Rus' Church, being under the jurisdiction of the Byzantine Church, was obliged to abide by Byzantine Church policy. Calling the Tatars derogatory names in the chronicles and other Church writings and attributing various nefarious acts to them would not have been in accord with that policy. But when the flap over Metropolitan Isidor occurred and the suzerainty of the khan in Sarai over the Rus' principalities weakened, a new scenario arose by the mid-fifteenth century. Then the Rus' Church could revive the rhetoric of the early Rus' writers against the people of the steppe and, in addition, place a more virulent anti-Muslim overlay on it.

In the meantime, the Muscovite princes were steering a course that was leading to their own sovereignty as well as suzerainty over the other Rus' principalities. Most like-

⁵ See my *Muscovy and the Mongols: Cross-Cultural Influences on the Steppe Frontier* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), pp. 138-143.

ly, they did not see issues of foreign policy in the same cosmic manichaean terms of good vs. evil that the Rus' Churchmen were espousing. In certain respects, they were constrained by the rules and obligations of steppe diplomacy. The second half of the fifteenth century was the time when Rus' churchmen began to re-edit chronicles to add anti-Tatar interpolations, in part to influence grand princely policy and actions.

In light of those considerations, I described in *Muscovy and the Mongols* three types of anti-Tatar interpolations in the *Nikon Chronicle*:

(1) the simple revision, where a neutral entry in previous chronicles was provided with an anti-Tatar wording;

(2) the double-layered revision, where a chronicle that is post-1448 but pre-*Nikon Chronicle* put an anti-Tatar spin on an earlier neutrally worded entry and then was further revised and enhanced in the *Nikon Chronicle*; and

(3) the inclusion of an anti-Tatar entry in the *Nikon Chronicle* where no entry, neutral or otherwise, appeared in an earlier chronicle.⁶

One example I used for the simple revision type of interpolation is the entry for 1261/2 (6770) about the calling of a *veche* by the people of the Rostov land to oust Muslims who were requiring forced labor from those who could not pay their taxes. In the context of 1262, the action on the part of the people of Rostov was not depicted by the contemporary thirteenth-century chronicler as anti-Mongol/Tatar.⁷ At that time, the Mongol/Tatars of the Ulus of Jochi had not converted to Islam, but were utilizing Muslim tax collectors. The action of the Rostovians is directed clearly at those Muslim tax collectors and no mention is made of their Mongol overlords. Under the entry for the same year in the *Nikon Chronicle*, in contrast, we read:

That same year all the towns in Rus' held counsel about the Tatars because Khan (царь) Batu placed his administrators (властелин) in all the Rus' towns. And after the killing of Batu, so did his son Sartaq, and after him [so did] the others. The Rus' princes, having agreed among themselves, drove the Tatars from their towns for there was violence among them. The rich ones would farm out the collection of tribute (дани) from the Tatars and aggrandized (корыстоваахуся) for themselves. And [as a result] many people were impoverished (убозии) in increased work (въ постѣхъ работяху). So, the Rus' princes drove away [some] Tatars, killed others, while [still] others among them were baptized in the Name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit.⁸

After that, the following passage appears:

Then in Iaroslavl' they killed Zosima the Apostate, who had rejected the Christian faith (вѣры) and monasticism and became a very evil Muslim. He was a favorite (приятъ поспѣхъ) of the khan's envoy Titiak and did much harm to the Christians. Therefore, the Orthodox Christians killed him and threw him to the dogs for food (на снѣдь).

⁶ *Muscovy and the Mongols*, pp. 149-155.

⁷ *Polnoe sobranie russkikh letopisei (PSRL)*, 41 vols. (St. Petersburg/Petrograd/Leningrad and Moscow, 1843-2005), vol. 1 (1927), col. 476; vol. 1 (1928), col. 524.

⁸ *PSRL*, vol. 10, p. 143.

In the *Nikon Chronicle* account, the identification of those who are driven away was expanded from Muslim tax collectors to the Tatar administrators appointed by Khan Batu. Instead of the initiative for driving the Muslims away being attributed to the people of Rostov land, the initiative for driving the Tatar administrators away is placed in the hands of the Rus' princes who reach an agreement among themselves. Not only do they drive the Tatar administrators away but they kill some and convert others to Christianity. The interpolation in the *Nikon Chronicle* of a prominent role played by the Rus' princes is significant because by the sixteenth century the Tatars are identified with Islam, since they had been Muslim by that time for over 200 years, and the connections of the administrators/tax collectors is made explicit with the Mongol khan Batu. The Church from the mid-fifteenth century on was encouraging Rus' princely opposition to the Tatars.

