CHAPTER 10

Praying Rulers, Elusive Clerics, and the Romano-Byzantine "Just War": Interaction Between Religion and Warfare in Pre-Mongol Rus

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Scholars studying the military role of the clergy in Latin Europe usually note the ambiguous attitude of medieval authors towards clerical involvement in warfare in cases when it went beyond praying for victory and providing spiritual care for the troops, activities that were universally accepted as proper for the churchmen. Actual, physical participation in battle on the part of the clergy was praised in *chansons de geste* and condemned in the writings of strict church reformers, calling for excommunication of "clerics bearing arms and usurers."[1] The views of most Western medieval authors who wrote about fighting clergy fall somewhere between these two extremes. Evaluation of each concrete episode of the clerical involvement in warfare depended on the circumstances. The involvement itself had various gradations, such as donning armor, but not arms, or directing troops on the battlefield, but not wielding arms personally. For the subject of religion and warfare in pre-Mongol Rus, the attitudes that existed on the eastern fringe of Latin Europe are of particular interest.

Arguably, the Polish chronicle narratives about the actions of the bishops of Płock at the time of war provide an especially suitable comparative material. Płock was located in Mazovia, a region that bordered Rus and was often involved in warfare with pagan Pomeranians and Prussians. Polish accounts of these encounters belong to the same genre and are devoted to the same subject – Christians fighting pagans – as the Rus accounts of relations with the steppe. How do representations of the clergy and the religious interpretations of war compare in chronicles produced in the neighboring countries that had close cultural and political ties, but were located on the different sides of the Catholic – Orthodox divide?

Narratives about the two twelfth-century Płock bishops in the chronicles by Gallus Anonymus (ca. 1115) and Master Vincentius (ca. 1205) display a range of opinions about a prelate's proper response to a military aggression against his diocese. Gallus's account of the 1109 Pomeranian raid is most in line with the "canonical requirements against clerical participation in warfare": Bishop Simon and his clerics stand apart from the fighting troops and

[1] Lawrence G. Duggan, "The Evolution of Latin Canon Law on the Clergy and Armsbearing to the Thirteenth Century," in *Between Sword and Prayer: Warfare and Medieval Clergy in Cultural Perspective*, ed. Radosław Kotecki, Jacek Maciejewski, and John S. Ott, EMC 3 (Leiden and Boston MA: Brill, 2018), 497–516 at 507.

pray tearfully.[2] Master Vincentius, in relating the same episode, presents the bishop as "a more active figure," not only praying but addressing soldiers at the battlefield.[3] Jacek Maciejewski argues that in Vincentius's account, the bishop, "in a sense, … replaces the secular commander."[4] Finally, Vincentius hints that Simon's successor, Alexander, may have "utilized a weapon and armor" at some point during Pomeranian and Prussian raids, but he is careful not to state this openly, which, according to Radosław Kotecki, results in an intentionally ambivalent narrative.[5]

The report of the Cuman raid in the *Kievan Chronicle* entry for 1172 is very similar to the Polish accounts of the 1109 Pomeranian raid: in both cases, the enemies attacked when the prince was absent, captured booty and prisoners, and were pursued by smaller forces led by the prince's substitutes (*comes* and the prince's younger brother, respectively), who, against all odds, defeated the raiders, recovered the plundered property and freed the captives.[6] Both Polish and Rusian narratives contain an extensive religious commentary. In the former, the local prelate contributes to the victory, whether by praying from afar or inspiring soldiers on the battlefield. How do these accounts of the bishop's action in the Polish chronicles compare to representations of the church hierarchs in the *Kievan Chronicle* entry for 1172?

The raid described in this entry occurred in the vicinity of Kiev, the seat of the metropolitan, and the main target of the raiders were the lands of the famous Holy Theotokos of the Tithe, the first church built in Rus by Vladimir I after his baptism in 998. The forces that pursued the raiding party were from the neighboring principality of Pereiaslavl. The chronicler praises devotion and heroism of "our men (*nashi*)," who "strengthened themselves by the help of God and by the Holy Theotokos," and he concludes his narrative with an explanation of the religious significance of the victory:

> And there was an assistance from the Venerable Cross and from the Holy Mother of God, great Theotokos of the Tithe, whose lands were invaded, since God will not allow anyone to abuse common people, especially when somebody tries to abuse them in His Mother's house. [The victors] arrived in Kiev, having defeated the Cumans, and the Christians were delivered from that slavery. The captives returned to their homes, and

[2] Radosław Kotecki, "Lions and Lambs, Wolves and Pastors of the Flock: Portraying Military Activity of Bishops in Twelfth-Century Poland," in *Between Sword and Prayer*, 303–40 at 312.
[3] Ibid., 320.
[4] Jacek Maciejewski, "Memory of the 'Warrior Bishops' of Płock in the Writings of Jan Długosz," in *Christianity and War in Medieval East Central Europe and Scandinavia*, ed. Radosław Kotecki, Carsten Selch Jensen, and Stephen Bennett (Leeds: ARC Humanities Press, 2021), 75–95 at 79.
[5] Kotecki, "Lions and Lambs," 328–31.
[6] Ipatevskaia *letopis*, ed. Aleksei A. Shakhmatov, PSRL, 46 vols. (St. Petersburg and Moscow, 1841–2004), here 2(1908):555–59. The raid reported under 1172 took place in 1169/1170, see Nikolai G. Berezhkov, *Khronologiia russkogo letopisaniia* (Moscow: Izdatelstvo Akademii Nauk SSSR, 1963), 159.

> the rest of the Christians all praised God and the Holy Theotokos who renders prompt help to the Christian people.[7]

The chronicler mentions neither the metropolitan, the clergy of the Church of the Tithe, nor the bishop of Pereiaslavl. Did their prayers help bring about the assistance from the Venerable Cross and the Theotokos? Did they bless “our men” departing to defend the property of one of the most important Rus churches? Did they lead “all the Christians” in praising God and the Theotokos after the victory by offering public thanksgiving prayers, tolling bells, or holding any kind of religious ceremony? Whatever they may have done, the chronicler passes their activities in silence.

In this respect, the *Kievan Chronicle* entry for 1172 represents the rule rather than an exception. The contrast between the *Kievan* chronicler’s indifference to activities of the churchmen at a time of a pagan attack and the Polish authors’ heightened attention to the local prelate reflects a divergence between Rus and Latin Europe in the attitudes towards the military role of the clergy. Such a divergence would have been taken for granted in the recent past, when scholars viewed Rus either as a society unlike any other, pursuing a “special path” of development, or as part of the Byzantine Commonwealth construed as an entity profoundly separate from Latin Europe. These traditional views have been challenged by historians exploring multifaceted ties and similarities between Rus and Western Europe. Christian Raffensperger rejected the notion of the Byzantine Commonwealth altogether, arguing that Rus and other Slavic Orthodox realms did not have any special ties with Byzantium, which would set them apart from the West, because the Byzantine influence was present throughout Europe.[8] Other scholars did not go that far and examined various manifestations of a special bond between Orthodox realms and Byzantium, which did not necessarily preclude the former from being part of the pan-European civilization.[9]

Arguably, the religious rituals of war, and especially the military role of the clergy in Rus, are a case in point. According to the famous passage in the *Primary Chronicle*, Rus was located on the “route from the Varangians to the Greeks,” which connected Orthodox Byzantium and Latin Europe, but when it came to relations between war and religion, it was much closer to Byzantium than to the West. Rus sources provide some interesting examples of

[7] Ipatevskaia *letopis*, PSRL 2:558–59.
[8] Christian Raffensperger, *Reimagining Europe: Kievan Rus’ in the Medieval World*, Harvard historical studies 177 (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 2012), 10–46.
[9] E.g., Jonathan Shepard, “Crowns from the Basileus, Crowns from Heaven,” in *Byzantium, New Peoples, New Powers: The Byzantino-Slav Contact Zone*, ed. Miliana Kaimakamova, Maciej Salamon, and Malgorzata Smorąg Różycka, Byzantina et Slavica Cracoviensia 5 (Cracow: Historia Iagellonica, 2007), 139–60; Monica White, *Military Saints in Byzantium and Rus, 900-1200* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013).

Western influences, and in some cases display departures from the Byzantine views, but the overall attitude is much closer to the "Greeks" than to the "Varangians."

Rus authors display no ambiguity in their attitudes towards fighting clergy, the kind of which found in the Western sources. The anti-Latin polemic produced in Kiev famously lists participation in warfare on the part of "their bishops" among the major differences between "us" and the "Latins."[10] Significantly, this claim is supported by chronicle reports of real-life events. When it comes to clerical participation in warfare, all types of Rusian sources are largely in agreement.

References to fighting clergy are absent from pre-Mongol Rusian literature, with one exception found in the entry for 1234 of the *Novgorodian First Chronicle* describing a Lithuanian raid on the town of Russa. The Lithuanians broke into Russa all the way to the market square, where the locals faced them and drove them out of the town. The fighting continued in a nearby field, where "four Russa men were killed," including "Peter (*Petrilo*) the Priest."[11] Strictly speaking, the chronicler does not report that Peter was bearing arms, he may have been in the field providing spiritual care to the dying; however, the context is more conductive to the interpretation that he did participate in the battle as one of the civilians of Russa who faced the raiders and were fighting them until the prince with his troops arrived from Novgorod.