In another version of this story from the sixteenth century, the *Ustiug Chronicle* account has Alexander Nevskii appealing to the Ustiugians to rebel against the Tatars. Buga, a Tatar tax collector, converts to Christianity at the behest of his Ustiug mistress because Alexander Nevskii has ordered the killing of all Tatars.⁹ Nasonov considered the Ustiug Chronicle account to be of sufficient credibility to propose that Alexander Nevskii planned and directed the entire rebellion.¹⁰ This romantic fable of the sixteenth century should not be used as Nasonov did for reliable evidence about the uprising of 1262. Nonetheless, it could have been cited by Isoaho as evidence for the portrayal of Alexander Nevskii in the Rus' north of the sixteenth century.

The example of the second type of revision — the double-layered one — that I described was four chronicle accounts of the 1327 Tver' uprising against Chol-Khan after he drove their prince Alexander Mikhailovich from the throne of Tver': the hypothetical reconstruction by Fennell of the *Tver' Chronicle*'s original account; the *1455 Tver' svod* account; the *Moscow svod of 1479* account; and the *Nikon Chronicle* account. The original account in the *Tver' Chronicle* according to Fennell's reconstruction was matter of fact in style in its description of the uprising.¹¹ Although Isoaho lists Fennell's article in her bibliography, she does not discuss the import of it, which is that Tver' chronicle writing of the event in the fourteenth century was devoid of critical remarks about the Mongol/Tatars. Instead, she prefers the view expressed in the published lectures of I. N. Danilevskii in 2001¹² to the effect that, as she describes it: "It was at the beginning of the fourteenth century that a literary style showing critical tones against the Mongols arose in Tver, as reported magnificently in the tale of the death of Mikhail of Tver in the Horde" (215).

⁹ *PSRL*, vol. 37, pp. 30, 70, 104-105, and 110. In the Second Redaction of the *Ustiug Chronicle* and in the *Chronicle of Vologdin*, the Ustiug woman is given the name Mariia. Cf. *PSRL*, vol. 37, p. 129 (*Chronicle of Lev Vologdin*).

¹⁰ A. N. Nasonov, *Mongoly i Rus': Istoriia tatarskoi politiki na Rusi* (Moscow: Izdatel'stvo Akademii Nauk SSSR, 1940), pp. 52-53 (repr. *Slavistic printings and reprintings* 233 [The Hague: Mouton, 1969]).

¹¹ John L. I. Fennell, "The Tver' Uprising of 1327: A Study of the Sources," *Jahrbücher für Geschichte Osteuropas*, 15 (1967), pp. 161-179.

¹² I. N. Danilevskii, *Russkie zemli glazami sovremennikov i potomkov (XII-XIV vv.): Kurs lektsii* (Moscow: Aspect Press, 2001).

But the earliest copies of the *Povest' ob ubienii velikogo kniazia tverskogo Mikhaila Iaroslavicha v Orde* are in the *Sofia I Chronicle* and date to the second half of the fifteenth century. So even if the original composition of the *Povest'* can be dated to the early fourteenth century, anti-Tatar sentiments in it cannot be dated earlier than our earliest extant copies.

By focusing so much on the *Nikon Chronicle's* anti-Tatar interpolations, I may have given the impression that I thought the compiler of the *Nikon Chronicle* was the first chronicler to articulate a changed policy. Instead, like Isoaho in regard to the various depictions of Alexander Nevskii, I wanted to show how treatment of the Tatars went through successive layerings in late fifteenth- and early sixteenth-century chronicle writing. I think my revision type no. 2, the double-layered revision, in which pre-Nikonian chroniclers (in this case, the compiler of the *Tver' svod of 1455* and the *Moscow svod of 1479*) had introduced anti-Tatar elements to a previously neutrally worded entry and then the Nikon chronicler took the anti-Tatar aspects further, is an indication that I recognized the introduction of anti-Tatar elements into Rus' chronicle writing before the compilation of the *Nikon Chronicle* in the late 1520s.¹³

I could also have used an example of a double-layered revision that is related to the *Life of Alexander Nevskii*; namely, the treatment of Nevruy's campaign against Alexander's younger brother Andrei in 1252 in the chronicles. Early chronicles either do not mention this episode or state that Nevruy went against Andrei Iaroslavich and chased him beyond the sea. The *Laurentian Chronicle's* account states that "the Tatars scattered throughout the land" (presumably in search of Andrei) and "caused much misery when they left" (presumably because they took many captives, horses, and cattle).¹⁴ Later (post-1448, pre-*Nikon Chronicle*) chronicles state that Nevruy went "against the Suzdal' land" as well.¹⁵

The *Nikon Chronicle* introduces, besides other anti-Tatar elements, an anti-Tatar speech that it puts in the mouth of Andrei Iaroslavich: "O Lord, why do we quarrel among ourselves and lead the Tatars against one another! It would be better for me to flee to a foreign land than to be friends with and serve the Tatars."¹⁶ This speech does not appear in earlier chronicles but does modify an idea that was expressed in the *Laurentian Chronicle s.a. 1252*: "Prince Andrei Iaroslavich thought with his boiars that it was better to flee than to serve the khan" ("здума Андрѣи князь Ярославич с своими бояры бѣгати нежели царемъ служити").¹⁷ The *Nikon Chronicle* changes the focus from not serving the khan (a political decision) to not serving the Tatars (a religious,

¹³ For the dating of the first compilation of the Nikon Chronicle to 1526-1530, see B. M. Kloss, *Nikonovskii svod i russkie letopisi XVI-XVII vekov* (Moscow: Nauka, 1980), p. 51.

¹⁴ Isoaho translates "Татарове же россунушася по земли" as "The Tatars destroyed the land" (228), but "россунушася по земли" is better translated as they "scattered throughout the land." See *Slovar' russkogo iazyka XI-XVII vv.*, ed. S. G. Bakhudarov, 26 vols. to date (Moscow: Nauka, 1975-) s.v. *рассунутися*.

¹⁵ *PSRL*, vol. 1 (1927), col. 473; vol. 1 (1928), col. 524; vol. 3 (2000), p. 304; vol. 6.1 (2000), col. 327; vol. 7, p. 159; vol. 42, p. 118. Cf. John Fennell, "Andrej Jaroslavič and the Struggle for Power in 1252: An Investigation of the Sources," *Russia Medievalis* 1 (1973), pp. 49-63.

¹⁶ *PSRL*, vol. 10, p. 138.

¹⁷ *PSRL*, vol. 1 (1926), col. 473.

moral decision). We do not have evidence from the time what Andrei was thinking of or what his motivations may have been. We do have evidence of a succession struggle between Andrei and Alexander that occurred after the death of their father Iaroslav in 1246. Andrei had then been willing to serve the khan (he had, for example, gone in 1247 to Khan Batu in Sarai and then to Qagan Güyük in Qaraqorum over the succession issue). The decision of Güyük at that time apparently was that Andrei assume the throne of Vladimir while Alexander was given “Kiev and all Rus’.” Although Kiev was seen by the Mongols to be the capital of Rus’, by 1252, it had clearly begun to decline in status and power in relation to the Northeast. In the meantime Güyük died and was replaced as qagan by Möngke in 1251. Sartaq required that all the Rus’ princes submit their *iarlyki* to him for confirmation. Andrei refused, perhaps (and here I am only speculating) because he felt he had received his *iarlyk* from the qagan in Qaraqorum, not the khan in Sarai. Alexander, of course, went to Sarai, and was rewarded by being made grand prince of Vladimir in place of Andrei. Khan Sartaq then sent his general Nevruy to oust Andrei from the throne.

The First Redaction of the *Life of Alexander Nevskii* fudges the issue by implying that Alexander went to see Batu in 1247 and a subsequent time in 1262/3 just before his death, but does not mention Alexander’s trip of 1252. The *Nikon Chronicle* fudges it in a different way by explaining that when Alexander went to Sartaq in 1252, he left Andrei in charge of Vladimir and the Suzdal’ land while he was gone. Since he (Alexander) had been grand prince of all Rus’, in the view of the *Nikon Chronicle*, all along, it refers to Andrei merely as “prince” rather than as “grand prince”. In neither instance do the authors of these texts see any connection between Alexander’s trip and the khan’s move against Andrei. It seems that Andrei thought better of his decision not to “serve the Tatars” or, as I have suggested above, to recognize the legitimacy of the khan in Sarai to extend the *iarlyk* to the grand prince of Vladimir, for by 1256 he was back in Rus’ again as the prince of Suzdal’. Far from my interpreting these words attributed to Andrei Iaroslavich in the *Nikon Chronicle* “as the first example of a changed attitude towards the steppes,” I was indicating a type of revision in the *Nikon Chronicle*.