Artem Grachev used this passage to argue for a widespread clerical participation in warfare;[12] however, it is more likely that the Russa episode reflects a confluence of unusual circumstances. It took place in the Novgorod Land which, at that time, actively collaborated with the Western military orders and other forces involved in the Baltic Crusades.[13] The raid on Russa occurred just two years before a contingent from the nearby Pskov participated in a crusade of the Livonian Sword Brothers. The Novgorodian chronicler lamented the defeat of

[10] *Voproshenie kniazia Iziaslava syna Iaroslavlia vnuka Volodimera igumena Fedoseia pecherskago manastyria o latynstei vere*, in Aleksei V. Barmin, *Polemika i skhizma. Istoria greko-latinskikh sporov XI-XII vv.* (Moscow: Institut filosofii, teologii i istorii sv. Fomy, 2006), 508; *Pouchenia i molitva Feodosia Pecherskogo*, ed. Natalia V. Ponyrko, BLDR 20 vols. (St. Petersburg: Nauka, 1997–2020), here 1(1997), 434–55 at 448. Compare with Tia M. Kolbaba, *The Byzantine Lists: Errors of the Latins* (Urbana IL: University of Illinois Press, 2000), 49–51. For a review of the differences between the secular functions of the bishops in Western and Eastern Christendom, see Michael C. Paul, "Secular Power and the Archbishops of Novgorod Before the Muscovite Conquest," *Kritika* 8 (2007): 231–70 at 238–43.
[11] *Novgorodskaia pervaia letopis starshego i mladshego izvodov*, ed. Arseny N. Nasonov (Moscow and Leningrad: Izdatelstvo Akademii Nauk SSSR, 1950), 73.
[12] Artem Iu. Grachev, "K voprosu o roli i meste dukhovenstva v voennoi organizatsii Drevnei Rusi," *Pskovskii voenno-istoricheskii vestnik* 1 (2015): 43–47 at 45.
[13] John Lind, "Russian Echoes of the Crusading Movement 1147-1478 – Impulses and Responses," *Middelalderforum* 3 (2003): 209–35 at 211–16.

the crusaders and their Pskov allies in the Battle of Saule (1236).[14] The clerical participation in warfare was probably more acceptable in the region that had such close relations with the Catholic military orders, and the case of Peter the Priest may thus be more representative of a Western influence than of a practice that existed in Rus. It should also be noted that Peter did not go on a pre-planned military campaign, but was caught in a sudden attack on his town – a situation similar to the cases of clerics using weapons that are reported in the Byzantine sources. Hans-George Beck showed that clerics in the Byzantine borderland regions "not infrequently" took up arms against raiders. Normally, they were afterwards punished by the ecclesiastical authorities – suspended, or even deposed.[15] We do not know if Peter would have suffered any consequences had he survived; like his Byzantine counterparts, he could have rushed to fight the raiders come what may.

Even without information about Peter the Priest's death on the battlefield, it would be reasonable to assume that Rusian churchmen sometimes took up arms, simply because any prohibition in any society would be violated on occasion, including the prohibition for clerics to fight. The question is whether such violations constituted a widespread practice or remained isolated occurrences. The former was the case in Latin Europe, where canonical rules against clerical participation in warfare were violated so often that Western medievalists devote special studies to the phenomenon of the "fighting clergy."[16] The official position of the Catholic Church began to change in the later twelfth century; eventually, the canon law legitimized what had previously been practiced unofficially and "accepted that clergy could bear arms for defensive and legitimate purposes."[17]

Rus sources do not attest to a similar phenomenon; rather, they point in the opposite direction. Some of the most explicit evidence is found in the *Tale of the Battle on the Lipitsa*.[18] The battle took place in 1216, when the ruling prince of Suzdalia, Yury Vsevolodovich, was defeated by a coalition supporting a rival claimant to the throne. The *Tale*, written from the perspective of the victors, gloats over the demise of "all the might of the Suzdalian Land": everyone was commanded to go and fight on the Lipitsa, "up to the very last rural man on foot (*biashe bo pognano is poselii i do peshtsa*)." After they all were killed, taken prisoners, or

[14] *Novgorodskaia pervaia letopis*, 74.
[15] Hans-George Beck, *Nomos, Kanon und Staatsraison in Byzanz*, Sitzungsberichte 384 (Vienna: Verlag der Osterreichen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 1981), 23, 35–38.
[16] Timothy Reuter, ed., *Warriors and Churchmen in the High Middle Ages: Essays Presented to Karl Leyser* (London and Rio Grande OH: Hambledon Press, 1992); Lawrence G. Duggan, *Armsbearing and the Clergy in the History and Canon Law of Western Christianity* (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2013); Kotecki, Maciejewski, Ott, ed., *Between Sword and Prayer*.
[17] Duggan, "The Evolution," 513.
[18] *Povest o bitve na Lipitse*, ed. Iakov S. Lurie, BLDR 5(1997), 74–87.

dropped their weapons and fled, there was no-one left to defend the Suzdalian capital city, where "only non-combatants (*neprotivnyi narod*) remained – priests, monks, women, children."[19]

The *Tale* survived in late fifteenth-early sixteenth-century copies, going back to a hypothetical mid-fifteenth-century exemplar. It follows the general narrative known from the thirteenth-century *Novgorodian First Chronicle*, but expands it significantly. The passages quoted above are absent from the *Novgorodian First*.[20] They may have come from a lost thirteenth-century source, the existence of which is postulated by some scholars. Alternatively, they could have been created by the fifteenth-century author of the *Tale*, seeking to underscore the magnanimity of the victors who did not sack the defenseless city.[21] In other words, the list of the non-combatants either goes back to a thirteenth-century source, or reflects the fifteenth-century perceptions of the pre-Mongol period, or else represents the fifteenth-century realities. It is not entirely clear to what extent these realities changed during the two centuries separating the Battle of Lipitsa from the composition of the extant redaction of the *Tale*.

Studies of arms-bearing clergy in Rus are few, and they cite sources, ranging from the eleventh to the sixteenth centuries, without addressing the question of chronological change. For example, Alexander Musin uses a Muscovite translation of a ruling issued by the 1276 Constantinople council as evidence that Rus had its own militant clergy. The council's response to the question of whether a priest can serve after he kills a man in battle was: "This is prohibited by the Holy Canons." Most East Slavonic manuscripts have "This is not prohibited" instead.[22] However, all these manuscripts were produced in the sixteenth century.[23]

By this time, perceptions of the role of the Church in the military affairs apparently underwent a significant change, as is indicated by the highly positive late-fifteenth or sixteenth-century representations of monks allegedly participating in the Battle of Kulikovo (1380).[24] No fighting monks are mentioned in the earlier accounts of this battle, and a positive – or, for that

[19] Ibid., 76, 82.
[20] *Novgorodskaia pervaia letopis*, 55–57.
[21] Iakov S. Lurie, "Povest o bitve na Lipitse 1216 g. v letopisanii XIV-XVI vv.," *Trudy otdela drevnerusskoi literatury* 34 (1979): 96–138; Andrei A. Kuznetsov, "Bitva na Lipitse 1216 g. Istochnikovedenie i istoria sobytia," *Novgorodskii istoricheskii sbornik* 26 (2016): 115–38.
[22] Alexandr E. Musin, *"Milites Christi" Drevnei Rusi. Voinskaia kultura russkogo srednevekovia v kontekste religioznogo mentaliteta* (St. Petersburg: Peterburgskoe Vostokovedenie, 2005), 60–61.
[23] *Otvety Konstantinopolskogo patriarshego sobora na voprosy saraiskogo episkopa Theognosta*, ed. Aleksei S. Pavlov, in *Pamiatniki drevnerusskago kanonicheskogo prava. Chast 1 (Pamiatniki XI-XV v.)*, Russkaia istoricheskaia biblioteka 6 (St. Petersburg: Imperatorskaia Arkheograficheskaia Kommissia, 1908), 129–30, 137–38.
[24] *Skazanie o Mamaevom poboishche*, ed. Vladimir P. Budaragin and Lev A. Dmitriev, BLDR 6(1997), 138–89 at 150–52, 176–78, 186. On the dating of *Skazanie*, see Maria A. Salmina, "K voprosu o vremeni i obstoiatelstvakh sozdania 'Skazania o Mamaevom poboishche,'" *Trudy otdela drevnerusskoi literatury* 56 (2004): 251–64; Vitaly V. Penskoi, "O datirovke 'Skazania o Mamaevom poboishche,'" *Nauka. Iskusstvo. Kultura* 7 (2015): 22–28.

matter, any – representation of them is inconceivable in pre-Mongol literature, no matter how just the cause. Thus, a detailed account of a Cuman raid on the Kievan Caves monastery, written by an eyewitness who laments the murder of his fellow monks and destruction of the holy objects, mentions no physical resistance by the monks, and no attempts at self-defense other than fleeing.[25]

References to the military activities of the clergy cited in scholarly literature are no earlier than the fourteenth century, with the single exception of Peter the Priest discussed above.[26] In short, if there was a change in the perception of the fighting clerics, it was a change towards more acceptance. It is then all the more remarkable that a fifteenth-century text includes priests among the non-combatants left in the defenseless city.

As for the texts undoubtedly produced before the Mongol invasion, they provide clear indications that the non-combatant status of churchmen was taken for granted. A case in point are chronicle entries describing popular enthusiasm for the military campaigns of Prince Iziaslav Mstislavich: Iziaslav requests military support from a community, and the assembly erupts, yelling, "[w]e all, even children, will go and fight"; "[e]veryone who can as much as hold a stick in his hands will go"; "[i]f someone among us refuses to go, hand him over to us and we will punish him ourselves."[27]

Such responses look formulaic; in all likelihood, they describe different levels of military mobilization. The Kievan assembly, which was the most frequent addressee of Iziaslav's appeals, clearly had the capacity to decide the degree of the community participation in the prince's military endeavors. Thus, when Iziaslav called on the Kievans to fight against Yury Dolgorukii, they responded, "Make peace with him, Prince: we are not going with you." Iziaslav then asked the assembly to support him with a show of force: "Just accompany me [to the talks with Yury]; it is appropriate for me to make peace with him from the position of power." The Kievans agreed and raised their militia on the explicit condition that they would not fight, just show up in numbers.[28]

That references to the "Kievans" in this context signify not just some random citizens, but an organized community militia, is evident from the report of Iziaslav's another failed attempt to rail the assembly, when the Kievans responded, "Forgive us, Prince, but we cannot

[25] *Letopis po Lavrentevskomu spisku*, ed. Evfimy F. Karskii, PSRL 1, 2nd ed. (Leningrad: Izdatelstvo Akademii Nauk SSSR, 1926–1927), 232–34; *The "Povest' vremennykh let": An Interlinear Collation and Paradosis*, ed. Donald Ostrowski with David Birnbaum and Horace G. Lunt, Harvard library of early Ukrainian literature. Text series 10 (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 2003), 1836–46.
[26] See n.10 above.
[27] Ipatevskaia *letopis*, PSRL 2:344, 348.
[28] Ibid., 378.

raise a hand against [Yury]."[29] Iziaslav then called for volunteers and "gathered many soldiers." "Not raising a hand against" Yury apparently meant that the assembly refused to levy militia, not that Kievans could not fight against Yury if they chose to do so.

All this evidence suggests that the militia mobilization procedures differed, depending on the occasion. "All, even children" may then signify total mobilization, as opposed to levying a certain number of males from each household, when the families could choose who these males would be. "Children" in this case would refer to teenagers who just reached the age of military obligation. In the cases when not every single eligible male had to join a campaign, older family members would go, leaving their boys at home. By the same token, a reference to those "who can carry a stick" implies that only men who owned weapons and had some military training would be drafted on less urgent occasions; when the Kievans express their readiness to punish shirkers, the assumption is that this was normally done by the prince's officials.

These formulaic expressions for the highest level of the community's military activity provide a context for the statement made by the Novgorod assembly in response to Iziaslav's appeal for help against the same Yury Dolgorukii. Unlike the Kievans, the Novgorodians were keen to fight: "We will happily go with you … Every single soul will go, even a deacon who is already tonsured, but not yet ordained. Those who are ordained will pray God."[30] Presumably, deacons about to be ordained would normally be exempt from the militia duty and allowed to proceed with their ordination; however, in this case, there could be no exemptions. This is an emphatic way to describe "all" who can possibly be combatants, implying that ordained clerics did not fight even on the most urgent occasions.

The Novgorodians expected them to pray instead, presumably for victory, although this is not stated explicitly. If "for victory," was, indeed, assumed, this would be one of the two cases of clerics praying for victory reported in pre-Mongol sources. The other one is found in the *Novgorodian First Chronicle* entry for 1170, which states that the troops besieging Novgorod were defeated "by the power of the Cross and by the Holy Theotokos, and by the prayers of the pious bishop Elias."[31] For all the pre-Mongol period, this is the only case when bishop is represented as praying for a military victory.[32]

Rusian chroniclers, like other medieval authors, do habitually attribute military success

[29] Ibid., 344.
[30] Ibid., 370.
[31] *Novgorodskaia pervaia letopis*, 33.
[32] Another possible case may be found in the *Primary Chronicle* entry for 1096, where the account of a victorious campaign by Mstislav Vladimirovich is concluded: "He went [back] to Novgorod, his city, by the prayers (*molitvami*) of reverend Bishop Nicetas": Ipatevskaia *letopis*, PSRL 2:240; *Povest' vremennykh let*, 1892. It is unclear what exactly Nicetas prayed for – victory, Mstislav's safe return to Novgorod, or both.

to prayers, but these are not prayers of the clergy. Most commonly, victories are won "by the power of the Venerable Cross" and by the prayers of the Holy Theotokos; power and prayers of other saints are also invoked, such as Holy Sophia in Novgorod sources.[33] Chroniclers also often use expressions, such as, "God helped him, and also his father's prayer," "by God's help and by his grandfather's prayer," "by God's protection (*zastupleniem*) and by his parents' prayer," "God helped, and the prayers of his father, grandfather, and great-grandfather," where "he" is the prince leading the troops.[34]

Both alive and dead progenitors of a prince are represented as praying for his victory and/or deliverance from the imminent threat of death on the battlefield. Thus, the prayer of Andrei Bogoliubsky's parents helped him in 1152, when his father Yury Dolgorukii was still alive.[35] Yury's prayer was equally efficient after his death, when it helped Andrei's younger brother.[36] When Andrei sent his own son Mstislav to take Kiev in 1169, the expedition succeeded thanks to help from "God, and the Holy Theotokos, and *otnia i dednia molitva*."[37]

This oft-used expression – *otnia i dednia molitva* – literally translates "fatherly and grandfatherly prayer." East Slavonic is notorious for its ambiguous syntax, and it may be possible that the single "prayer" here stands for plural "prayers." The phrase then would mean that the alive father prayed for victory, as did Mstislav's dead grandfather(s). Another possible translation for *otnia i dednia molitva* is "his ancestors' prayer." The possessive form *otnia* ("father's") is used with "prayer" only when combined with *dednia* ("grandfather's" or "grandfathers'"). When the father is represented as praying alone, or together with relatives other than grandfather, the form is *ottsa ego*, "of his father." An interesting example of such usage is found under 1223, when Prince Basil of Rostov was protected "by the prayer of his father Konstantin and of his uncle Yury."[38] At that time, the father was dead and the uncle alive.

Whether "prayer" here stands for "prayers," or whether the alive and the dead were imagined together in a common single prayer, it is evident that the dead princes were believed

[33] For the power of the Cross, see *Letopis po Lavrentevskomu spisku*, PSRL 1:172, 316, 324, 360–63, 376, 444, 448; *Ipatevskaia letopis*, PSRL 2:161–62, 244, 290, 323, 327, 347–48, 362, 376, 390 438, 461, 539, 563, 570, 693; *Novgorodskaia pervaia letopis*, 33, 284. For prayers and assistance of the Theotokos, see *Letopis po Lavrentevskomu spisku*, PSRL 1:354, 357, 363, 373, 376, 386, 390, 395, 448; *Ipatevskaia letopis*, PSRL 2:335, 362, 532, 538, 539, 555–59, 563, 570, 597, 607–8, 631; N*ovgorodskaia pervaia letopis*, 33, 77. For Holy Sophia, see *Novgorodskaia pervaia letopis*, 77, 78, 256, 284, 294, 296; for Archangels Michael and Gabriel, see *Letopis po Lavrentevskomu spisku*, PSRL 1:448; *Ipatevskaia letopis*, PSRL 2:327. For St. Boris and Gleb, see *Letopis po Lavrentevskomu spisku*, PSRL 1:363; Ipatevskaia *letopis*, PSRL 2:563, 576; *Novgorodskaia pervaia letopis*, 78, 296. For St. Theodore, see *Letopis po Lavrentevskomu spisku*, PSRL 1:325; Ipatevskaia *letopis*, PSRL 2:390.

[34] *Letopis po Lavrentevskomu spisku*, PSRL 1:324, 334, 354, 376; Ipatevskaia *letopis*, PSRL 2:290, 390, 438.

[35] *Letopis po Lavrentevskomu spisku*, PSRL 1:334. The date of Andew's mother's death is unknown.

[36] Ibid., 360.

[37] Ibid., 354.

[38] Ibid., 447: "molitvoiu ottsa svoego Kostiantina i stryia svoego Georgiia."

to pray for their living relatives. This belief appears to be somewhat different from the common Christian notion of the saints in heaven interceding for those on earth. As was typical of all medieval Christendom, Rusian authors often refer to prayers of the saints, including those who were princes in their earthly life. The earliest such reference is found in the eulogy for Olga in the *Primary Chronicle*: "She was the first from Rus to enter the Kingdom of Heaven, and the sons of Rus praise her as their intercessor (*pechalnittsu*), because she prayed for the Rus Land after her death."[39] When the *Kievan* chronicler addresses the murdered Prince Andrei Bogoliubsky, asking him to pray "for your kin, and for your relations, and for the Rus Land and for peace to be granted to the world," this request is part of the narrative casting Andrei's death as martyrdom and presenting arguments for his veneration as a saint.[40]

However, most dead princes represented as praying for their descendants were neither saints nor candidates for sainthood. The prayers of the non-saintly dead are sometimes mentioned in a non-military context;[41] however, the overwhelming majority are found in accounts of battles, where they help the living relatives. Unlike prayers of the saints, they never include a greater cause, such as the wellbeing of the Rus Land. Another characteristic feature of these prayers is that they are attributed exclusively to the male ancestors, in contrast with the prayers of the living relatives who can be of either gender.[42]

Gail Lenhoff apparently referred to this phenomenon when she noted that, in the *Primary Chronicle*, Yaroslav requests that his dead brothers Boris and Gleb help him against their murderer Sviatopolk at a time when their sainthood was not yet revealed. Lenhoff sees this as an indication of an early "syncretic" veneration of Boris and Gleb, resonating both with Christian and residual pagan sensibilities.[43] Whatever survivals of the pre-Christian cult of the dead may have existed in early Rus, the efficacy of non-saintly dead's prayers has a Christian rationale in the sources: being in heaven, they can address God more directly.[44] The *Primary Chronicle* clearly differentiates between Yaroslav's prayer to God and his appeal Boris and Gleb:

[39] Ibid., 68; *Povest' vremennykh let*, 465–66.

[40] Ipatevskaia *letopis*, PSRL 2:585; see also Nadezhda I. Milutenko, *Sviatye kniazia-mucheniki Boris i Gleb* (St. Petersburg: Izdatelstvo Olega Abyshko, 2006), 24–26.

[41] *Letopis po Lavrentevskomu spisku*, PSRL 1:409.

[42] Ibid., 483.

[43] Gail Lenhoff, *The Martyred Princes Boris and Gleb: A Social-Cultural Study of the Cult and the Texts*, UCLA Slavic studies 19 (Columbus OH: Slavica, 1989), 35–37.

[44] Compare with a passage where Gleb learns about the murder of Boris and requests that Boris prays for him, "if you received this power (*derznovenie*) from God": *Skazanie i strast i pokhvala sviatuiu mucheniku Borisa i Gleba*, ed. Nadezhda I. Milutenko, in *Sviatye kniazia-mucheniki*, 300.

> Yaroslav stood on the place where Boris had been killed. Hands raised to heaven, he said, "The blood of my brother is crying to You, Lord. Avenge the blood of this righteous one even as you avenged Abel's blood by inflicting moaning and trembling on Cain, and inflict likewise on [Sviatopolk]." After having prayed, he said (*pomolivsia i rek*), "My brothers, even if you departed from this world in the body, but [still] help me with your prayer against this hostile and proud murderer."[45]

This passage may be juxtaposed with the account of Prince Yaropolk's battle against the Cumans, found in three different chronicles. It is reported under 1125, soon after the information about the death of Yaropolk's father, Vladimir Monomakh. One version states, "Yaropolk, having invoked (*prizvav*) the name of God, and having mentioned (*pomianuv*) his own father, advanced bravely together with his men."[46] Another one, found in the *Hypatian Codex*, probably results from a scribal error: "Yaropolk, having invoked the name of God and his own father."[47] If the *Hypatian* redaction does not reflect an accidental omission of *pomianuv*, it means that Yaropolk is represented as invoking first God and then his own dead father before the battle. Even if the father is "mentioned" rather than "invoked," it is worth noting that the verb *pomianuti* has religious connotations: its primary meaning is "to mention," but it also signifies "praying for somebody's dead soul to rest in peace."[48] It is likely, then, that princes' prayers before battle were often accompanied by some form of evocation of their dead male ancestors, who were believed to respond by praying to God for their relatives.