Another example of the double-layered revision is the *Nikon Chronicle*’s account under 1248 of the killing of Batu, “the impure khan,” by King Vladislav of Hungary.¹⁸ This story is a fabrication from whole cloth that first appears in Rus’ chronicles of the second half of the fifteenth century.¹⁹ but it is relevant for our purposes, since the First Redaction of the *Life of Alexander Nevskii* has Alexander making his visit to “Khan Batu” just before his return trip in 1263 when he died. In addition, the Redaction of Vasilii-Varlaam of the *Life for Makarii’s Velikie minei chet’i* incorporates the story from the *Nikon Chronicle* of Batu’s being killed by Vladislav. Isoaho points out the presence of this story in the Vasilii-Varlaam Redaction (319) but does not mention its derivation.

My example of the third type of interpolation — inclusion of anti-Tatar material where no previous entry exists in the earlier chronicles — was the account in the *Nikon*

¹⁸ *PSRL*, vol. 10, pp. 135-136.

¹⁹ *PSRL*, vol. 7, pp. 157-159; vol. 15 (1863), cols. 394-395; vol. 18, p. 69; vol. 25, pp. 139-141. For the dating and a discussion of the *Povest’ ob ubienii Batyevom*, see Charles J. Halperin, “The Defeat and Death of Batu,” *Russian History*, vol. 10, no. 1 (1983), pp. 60-61.

Chronicle of the “accursed” Temur in 1348. More to the subject of this review, I could have used the Nikon chronicle’s inserted recitations in regard to the genealogical line of descent from Iurii Dolgorukii through Alexander Nevskii of Muscovite princes who were involved in the Kulikovo Battle “grandson of Ivan Kalita, great grandson of Daniil, great great grandson of Alexander, great great great grandson of Iaroslav, and his forebearer was Iurii Dolgorukii.”²⁰ Such recitations tend to corroborate the notion of Rus’ (and in this case specifically Muscovite) princes’ long opposition to the Tatars.

Isoaho does discuss and provide ample evidence of “how the descriptions of the cruel Mongols grew even more violent during the sixteenth century” (353). In particular, she shows how “this cruelty grew still further into an extreme description of slaughter and terror” in the Iona Dumin Redaction of the *Life of Alexander Nevskii* (353). In that redaction, Alexander Nevskii is depicted as miraculously aiding Ivan IV, most especially in his campaign against the Crimean Khan Devlet Girey in 1572 (338-339).

Isoaho finds it significant that no churches in the Kremlin were dedicated to Alexander Nevskii until the early seventeenth century (363) and that the earliest icons of him date to the end of the sixteenth century. Nor does she see any evidence that Alexander Nevskii was declared a saint before 1547. All these considerations indicate a rather late blossoming of this part of the myth — that is, Alexander Nevskii as a Muscovite miracle-worker. Nonetheless she also correctly, in my opinion, rejects the identification of the fourth warrior in the *Mother of God of the Sign* icon as Alexander Nevskii and thereby also A. G. Bobrov’s idea that his presence in the icon represented Novgorodian opposition to Moscow’s acceptance of the decision of the Council of Florence-Ferrara in 1437-1439 for unifying the Eastern and Western Churches (369-370). Thus, she does not accept Alexander Nevskii as being portrayed as an anti-Muscovite miracle-worker.

Some aspects of Isoaho’s book I have reservations about. Isoaho finds problematic use of the term *Russia* in that “[t]he state that we know today as Russia has nothing to do with that of the thirteenth-century entity of diverse principalities, functioning on the basis of personal and family ties, each ruled by a prince of its own” She, nonetheless, chooses to use the term “Russia or Russian lands” instead of “Rus’” because “the term *Rus’* is not less problematic” (3). It is difficult to imagine the term *Rus’* being as problematic as a term that has “nothing to do with that of the thirteenth-century entity” especially since the term *Rus’* was the term that was used at the time. Although Isoaho may feel she is able to maintain a distinction between *Russia* meaning “the state that we know today as Russia” and *Russia* meaning “the thirteenth-century entity of diverse principalities...,” how does she know that her readers will always be able to continue to make that same distinction throughout her book if at all? Also there is the problem of the categorical fallacy in usage by the author. How consistently is she able to keep distinct the two uses of the same term conceptually? I suspect that fallacy (i.e., thinking of *Russia* as “the state we know today”) may have been at the root of her misstatement that part of my proposal is there was “an alliance between Russia and the Qipchaq Khanate up to 1448.” Then, too, by using the term *Russia* to apply to all the various Rus’ principalities,

²⁰ *PSRL*, vol. 11, pp. 11, 34, 46.

she risks alienating Ukrainian readers not to mention scholars who prefer terminological precision.