It is hard to tell if the non-princely dead were also believed to pray for their living kinsmen in distress. On the one hand, princes had a special charisma, and their position in society was divinely sanctioned, as was typical of medieval rulers. Miracle stories suggest a common belief that princes kept their privileged social position as saints in heaven. Thus, in one vision of St. Boris and Gleb, the retainer (*otrok*) Yury, who died trying to protect Boris, walks in front of them with a candle, thus continuing to serve his prince.[49] This vision is part of miracle stories about the saints helping the poor, the exploited, and the wrongfully imprisoned, which apparently reflect popular, rather than elite, sensibility.[50] The *Life of Alexander Nevsky*, which is connected with the elite milieu (*druzhinnaia sreda*), reports a vision of St. Boris and Gleb in a boat rowed by some mystical figures; Boris tells his younger brother,

[45] *Letopis po Lavrentevskomu spisku*, PSRL 1:144.
[46] Ibid., 296: "Iaropolk zhe prizvav imia Bozhie i pomianuv ottsa svoego pochte s druzhinoiu na poganyia"; *Moskovskii letopisnyi svod kontsa XV veka*, ed. Michael N. Tikhmorov, PSRL 25:29.
[47] Ipatevskaia *letopis*, PSRL 2:290.
[48] Galina A. Bogatova et al., *Slovar Russkogo iazyka XI-XVII vv.*, vol. 17 (Moscow: Nauka, 1991), 44.
[49] *Skazanie chudes sviatoiu strastoterptsiu Khristovu Romana i Davyda*, in Miliutenko, *Sviatye kniazia-mucheniki*, 322.
[50] Miliutenko, *Sviatye kniazia-mucheniki*, 31.

Gleb, to order the rowers to go faster.[51] This "chain of command," with Gleb passing Boris's order to the rowers reflects the hierarchy that existed in their earthly life. Thus, a belief that the hierarchical relations between the living continued after death probably existed across the social spectrum and may have led to the notion that prayers of dead princes had a special power.

Another possibility is that all the dead in heaven were believed to pray for their living family, but the chroniclers only mention prayers of the dead princes, because they concentrate on princes almost exclusively and rarely discuss non-princes as individuals. The sources that do are lives of saints and accounts of miracles; their authors were not much interested in the relations between the non-saintly dead and the living. To my knowledge, there is no mentioning of the dead ancestors' prayers in birchbark documents, but this may be due to their fragmentary nature and accident of survival. We are thus left with the information that the prince who commanded the troops prayed before the battle, that it was commonly believed that his dead male ancestors in heaven prayed God on his behalf, and the prince probably included them in his pre-battle prayer or evoked them in some way after the prayer.

More detailed chronicle narratives sometimes include pre-battle prayers of not only princes, but of the soldiers as well, but they never mention clergy. This does not mean that there were no clergy with the troops going on a campaign. On the contrary, their presence is well attested. Thus, when a prince fighting far away from home sends "his priest" to negotiate with his opponent, it is clear that the priest accompanied the prince and his troops.[52] Since princes often conducted talks through their men (*muzhi*) as well, priests must have accompanied troops not only on the off chance that they may be needed as envoys, but to provide spiritual care, which, in all likelihood, included camp church services, such as the one described in accounts of St. Boris's martyrdom.

According to the *Lesson* by Nestor of the Kievan Caves, Boris, returning from a military expedition, pitched a camp and spent a night in his tent. In the morning, he "bade his priest sing matins and read the holy Gospel, for it was Sunday."[53] It should be noted that Nestor emphasized the aspects of Boris's behavior which were atypical of an ordinary, non-saintly prince, such as an unwillingness to marry. While others would marry "out of desire of the flesh," Boris had no such desire and only married "for the sake of the law of kings and obedience to his father."[54] Likewise, Boris acts contrary to all expectations when he refuses to fight against

[51] *Zhitie Aleksandra Nevskogo*, ed. Valentina I. Okhotnikova, BLDR 5(1997), 358–69 at 360.
[52] Ipatevskaia *letopis*, PSRL 2:619.
[53] Nestor, *Chtenie o zhitii i pogublenii blazhennuiu strastoterptsiu Borisa i Gleba*, ed. Nadezhda I. Milutenko, in *Sviatuye kniazia-mucheniki*, 370–72.
[54] Ibid., 364.

Sviatopolk. To explain this unusual decision, Nestor makes Boris deliver a lengthy speech filled with religious rhetoric.[55] In contrast, the only explanation for singing matins in Boris's tent is, "for it was Sunday." In this case, Boris's behavior is not presented as something that only a saint would do – clearly, a "normal" prince on a campaign was expected to have matins sung in his tent on Sundays.

In the anonymous *Tale of Boris and Gleb*, Boris's decision not to resist Sviatopolk looks even more extraordinary than in the *Lesson*: after he turns down his men's proposal to fight, they leave him, apparently perceiving such pacifism as not befitting a prince. However, when it comes to the church service, the *Tale*, similarly to the *Lesson*, presents Boris's behavior as typical: "Then evening came, and Boris ordered vespers to be sung .… Rising early, he saw that it was morning. It was Sunday, [and] he said to his priest, 'Arise and begin matins.'"[56]

In this respect, Rus was no different from other medieval realms: priests accompanied princes on the march, held tent church services and, presumably, carried with them holy objects necessary for these services, princes regularly prayed in their tents.[57] It is likely that these prayers, the presence of the priests, and the services they held inspired troops in the way described in several Byzantine military treatises, which stress the importance of proper Christian worship on a campaign.[58] However, pre-Mongol sources do not provide any information on this aspect of Rus military history.

The only military narrative mentioning priests in a capacity other than princely envoys is an account of the victorious anti-Cuman campaign in the entry for 1111 of the *Hypatian* redaction of the *Primary Chronicle*, which reports that Vladimir Monomakh "appointed his priests (*pristavi popy svoia*)" to ride in front of the troops singing hymns.[59] This case is unique. Priests singing hymns in front of the troops are not mentioned in any of the other countless reports of military campaigns, even when the author stresses the religious aspect of fighting non-Christian enemies. An especially relevant example of such a report is found in the *Hypatian* entry for 1183, which has many similarities with the entry for 1111.

Both narratives describe successful expeditions into the Cuman steppe undertaken by the joint forces of the leading princes; they provide a comparable degree of detail about the movements and actions of the troops, and both include an extensive religious commentary. The

[55] Ibid., 370.
[56] *Skazanie i strast*, 292, 294.
[57] Compare the evidence discussed by Kotecki, Maciejewski, and Leighton in respective chapters in this collection, as well as in the final chapter by Kotecki.
[58] On these treatises, see White, *Military Saints* 51–63.
[59] Ipatevskaia *letopis*, PSRL 2:266.

entry for 1183 states that God's protection (*zastupleniem*) saved the Rus borderland from the raid of "Ishmaelites, godless Cumans" led by the "accursed (*okaiannym*)" Konchak, and describes the subsequent victorious campaign by the joint Rus forces. God inspired (*vlozhi v serdtse*) the two leading princes Sviatoslav and Rurik to go against the Cumans; the Cumans fled before the wrath of God and the Holy Theotokos, while the Rus forces received help from God. The Lord showed mercy to the Christians and exalted Sviatoslav and Rurik as a reward for their faith. The conclusion reads:

> God created this victory on the fifth of July, on Monday, on the day of St. John the Soldier, and Great Prince Sviatoslav Vsevolodich and Rurik Rostislavich were granted victory over the pagans by God, and they returned with great glory and honor.[60]

If Sviatoslav and Rurik had their priests perform some special activity before battle, it is hard to imagine that this would not have been mentioned by the author of the entry for 1183, who apparently paid great attention to the religious aspect of warfare. The most parsimonious explanation for the absence of information about priests riding with the troops and singing hymns in this and similar narratives is that they did not do so. Furthermore, the structure of the entry for 1111 indicates that its report about the priests reflects not a common practice, but Monomakh's creative initiative for a special occasion.

The entry belongs to the part of the *Primary Chronicle* composed under Monomakh's sponsorship. The chronicler minimizes the role of Sviatopolk, the Kievan prince of the time, and presents Monomakh as the moral leader of the princely clan and the main driving force for the anti-Cuman military effort. Nonetheless, a close reading of the chronicle text leaves no doubt that the formal, "official" leadership belonged to Sviatopolk.61 Thus, after God inspired Monomakh to fight the Cumans, he did not set out to organize a campaign, apparently because he did not have sufficient authority over other princes. Instead, "started talking to … Sviatopolk, urging him to go against the pagans." The "talking" must have been done through envoys, because upon hearing it, Sviatopolk invited Monomakh to a conference, where the latter presented his arguments and convinced Sviatopolk and his men.[62] In the conclusion to the narrative of the campaign, the author explains once more that it all happened because "an angel inspired (*vlozhi v serdtse*) Vladimir to persuade (*poustiti*) his brethren [that is, other princes] to fight the aliens," making it clear that Monomakh had no formal authority over other princes,

[60] Ibid., 628, 630–34.
[61] Compare with Simon Franklin and Jonathan Shepard, *The Emergence of Rus, 750-1200* (London and New York: Longman, 1996), 275–276.
[62] Ipatevskaia *letopis*, PSRL 2:264–65.

only the power of persuasion. The account of the main battle mentions Monomakh's troops and David's troops, but does not name the commander of the Rus army as a whole – not explicitly, at any rate. It is easy to surmise, though, that it was Sviatopolk, as was, indeed, appropriate to his position as the Kievan prince.

The start of the campaign is described thus: "Sviatopolk [of Kiev] with his son, Iaroslav [of Vladimir-in-Volhynia] and Vladimir [Monomakh of Pereiaslavl] with their sons, and David [of Chernigov] with his son departed, placing their hope in God, and His Most Pure Mother, and His holy angels." After the main battle, "Sviatopolk, Vladimir, and David praised God, who gave them such a victory."[63] Monomakh may have inspired the campaign, but the list of the participating princes always starts with Sviatopolk, indicating that he was the formal leader.