Twice she states that “spring floods” spared Novgorod from Mongol attack in 1238 (6, 8). To be sure, this explanation for the Mongols’ turning back is a standard one in the historiography, but that explanation is absent in our sources. V. V. Kargalov claimed that the beginning of March when the Mongols had just taken Torzhok and their way to Novgorod seemingly lay open was too early for the spring thaw and that only a reconnaissance patrol scouted west of Torzhok.²¹ Vernadsky wrote that their decision not to go on to Novgorod and Pskov was in anticipation of the spring floods: “After careful consideration the Mongol leaders decided to turn back, being afraid of the approach of spring and the thaw which would make the roads impassable.”²² Fennell declared that it “is hard to say” why the Mongols turned back, and did not venture an opinion.²³ The *Novgorod I Chronicle* tells us that, after the Mongols reached within 100 versts of Novgorod, “God and the sacred and great apostolic cathedral Church of Holy Sophia, and St. Kirill, and the prayers of the holy orthodox archbishop, of the blessed princes, and of the reverend monks of the hierarchical synod, protected Novgorod.”²⁴ Instead, Novgorod may simply have not been in the Mongols’ campaign plan. The battle on the Sit River, in which Iurii Vsevolodovich, Grand Prince of Vladimir, was killed on March 4th marked a natural end to their push to the north and east. At that point, there would have been no reason, from the Mongols’ perspective, to push on to Novgorod or Pskov, for they had eliminated any military threat to their right flank during their planned campaign against Kiev and the western Rus’ principalities. Thus, they simply returned southward to the steppe, besieging several Rus’ towns on the way. One would be interested to find out why Isoaho is so sure that the reason they turned back was “spring floods.”

I find that I am not in agreement with a number of the views she expresses about the political and ideological context of late fifteenth- and early sixteenth-century Muscovy, particularly in regard to her claims concerning the impact of a Josephian Church party on the grand prince (287-288), her acceptance of the date of composition of the *Povest’ o novgorodskom belom klobuke* to the end of the fifteenth century (292-293), and her treating the sixteenth-century mentions of “Third Rome” as referring to Moscow (293-294).²⁵

²¹ V. V. Kargalov, *Vneshnepoliticheskie faktory razvitiia feodal'noi Rusi: Feodal'naiia Rus' i kochevniki* (Moscow: Vysshiaia shkola, 1967), pp. 108-109.

²² George Vernadsky, *History of Russia*, 5 vols. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1943-1969), vol. 3: *The Mongols and Russia* (1953), p. 51.

²³ John Fennell, *The Crisis of Medieval Russia 1200-1304* (London: Longman, 1983), p. 81.

²⁴ *Novgorodskaia pervaiia letopis' starshego i mladshhego izvodov*, ed. A. N. Nasonov (Moscow — Leningrad: Akademiia nauk SSSR, 1950), reprinted in *PSRL*, vol. 3 (Moscow: Iazyki russkoi kul'tury, 2000), p. 289.

²⁵ See, e.g., my “Church Polemics and Monastic Land Acquisition in Sixteenth-Century Muscovy,” *Slavonic and East European Review*, 64 (1986), pp. 355-379; “Ironies of the *Tale of the White Cow*,” *Palaeoslavica*, vol. X, no. 2 (2002), pp. 27-54. and “Moscow the Third Rome as Historical Ghost,” *Byzantium: Faith and Power (1261-1557): Perspectives on Late Byzantine Art and Culture*, edited by Sarah Brooks (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2007), pp. 170-179.