Therefore, it is remarkable that it was only Monomakh's priests who were riding with the troops and singing. Why did not Sviatopolk and David appoint their priests to do the same? "They," that is, apparently all the princes, put their troops in battle order (*polki izriadisha*, plural), but it was only Monomakh who put (*pristavi*, singular) his priests in front of the troops. The author who stresses Monomakh's moral and spiritual leadership would have surely mentioned that he was the first to do so, and others followed his example. Again, the most parsimonious explanation is that Monomakh and his priests improvised something very unusual, in which the other princes and their clerics did not participate.

This was the day when the Rus forces entered the Cuman territory and were approaching the town of Sharukan, the first fortified settlement they encountered on their way. There was no battle on that day: the people of Sharukan opened the gates, "bowed down to the Rus princes and brought fish and wine to them."[64] The scholarly consensus is that the gift of fish and wine during Lent had a religious significance, and the givers must have been Christian.65 The population dominated by the Cumans was multi-ethnic and multi-religious; Christian-rite

[63] Ipatevskaia *letopis*, PSRL 2:265–66.
[64] Ibid., 266.
[65] Svetlana A. Pletneva, *Polovtsy* (Moscow: Nauka, 1990), 58–59. The Rus troops approached Sharukan on March 21, which was Tuesday of the sixth week of Lent, that is, three days before the Feast of the Annunciation and four days before the Palm Sunday. According to the present-day Orthodox rule, fish and wine are allowed on the Palm Sunday and Annunciation, but not during the rest of the week. However, the current dietary requirements are based on a monastic rule, which usually did not apply to laypersons in the early twelfth century, when the fasting practices had many local and situational variations. The common denominator was abstinence from meet, but rules about fish varied, and some rules recommended that laypersons abstained from fish during the Lent, "if they could," indicating that this was not obligatory. See Ivan D. Mansvetov, *O postakh pravoslavnoi vostochnoi tserkvi* (Moscow: Tipografiia Volchaninova, 1886), 116, see also at 19, 30, 95, 125. The sixteenth-century household manual *Domostroi* lists fish among the products consumed during religious fasts, without making any special provisions for Lent: *Domostroi*, ed. Vladimir V. Kolesov and V.V. Rozhdestvenskaia (St. Petersburg: Nauka, 1994), 115–16, see also at 130. Therefore, it is most likely that the Rus troops ate fish, but not meat, when they reached Sharukan. In the unlikely case that they fasted according to the strictest rules and abstained from fish on that day, they would still eat fish and drink wine three days later.

burials and other archaeological evidence from the eleventh and twelfth centuries attest to the presence of Christians in the Cuman steppe. The location of Sharukan is a matter of debate, but crosses found in a Cuman fortified settlement of the type that would have been called a "town (*gorod*)" in East Slavonic indicate that at least some inhabitants of these towns were Christian.[66]

Therefore, it is likely that Monomakh and his clerics intended to appeal to the Christian population of Sharukan. Priests singing hymns showed that the approaching forces were fellow Christians, willing to make peace with their co-religionists; soldiers in a battle formation following the priests indicated that they were ready to fight if need be. It is significant that the author of the entry for 1111 does not mention any priests or hymn-signing while describing actual battles. The account of the rest of the campaign needs to be examined in some detail here.

After spending the night in Sharukan, the Rus troops advanced further into the steppe, took the settlement called Sugrov, presumably another fortified town, and "set it on fire," which, of course, could not happen without fighting. On the next day, when they saw the approaching Cuman forces, "our princes placed their hope in God and said, 'Even if we have to die here, let us not waver (*stanem krepko*),' and they kissed one another, raising their eyes to heaven and calling on God in the Highest." The Cumans were defeated, but two days later they raised more troops, and the main battle of the campaign took place. Rus won a decisive victory with the help of God's angels.[67]

Apparently, if priests had ridden with the troops to these victorious battles, this would have been reported by the author of the entry for 1111, who saturates his narrative with religious rhetoric. It should be noted that his style is rather repetitive: the princes "placed hope in God" when they were departing on the campaign, and they also "placed hope in God" before the first battle; the author states three times that God inspired Monomakh to fight the Cumans; the vision of the fiery pillar is mentioned three times; the explanation that angels invisibly participate in warfare on Cod's command is repeated four times.68 These repetitions are deliberate, as indicated by the author's cross-references. For example, he describes the appearance of a fiery pillar in detail, then prefaces the second mentioning of the same event by "as we said earlier, this portent occurred," and then returns to it once more, starting with, "As we said before, we saw this vision," and proceeds to describe the vision again. Evidently, the author's goal is to

[66] On the debate over the location of Sharukan, see Oleg Bubenok, "Sharukan, Sugrov, Balin – poselenia gorodskogo tipa na polovetsko-russkom pogranichie," in *Vostochnaia Evropa v drevnosti i srednevekovie. Rannie etapy urbanizatsii*, ed. Elena Melnokova et al. (Moscow: Institut vseobshchei istorii Rossiiskoi akademii nauk, 2019), 28–32. On the archaeological evidence for the Christian presence in the steppe, see idem, *Iasy i brodniki v stepiakh Vostochnoi Evropy (VI-nachalo XIII vv)* (Kiev: Logos, 1997), 101–5.
[67] Ipatevskaia *letopis*, PSRL 2:267–68.
[68] Ibid., 266, 268; 264, 268; 260–61, 264, 268; 261–64.

drive the point home, not to display elegance of style. If priests rode with the troops more than once in the course of the 1111 campaign, he would have surely not hesitated to report all such occasions.

Clearly, then, priests did not precede the troops on the battlefield in 1111; they did so only when the Rus army was approaching Sharukan. This is not to say that their presence was intended for the Sharukan Christians exclusively and may not have any effect on the soldiers. Arguably, priests riding in front of the troops and singing hymns on the day when the Rus forces entered the Cuman territory and donned armor for the first time may have signified a special religious character of the campaign. André Vaillant listed the passage about Monomakh's priests among the features "making one believe that the chronicler relating this campaign was influenced by accounts of the First Crusade."[69] Indeed, the religious aspect of the entry for 1111 has a number of idiosyncratic features setting it apart from other pre-Mongol military-religious narratives and giving it crusading overtones.[70]

The most significant among these features is the report of miraculous help that the Rus troops received from God's angels appearing on the battlefield.[71] The account of this miracle apparently drew inspiration from diverse traditions. On the one hand, it is connected with the cult of St. Michael as the commander of the angelic heavenly armies, which had deep roots in both Western and Eastern Christianity and was on the rise in Rus in the early twelfth century.[72] St. Michael and churches dedicated to him are mentioned in a number of East Slavonic military narratives.[73] On the other hand, some aspects of the entry for 1111 have no parallels in contemporaneous Rus sources but are very similar to miracle stories in the accounts of the First Crusade.[74]

The chronicler claims that the news of the victory over the Cumans reached "as far as

[69] André Vaillant, "Les citations des années 1110-1111 dans la chronique de Kiev," *Byzantinoslavica* 18 (1957): 18–38 at 20: "On croirait que le chroniqueur, en relatant ce campagne, était sous l'influence des récits sur la première Croisade."
[70] For the 1111 campaign as "Monomakh's crusade," see, e.g., Valerii B. Perkhavko and Yury V. Sukharev, *Voiteli Rusi IX-XIII vv.* (Moscow: Veche, 2006), 138. Otherwise, Radosław Kotecki discerns in the expedition pre-crusade overtones typical of the imperial holy war ideology. See Radosław Kotecki, "Pious Rulers, Ducal Clerics, and Angels of Light: 'Imperial Holy War' Imagery in Twelfth-Century Poland and Rus,'" in *Christianity and War in Medieval East Central Europe and Scandinavia*, ed. Radosław Kotecki, Carsten Selch Jensen, and Stephen Bennett (Leeds: ARC Humanities Press, 2021), 151–78.
[71] Ipatevskaia *letopis*, PSRL 2:266.
[72] Johannes Peter Rohland, *Der Erzengel Michael: Arzt und Feldherr. Zwei Aspekte des vor- und frühbyzantinischen Michaelskultes* (Leiden: Brill, 1977), 105–44; Kotecki, "Pious Rulers," 151–52 for a review of literature on the cult of St. Michael and angelic interference in battles.
[73] *Letopis po Lavrentevskomu spisku*, PSRL 1:448; Ipatevskaia *letopis*, PSRL 2:210, 290, 323, 327, 703.
[74] For the parallels with the narratives of the First Crusade, see Yulia Mikhailova, "Reflection of the Crusading Movement in Rusian Sources: Tantalizing Hints," in *Fruits of Devotion: Essays in Honor of Predrag Matejic*, ed. M.A. Johnson and Alice Isabelle Sullivan, Ohio Slavic papers 11 (Columbus OH: The Ohio State University, forthcoming 2022).

Rome, for the glory of God," a very unusual statement,[75] and he also stresses the fact that the campaign took place during Lent, and the decisive battle occurred on Holy Monday; the progress of the troops through the steppe is juxtaposed with the progress of Lent:

> They departed on the second week of Lent, … and on Sunday when the Cross is kissed [e.g. Sunday of the Veneration of the Holy Cross], they reached the Psel river … and they stayed and waited for the rest of the army there .… On Wednesday, they kissed the Cross [as part of the Orthodox church service during the third week of Lent known as "Cross-venerating (*Krestopoklonnaia*)"] and placed all their hope in the Cross, with great tears. And from there, they went and crossed many rivers during the fifth week of Lent, and they marched towards the Don on Tuesday. And they donned armor and put the troops in battle order, and marched to the town of Sharukan, and Prince Vladimir [Monomakh] appointed his priests to ride in front of his troops and to sing *troparia* and *kontakia* of the Venerable Cross and the Canon to the Holy Theotokos.[76]

Since Lent is, of course, a time of penance, the intertwining of military action with Lent worship in this narrative frames the 1111 campaign as a penitential activity. In the West, fighting infidels as a way of doing penance was a key aspect that differentiated crusades from "other contemporaneous forms of righteous war," so much so that crusading warfare became "incorporated into the Church's penitential system."[77] This was not the case in pre-Mongol Rus, where Monomakh's and his chronicler's experimentation with giving an anti-Cuman campaign a crusading flavor remained an isolated episode.

All these considerations indicate that the information about Monomakh's priests in the entry for 1111 reflects a special arrangement made for the Rus troops approaching Sharukan. Whether meant as an appeal to the Sharukan Christians, or an inspiration for the troops, or, most likely, both, this arrangement was not representative of a common practice that remained unreported in all the other pre-Mongol military narratives.[78]

The only other case of religious hymns being sung before a battle is found in the *Laurentian Chronicle* entry for 1164, which describes a campaign led by Andrei Bogoliubsky of Suzdalia against the Muslim Volga Bulgars:

> [Andrei's troops] were standing dismounted on the field with [an icon of] the Holy Theotokos and under the banners. Prince Andrei with Yury [of Murom], and with [Andrei's son] Iziaslav, and with [Andrei's nephew] Iaroslav, and with all his men (*druzhinoiu*) came to the Holy Theotokos and to the soldiers, and they prostrated

[75] Ipatevskaia *letopis*, PSRL 2:273.
[76] Ibid., 266. The river called the Don in this passage may have been the Don's tributary Malyi Donets, which was mistaken for the Upper Don, because the geography of the steppe was not yet well known in Rus at that time.
[77] Jason T. Roche, "The Appropriation and Weaponisation of the Crusades in the Modern Era," *International Journal of Military History and Historiography* 41 (2021): 187–207 at 188. See also Jonathan Riley-Smith, *What Were the Crusades*, 4th ed. (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), 1–5.
[78] *Pace* Musin, *"Milites Christi,"* 53.

> themselves in front of the Holy Theotokos and started kissing the Holy Theotokos with great joy and with tears, giving her praise and songs. Then they went and conquered their [Bulgar] renowned city of Briakhimov, … and this was a new miracle of the Holy Theotokos of Vladimir.[79]

Participation of the clergy in this pre-battle religious ceremony, although cannot be ruled out entirely, is unlikely. The clause "giving her praise and songs (*khvaly i pesni vozdavaiushche ei*)" refers to Andrei and those who accompanied him. If clerics were among them, it is hard to see why they were not mentioned by the chronicler, who dutifully listed Andrei's allies and family members and did not fail to report the presence of "all his men." Such an omission is all the more improbable given the keen interest in the clergy and in ecclesiastical affairs displayed by the author of the *Laurentian* entries for the 1150s–1170s.

This chronicler criticizes the bishop who "robbed the priests," presumably by increasing some kind of payments they owed, and describes in detail a controversy over fasting rules, in which the Suzdalian ecclesiastics were involved.[80] His special attention to the Vladimir Cathedral of Dormition and the icon of the Theotokos kept there led scholars to believe that he was a member of the cathedral clergy.[81] All these considerations indicate that it is very improbable that the author of the *Laurentian* entry for 1164 accidentally omitted information about clerics performing the ceremony that brought about "a new miracle of the Holy Theotokos of Vladimir." If clerics were there, not mentioning them must have been a deliberate choice for this particular chronicler. This leaves us with two possibilities: either clerical participation in a pre-battle religious rite was so controversial that the chronicler wanted to hush it up, or Prince Andrei and his men "gave praises and songs" to the Theotokos on their own.

In this connection, it is worth mentioning an episode in the Slavonic *Digenes Akrites* (written perhaps in the twelfth century), where the warrior brothers, in the absence of any clerics, sing "angelic songs" while preparing for a fight, and then again while riding to battle. Their first song is a psalm, and the second seems to be a personal prayer.[82] In the corresponding

[79] *Letopis po Lavrentevskomu spisku*, PSRL 1:352–53.

[80] Ibid., 349, 351–52. For an interpretation of the passage about the priests and a review of literature on this subject, see Andrey Vinogradov and Mikhail Zheltov, "Pravovye akty russkoi mitropolii pri Konstantine I (1156-1159 gg.)," in *U istokov i istochnikov. Na mezhdunarodnykh i mezhdistsiplinarnykh putiakh*, ed. Yury A. Petrov (Moscow: Institut rossiiskoi istorii Rossiiskoi akademii nauk, 2019), 35–56 at 48–51. For the fasting controversy and its reflection in the *Laurentian Chronicle*, see iidem, "'Pervaia eres na Rusi'. Russkie spory 1160-kh godov ob otmene posta v prazdnichnye dni," *Drevniaia Rus* 73 (2018): 118–39.

[81] Boris N. Floria, "Predstavlenia ob otnosheniiakh vlasti i obshchestva v Drevnei Rusi (XII-nachalo XIII vv.)," in *Vlast i obshchestvo v literaturnykh tekstakh Drevnei Rusi i drugikh slavianskikh stran (XII-XIII vv.)*, ed. Boris N. Floiria (Moscow: Znak, 2012), 9–95 at 11.

[82] *Devgenievo deianie*, ed. Oleg V. Tvorogov, BLDR 3(1997), 58–91 at 62, 64.

passage of the Greek *Digenes*, the brothers pray, but do not sing any “angelic songs.”[83] The Slavonic version thus reflects a pre-battle practice of soldiers singing a psalm or other religious hymn, which may be called “angelic” as a reference to angelic forces commanded by St. Michael. It is hard to tell whether this custom was common to all the medieval Slavia Orthodoxa, or existed only in the milieu where the Slavonic *Digenes* was produced.[84] What is important in the context of the present discussion is that spiritual preparation for fighting in the Slavonic version has similarities with the *Laurentian* entry for 1164, and that neither Greek, nor Slavonic version mentions any clerical involvement. Nor do absolute majority of the military narratives found in the Rus chronicles.

One reason for this absence of the clergy may be a religious diversity, which set Rus apart from Latin Europe. Thus, the majority of the victorious troops fighting the Cumans in the *Kievan* entry for 1172 were pagan Turkic *federati* of Rus.[85] The Cumans, on their part, often acted as allies of Rus princes. According to the *Primary Chronicle* entry for 1099, when the Kievan prince David and the Cuman leader Boniak conducted a joint military campaign against the Hungarians, Boniak retreated from the camp at midnight before the battle and started howling like a wolf. He then informed David that he heard wolves howling back at him, which meant that the battle would be victorious.[86] This account of what looks like a pagan pre-battle ritual is unique, but it is reasonable to assume that non-Christian allies of Rus kept performing some religious rites before battle. It is possible, then, that “our men,” indeed, “strengthened themselves by the help of God and by the Holy Theotokos,” while the Turkic soldiers probably strengthened themselves by their own religious beliefs. In this situation, it would be awkward to have a Christian religious ceremony intended for the whole army.

However, not all cases of the exclusion of the clergy from military narratives can be explained by the presence of non-Christian soldiers. Chronicles produced in the northern woodlands, such as Suzdalia or Novgorod, where pagan allies were rarely present, normally do

[83] *Digenes Akrites*, ed. John Mavrogordato (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1956), 10–11 (ll. 120–40).
[84] The provenance of the Slavonic version of the poem is debated. East and South Slavic origins have been proposed; “dating oscillates between the XI-XII and XIV-XV centuries”: Alessandro Maria Bruni, “The Language of the Old East Slavic ‘Digenis Akritis’: A Few Preliminary Remarks,” *Russica Romana* 21 (2014): 9–41 at 12. The extant manuscripts are late, and their East Slavonic features have been variously interpreted as evidence of a Rus origin, or as a result of alterations of a lost South Slavonic original by East Slavic scribes.
[85] *Letopis po Lavrentevskomu spisku*, PSRL 1:364; Ipatevskaia *letopis*, PSRL 2:557. On the pagan *federati* of Rus princes, see Peter Golden, “The Cernii Klobouci,” *Symbolae Turcologicae* 6 (1996): 97–107. See also Yulia Mikhailova, “‘Christians and Pagans’ in the Chronicles of Pre-Mongolian Rus: Beyond the Dichotomy of ‘Good Us’ and ‘Bad Them,’” in *Geschichte der “Slavia Asiatica.” Quellenkundliche Probleme*, ed. Christian Lübke, Ilmira Miftakhova, and Wolfram von Scheliha (Leipzig: Leipziger Universitätsverlag, 2013), 22–51 at 47–48.
[86] *Letopis po Lavrentevskomu spisku*, PSRL 1:70–271; *Povest’ vremennykh let*, 2056–57. See also Peter Golden, “Wolves, Dogs and Qïpchaq Religion,” *Acta Orientalia Hungarica* 50 (1997): 87–97.

not mention any public pre-battle rituals, only personal prayers. Nor are other sources different in this respect. Saints' lives and the *Kievan Caves Patericon* contain numerous accounts of praying clerics and church services, and they also mention military victories – but they do not establish a connection between the two. If anything, clerics play a more prominent role in the narratives about defeats, such as the famous story of Vladimir Monomakh's younger brother, Rostislav.

According to the *Patericon*, Vladimir and Rostislav were on their way to the Kievan Caves monastery "for the sake of a prayer and a blessing" before going to fight the Cumans. When they were on the Dnieper bank, Rostislav's men insulted a monk, who admonished them, "O my children, at a time when it befits you, with a tender soul (*umilenie imeti*), to seek many prayers from everyone, you are doing evil things displeasing to God," and predicted that they would soon drown. The infuriated Rostislav, who did not realize that the monk was prophesying, ordered him to be drowned and refused to go to the monastery with his brother. In the battle, they were defeated and fled, crossing a river. Vladimir survived "because of the prayers and the blessing of the holy monks," but Rostislav and all his men drowned.[87]

This story indicates that it was customary for troops to receive pre-battle prayers and blessings from churchmen, but there was no developed "liturgy of war" comparable to that of Latin Europe.[88] Rostislav's soldiers are admonished to seek "prayers from everyone," including monks, not to attend a special pre-battle religious rite performed in the monastery. Monks' prayers are beneficial, but they do not have power to bring victory. This attitude is very consistent across all kinds of East Slavonic sources. According to the *Patericon*, Prince Sviatopolk came to the Kievan Caves to "bow down before the Holy Theotokos, Theodosius's coffin … and all the holy fathers" when he went to "a war or to a hunt"; according to the *Primary Chronicle*, he "was accustomed to bow down before Theodosius's coffin and to receive the prayer of [the Kievan Caves] superior" when he "had a war or another undertaking (*koli idiashe*

[87] *Kievo-Pecherskii Paterik*, ed. Lev A. Dmitriev and Lidia A. Olshevskaia, BLDR 4(1997), 296–489 at 410. See also the account of a failed campaign of Iziaslav Mstislavich against Yury Dolgorukii. Before going against Yury, Iziaslav attended a mass, "and when he was on his way from the church, Bishop Euphemius tearfully implored him, 'Prince, make peace with [Yury], this will be good for your soul.'" Iziaslav ignored this appeal and was defeated. Ipatevskaia *letopis*, PSRL 2:380. No words or actions by the bishop are reported in accounts of Iziaslav's victorious campaigns, although one such report mentions that Iziaslav went to fight, "having received (*vzem*) a prayer at St. Michael's from Bishop Euphemius": Ipatevskaia *letopis*, PSRL 2:323.