In her discussion of editions of the *Life of Alexander Nevskii*, she makes no mention of the critical edition of the First Redaction published by S. A. Bugoslavskii in 1915.²⁶ His was the first edition with a critical apparatus drawing on multiple copies and remained the only such edition for 50 years until Iu. K. Begunov's edition of 1965 replaced it.²⁷ Bugoslavskii used Vilho Mansikka's diplomatic edition of the version in the manuscript RGB, *sobranie Moskovskoi dukhovnoi akademii*, fond 173, № 208 (ca. 1550) as his copy text and provided variants from seven copies. Instead of altering the copy text, Bugoslavskii separately proposed three pages of improvements to it.²⁸ Isoaho treats the publication in 1981, for the series *Pamiatniki literatury drevnei Rusi*, of the text of the *Life* by V. I. Okhotnikova as though it was a separate edition.²⁹ She calls it "a slightly different version of the First Redaction," and writes that "[I]ike Begunov, Okhotnikova also took the *Life* presented in the *Pskov II Chronicle* as her basis, but the difference between these two textual studies was that Okhotnikova made fewer changes to the *Pskov II Chronicle* narration" than Begunov did (20). Isoaho must have been comparing the Okhotnikova publication of the *Life* of Alexander Nevskii with the critical edition found in Begunov's book on pages 158-180. Begunov, however, had published a second version of the *Life* in the same book. He called this version a "reconstruction," and it appears on pages 187-194. It is this version that Okhotnikova reproduced without change in the *Pamiatniki literatury drevnei Rusi* series. Okhotnikova did provide a commentary and a facing-page translation into modern Russian, but a comparison of Begunov's reconstruction and Okhotnikova's reprint of it with his critical edition does not indicate fewer changes from the *Pskov II Chronicle* copy but more.³⁰

Finally, I question to what extent we can refer to the transformation of the portrayal of Alexander Nevskii as being from an instrument of an "imperial dynasty" to that of "a national myth" in the context of the sixteenth century. The terms "imperial," which connotes empire, and "national," which connotes nationalism, carry with them an entire baggage train of present-day preconceptions, especially when applied to earlier times. "Empire" is a term that depends on the degree of subsequent assimilation of the people conquered by a dynastic state and on the self-identification of that dynastic state. One

²⁶ S. A. Bugoslavskii, "K voprosu o pervonachal'nom tekste *Zhitiia velikogo kniazia Aleksandra Nevskogo*," *Izvestiia Otdeleniia russkogo iazyka i slovesnosti Imperatorskoi Akademii nauk*, 19 (1915), pp. 274-276.

²⁷ Iu. K. Begunov, *Pamiatnik russkoi literatury XIII veka "Slovo o pogibeli Russkoi zemli"* (Moscow: Nauka, 1965), pp. 158-180.

²⁸ Bugoslavskii, "K voprosu o pervonachal'nom tekste *Zhitiia velikogo kniazia Aleksandra Nevskogo*," pp. 274-276.

²⁹ "Zhitie Aleksandra Nevskogo," editing, translation, and commentary by V.I. Okhotnikova, in *Pamiatniki literatury drevnei Rusi: XIII vek*, ed. L. A. Dmitriev and D. S. Likhachev (Moscow: Khudozhestvennaia literatura, 1981), pp. 426-439, 602-606.

³⁰ Begunov also reproduced his "reconstruction" in "*Izbornik*." *Sbornik proizvedenii literatury drevnei Rusi*, ed. L. A. Dmitriev and D. S. Likhachev (Moscow: Khudozhestvennaia literatura, 1969), pp. 328-343. It differs from his "reconstruction" in *Pamiatnik russkoi literatury XIII veka* in not italicizing the words and phrases he had changed from his copy text, in not having footnote references to his sources for the changes, and in dropping final back yers. A translation into modern Russian also appears on the facing pages.

could speak of the “empire” of the early Capetians or the Plantagenets (e.g., the Angevin Empire), but to do so is neologistic since there was no self-identification of those respective dynasties at the time. Similarly, one can ask to what extent there is a “nation” when the ruling class identifies more closely with the ruling class of other dynastic states than with the vast majority of the population over whom it rules. France, for example, did not become a “nation” until after the French Revolution of 1789, and some historians say not until the end of the nineteenth century. The transformations that Isoaho perceives in the depictions of Alexander Nevskii, nonetheless, are valid; I am just raising questions about the terminology she uses to describe them, which may not be completely in accord with her implied interpretation.

These disagreements and errors aside, I found Isoaho’s study of the image of Alexander Nevskii in Rus’ sources from the thirteenth through the sixteenth centuries to be engaging and informative. It contributes to our understanding of the construction of the legends about Alexander Nevskii and to the sources in which they are found. It should be standard reading for those who are interested in studying the evidence we have concerning Alexander Nevskii and the development of the legends about him as well as those who study the history of the later Rus’ principalities in general. As she argues, we historians need to be more aware of “the importance of the date of each source” we use and of the dates of the different redactions of those sources. Such awareness is an obligatory foundation of serious scholarship.

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