[88] Michael McCormick, "The Liturgy of War in the Early Middle Ages: Crisis, Litanies, and the Carolingian Monarchy," *Viator* 15 (1984): 1–24; idem, *Eternal Victory: Triumphal Rulership in Late Antiquity, Byzantium and the Early Medieval West* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), 342–61; idem, "The Liturgy of War from Antiquity to the Crusades," in *The Sword of the Lord: Military Chaplains from the First to the Twenty-First Century*, ed. Doris L. Bergen (Notre Dame IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2004), 45–67; David S. Bachrach, *Religion and the Conduct of War, c.300-1215* (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2003), 32–43; see also idem, "Military Chaplains and the Religion of War in Ottonian Germany, 919-1024," *Religion, State & Society* 39 (2011): 13–31.

na voinu ili inamo)."[89] When it comes to religious rites, war is just another undertaking. There is nothing comparable to Charlemagne's capitularies, which prescribed, for example, that bishops and priests serve three masses, and monks and nuns recite three psalms to help ensure military victory for the Frankish forces.[90]

A rare example of the military motif in a Church Slavonic liturgical source is found in the *Canon of the Elevation of the Cross*, a translation of the eighth-century Greek hymn that refers to the power of the Cross to defeat the barbarians and to give victory to "our faithful prince."[91] *Troparia* and *kontakia* of the Venerable Cross that Monomakh's priests sang during the 1111 campaign were probably part of this hymn. However, there is no evidence that the *Canon* was customarily sung before battles and not just on the Elevation of the Cross feast day. The predominant early Slavic Orthodox liturgical practices during a wartime are reflected in the type of book known as *paremeinik*. This is a lectionary containing pericopes (*paremia*) from the Scripture, mostly the Old Testament, in the order they are read during the Divine Liturgy. The readings organized according to feast days comprise the body of the *paremeinik*, which may be followed by a supplementary part, containing texts to be read on special occasions.

Unfortunately, the last folia of the *paremeinik* books often go missing, as is typical of heavily used manuscripts. Since the *paremeinik* started gradually falling out of use in the twelfth-thirteenth centuries, with its readings being incorporated into other liturgical books, there was, apparently, no perceived need to copy worn-out manuscripts and to restore lost leaves.[92] It appears, however, that the special occasions listed in the extant supplementary sections of the *paremeinik* manuscripts are representative of the general practice. Alexander Mikhailov, who studied all the manuscripts available to him in the early 1900s, observed, "In all the copies where supplementary readings are present, there are only found *paremia* for the consecration of a church, for an enemy attack, and a drought."[93] This uniformity suggests that those were the most common occasions included in the *paremeinik* books.

The earliest surviving *paremeinik*, a twelfth-century South Slavic manuscript, prescribes readings from Jeremiah 1–2 on the occasion of "a drought and a military invasion (*o vedria i o*

[89] *Kievo-Pecherskii Paterik*, 434; *Letopis po Lavrentevskomu spisku*, PSRL 1:282; *Povest' vremennykh let*, 2143.
[90] Bachrach, *Religion*, 33.
[91] *Sluzhba Vozdvizheniu Kresta Kosmy Maiumskogo*, ed. Tatyana V. Tkacheva, BLDR 2(1999), 480–91 at 480, 482, 490.
[92] M.A. Johnson, "Reconstructing Missing Folia in Selected Medieval Slavic Parimejniks: Grigorovičev, Hilandar Slavic No 313, Q.π.l.51, and Sviato-Troickaia Sergieva Lavra No 4," *Scripta & e-Scripta* 7 (2009): 107–19 at 107–9.
[93] Alexandr V. Mikhailov, "Grecheskie i drevne-slavianskie paremeiniki," *Russkii filologicheskii vestnik* 58 (1907): 265–306 at 294.

nahozhdenii voistse)."[94] Invasion paired with drought and the choice of readings present war as an evil that people suffer as God's punishment for their sins. The fifteenth-century East Slavic manuscript, representing the late stage of the *paremeinik* tradition, has a separate rubric for a drought and groups war together with another natural disaster in the section "for an earthquake and an attack of the pagans (*ot trakha i napadenia ot poganyikh*)."[95]

This section contains excerpts from Kings, Baruch, and Isaiah rather than Jeremiah, but the main message is similar to the one of the twelfth-century manuscript.[96] The readings include Hezekiah's prayer for help against the Assyrian invasion, but the king prays alone in the temple, not in front of his army, and the resulting delivery occurs not through a won battle, but because the Assyrian soldiers are massacred by God's angel (2 Kings 18–19; 4 Kingdoms 18–19 in the Orthodox Bible).[97] The rest of the readings in this section are devoted to God's punishments of sins summarized by the line, "Children, suffer patiently the wrath that is come upon you from God" (Baruch 4:24–25).[98] War is once again framed as a disaster rather than a glorious endeavor.

Slavic Orthodox churchmen inherited this tradition from Byzantium. Thus, in the earliest Byzantine ordinal, the Typikon of the Great Church, the texts to be read "for a barbarian invasion (*ἐλεύσεως βαρβάρων*) and a drought" are listed right after those "for an earthquake."[99] No readings are prescribed for a war other than a defensive one, caused by a foreign invasion of the country. This liturgical practice reflects the Byzantine military ideology, going back to the late Roman Empire and centered on "the integrity of Roman territory and the protection of its inhabitants against foreign attack (indifferently whether the enemy was Christian or infidel)."[100]

[94] Rossiiskaia Gosudarstvennaia Biblioteka F.87 no. 2, Paremeinik, Sviato-Troitskaia Sergieva Lavra, fol. 103v (101v), https://lib-fond.ru/lib-rgb/87/f-87-2/#image-104. There are two numbers on this page, 103 and 101. See also the printed edition, *Grigorovichev Paremejnik 1. Tekst so kritichki aparat*, ed. Zdenka Ribarova and Zoe Hauptova (Skopje: MANU, 1998).
[95] Sinai.Slavic.11 (St. Catherine's Monastery, Mount Sinai), fol. 158, available online: Library of Congress, Collection of Manuscripts in St. Catherine's Monastery, Mount Sinai, https://www.loc.gov/item/00279388021-ms/ and https://www.loc.gov/resource/amedmonastery.00279388021-ms/?sp=160&r=0.396,0.064,0.955,0.38,0. In the Library of Congress catalog, the manuscript is erroneously described as "Parakletike [Oktoikh]," which is a liturgical book containing a collection of hymns. Since this manuscript is a collection of Old Testament readings rather than hymns, it is a *paremeinik*. The reading for a drought is found on fol. 159v https://www.loc.gov/resource/amedmonastery.00279388021-ms/?sp=162&r=-0.07,0.108,1.052,0.418,0
[96] The header of the section erroneously describe the readings as "from Jeremiah," which is apparently a scribal mistake.
[97] Sinai.Slavic.11, fols. 158r, 158v, https://www.loc.gov/resource/amedmonastery.00279388021-ms/?sp=161&r=-0.02,0.042,1.067,0.417,0.
[98] Sinai.Slavic.11, fol. 159r, https://www.loc.gov/resource/amedmonastery.00279388021-ms/?sp=161&r=-0.261,0.038,1.422,0.556,0
[99] *Le Typicon de la Grande Église*, vol. 2, ed. Juan Mateos, Orientalia Christiana analecta 166 (Rome: Pontificium Institutum Orientalium Studiorum, 1963), 190–92.
[100] Ioannis Stouraitis, "Jihād and Crusade: Byzantine Positions Towards the Notions of 'Holy War,'" *Byzantina*

The late East Slavonic *paremeinik* quoted above somewhat departs from this Byzantine model in describing the invaders in religious terms as "pagans." Further research is needed to determine whether this use of "pagans" constitutes an isolated occurrence or indicates a change in the religious interpretation of war. The Byzantines usually described their enemies as "barbarians."[101] Following the Roman tradition, this word signified relations to the empire, not religion: "In Byzantine perception, Christian enemies that took the offensive against the Romans were as barbarian … as any infidel enemy of the Empire."[102] In practice, the Byzantine war ethic could sanctify wars of conquest, because its proclaimed goal was "restoration of justice and imperial rule over territories which the Byzantines claimed as legitimately parts of their empire," and these may be interpreted as all former Roman territories.[103] However, regardless of whether the Byzantines fought a defensive or a *de-facto* aggressive war, the justification for it was territorial, not religious.

This aspect of the Byzantine ideology may have contributed to the development of what Monica White deemed the cult of military saints, that is, saints who were soldiers in their earthly lives and gradually came to be viewed as heavenly patrons of imperial armies, providing comfort and inspiration to soldiers in the absence of official sanctification of war by the Church. White's exhaustive analysis of the sources from the middle Byzantine period (843–1204) showed that they "emphasize the sacred aspects of warfare and the similarities between soldiers and martyrs," they "hint" or "assume" that the enemies of the empire are the enemies of God, and the empire's soldiers are fighters for Christ "by extension."[104] However, they never express such ideas explicitly.

This constituted a fundamental difference that set the Byzantine military-religious ideology apart from both Western Crusades and Muslim jihad, which proclaimed fallen soldiers as martyrs, promised them remission of all sins, and guaranteed entrance to paradise. Most scholars agree that the Byzantine ideology was centered not on a holy war, but on a just war. A minority opinion, most prominently represented by Athina Kolia-Demitzaki, is that the Byzantines had their own concept of a holy war.

Σymmeikta 21 (2011): 11–63 at 19.

[101] Jean-Claude Cheynet, "La guerre sainte à Byzance au Moyen Âge. Un malentendu," in *Regards croisés sur la guerre sainte. Guerre, religion et idéologie dans l'espace méditerranéen latin (XIe-XIIIe siècle)*, ed. Daniel Baloup and Philippe Josserand (Toulouse: Presses Universitaires du Midi, 2006), 13–32 at 17; Stouraitis, "Jihād and Crusade," 43.

[102] Yannis Stouraitis, "State War Ethic and Popular Views on Warfare," in *A Companion to the Byzantine Culture of War, ca.300-1204*, ed. Yannis Stouraitis, Brill's companions to the Byzantine world 3 (Leiden and Boston MA: Brill, 2018), 59–91 at 82.

[103] Savvas Kyriakidis, *Warfare in Late Byzantium, 1204-1453*, History of warfare 67 (Leiden and Boston MA: Brill, 2011), 21; Stouraitis, "State War Ethic," 70–72.

[104] White, *Military Saints*, 33.

The controversy, however, appears to be purely terminological. Both Kolia-Demitzaki and her opponents agree that the Byzantine soldiers were not promised plenary remission of sins if they died fighting infidels. Such a promise, connected with the view of fallen soldiers as martyrs, is generally considered the defining characteristic of a holy war, but Kolia-Demitzaki finds this approach too narrow. For her, a holy war took place whenever

> the imperative need of addressing non-Christian enemies … led rulers to promote war in which the religious diversity of the opponents was emphasized …. Sometimes an assurance was given – by the State and only in a few specified cases by representatives of the Church – that those who participated in such a war would gain the salvation of their souls.[105]

Remarkably, the cases when the Byzantine church provided such an assurance belong to the period after 1204 and may be explained by the Western influence and by the presence of the Catholic mercenaries among the troops of the Byzantine government in exile.[106]

The position of the church in the middle Byzantine period is best expressed by Patriarch Polyeuctus, who famously rejected the request of Emperor Nicephoros II that all fallen soldiers should be proclaimed martyrs. The closest pre-1204 Byzantine parallel to the Western concept of holy war is found in the account of Emperor Heraclius encouraging his soldiers to fight the Persians and saying, "May we win the crown of the martyrs."[107] This idea was never supported by religious authorities, presumably because of the Byzantine vehement opposition to the Muslim concept of jihad that emerged later in the same century.[108] Parallels or associations between soldiers and martyrs were used by some emperors, most notably by Constantine VII, but, again, this was a rhetoric of rulers seeking to inspire their troops, not an official proclamation by church authorities. To quote White's summary of the subject:

> The religious trappings of Byzantine military operations did not mean that the conflicts themselves were officially regarded as holy, and the refusal of the Orthodox church to declare or sanction war is universally acknowledged. In general, the Byzantines regarded war at best as a necessary evil.[109]

This Byzantine position, reflected in the liturgical books discussed above, best explains the

[105] Athina Kolia-Dermitzaki, "'Holy War' In Byzantium Twenty Years Later: A Question of Term Definition and Interpretation," in *Byzantine War Ideology between Roman Imperial Concept and Christian Religion*, ed. Johannes Koder and Ioannis Stouraitis, Veröffentlichungen zur Byzanzforschung 30 (Vienna: Verlag der Österreichische Akademie der Wissenschaften, 2012), 121–32 at 122.
[106] Cheynet, "La guerre sainte," 30–31
[107] Theophanes, *Theophanis Chronographia*, ed. Carl de Boor (Leipzig: Teubner, 1883–1885; repr. Hildesheim: Olms, 1963), 310–11, as quoted in White, *Military Saints*, 49.
[108] Cheynet, "La guerre sainte," 31.
[109] White, *Military Saints*, 62.

marginal role of the clergy in East Slavonic military narratives. Most such narratives are indeed part of chronicles that generally pay more attention to princes than to churchmen; however, they do consistently mention clerics when it comes to peace-making. We do not see church hierarchs encouraging soldiers or praying for victory (with the single exception mentioned above), but they appear in the military narratives when they urge princes to make peace, or not to start a war, or when they facilitate and seal peace treaties.[110]

In short, Nicephoros II, metropolitan of Kiev, accurately described the role of the church in Rus when he said, addressing princes, "God appointed us to restrain you from shedding blood."[111] In pre-Mongol sources, clerics, indeed, are consistently represented as inspiring peace-making, not fighting. Reports of battles and victories often include religious commentaries, but they are either provided by the author or attributed to princes. Chroniclers, as a rule, were, of course, churchmen, and thus their authorial commentaries do constitute clerical voices; however, these commentaries exist only on parchment and are never represented as something that was delivered orally, as part of a public ceremony.

In the chronicles, it is princes who address soldiers with pre- and post-battle speeches steeped in religious rhetoric, such as the one reported in the conclusion to an account of a victory over the Cumans:

> Vladimir [Monomakh] said, "This is the day that the Lord created for us, let us be glad and rejoice on this day, for the Lord delivered us from our enemies, and subjugated our enemies, and destroyed the heads of the serpent and gave nourishment to these people of Rus."[112]

Even in the *Hypatian* entry for 1111, which displays unusual attention to the clergy and religious rites performed during a military campaign, the priests sing hymns on Monomakh's orders but do not deliver any exhortations of their own. Neither is clergy mentioned after the battle, when princes "Sviatopolk, and Vladimir, and David praised God who gave them such a victory over the pagans."[113] In accordance with the Byzantine model, "the religious diversity of the opponents was emphasized" by secular rulers, not clerics.

In the *Life of Alexander Nevsky*, it is also the prince who inspires the troops by speeches and public prayers, but, astonishingly for a narrative about an Orthodox leader fighting Catholic

[110] *Letopis po Lavrentevskomu spisku*, PSRL 1:297, 307, 322, 404, 425, 455–56; Ipatevskaia *letopis*, PSRL 2:291, 299, 302–3, 324, 366, 380, 689, 697. See also Piotr S. Stefanovich, "Krestotselovanie i otnoshenie k nemu tserkvi v Drevnei Rusi," in *Srednevekovaia Rus*, vol. 5, ed. Anton A. Gorskii et al. (Moscow: Indrik, 2004), 86–113.
[111] Ipatevskaia *letopis*, PSRL 2:684.
[112] *Letopis po Lavrentevskomu spisku*, PSRL 1:279.
[113] Ibid., 268.

crusaders, Alexander does not mention the religious denomination of the opponents at all. The author of the *Life* calls the Germans "godless" once, but the rest of the text concentrates on a territorial, not religious justification of Alexander's wars. This aspect is especially pronounced in the account of Alexander's prayer about the Swedish invasion, apparently inspired by the prayer of the Biblical king Hezekiah, but with important modifications.

In the biblical story, Hezekiah received a message from the Assyrian king, Sennacherib, demanding surrender, and "went up into the house of the Lord" where he prayed for deliverance. In response, God sent angels who killed Sennacherib's soldiers and made him retreat from Israel (2 Kings: 18–19). In the *Life*, Alexander likewise receives a message from the Swedish leader, Birger, goes to the Cathedral of Holy Sophia, and prays. Like Hezekiah, he addresses God, "Thou hast made heaven and earth." One redaction reports a "marvelous miracle, like in the ancient days of King Hezekiah": Alexander's troops were helped by God's angels, who killed many Swedish soldiers.[114] However, the *Life* also displays significant departures from the Biblical narrative.

Sennacherib's message urges Hezekiah not to trust in God, but there is nothing concerning religion in Birger's message to Alexander: "If you are able to resist me, know that I am already here, conquering your land." Like Hezekiah, Alexander begins his prayer by praising God's might; however, Hezekiah then concentrates on impiety of Sennacherib, who dared "to reproach the living God." In contrast, Alexander concentrates on Birger's unjust invasion of a territory that does not belong to the Swedes, addressing God, "You appointed boundaries to the peoples, and commanded them to live without transgressing into someone else's part." Remarkably, Birger is described as being not "of the Roman faith," but "of the Roman part (*chasti Rimskyia*)." Addressing his soldiers after the prayer, Alexander tells them that God supports "not strength, but justice," and then advances against the Swedes with a small number of troops.[115]

The substitution of the territorial motif for the religious one in the ruler's prayer for God's help against invaders resonates with the Byzantine ideology of the just war, where "the Roman heritage was stronger than Old Testament models."[116] The *Life* mentions neither clerical prayers, nor church services, and contains only two passages with references to churchmen. One reads, "After [Alexander] finished his prayer, he stood up and bowed to the archbishop. At

[114] Z*hitie Aleksandra Nevskogo*, 360, 362.
[115] Ibd., 360,
[116] Philippe Buc, "Religions and Warfare: Prolegomena to a Comparative Study," *QMAN* 21 (2016): 9–26 at 11.

that time, Spiridon was the archbishop, and he blessed Alexander and *otpusti* him."[117] Meanings of *otpustiti* include "to give leave, to let go," "to send," and "to give absolution." This polysemy makes it impossible to determine what, if any, rite Spriridon performed in addition to blessing. In any case, there is no indication that the archbishop acted differently from any other occasion when a prince prayed in his cathedral, whether before a battle or not.[118]

The other passage mentioning clerics describes Alexander's entrance to Pskov after the victorious Battle on the Ice at Lake Peipus:

> Monastery superiors, and priests, and all the people met him with crosses in front of the city, giving praise to God and glory to Lord Prince Alexander, singing, "You, Lord, helped the meek David to defeat foreigners (*inoplemmeniky*), and helped our prince Alexander with the weapon of the Cross (*oruzhiem krestnym*), and liberated the city of Pskov from aliens (*ot inoiazychnik*) through Alexander's hand."[119]

It should be noted that it was customary for clerics and "all the people" to greet a prince entering a city in this way, not necessarily after a battle.[120] The reference to the "weapon of the Cross" comes closest to the motif of holy war, but, remarkably, the enemies are, again, described as foreigners, not as members of a "wrong" Church. Clerics are represented as part of the crowd singing and carrying crosses, presumably leading the laity in these activities, but they do not perform any specific religious rituals.

Most importantly, no churchmen are mentioned in the account of the preparations for the Battle on the Ice. It is, again, the prince praying publicly and making a speech to the soldiers. In short, Rus ecclesiastics followed the Byzantine practice characterized by "the refusal of the Orthodox church to declare or sanction war." In the entire pre-Mongol period, there is only one reported case when a church hierarch encouraged princes to launch a military campaign. This was the same Nicephorus II who, on a different occasion, referred to the mission of the Church to restrain princes from bloodshed.[121]

According to the *Kievan Chronicle* entry for 1189, Nichephorus addressed Sviatoslav and Rurik, who ruled in Kiev jointly, and urged them to fight the Hungarian occupation of

[117] Z*hitie Aleksandra Nevskogo*, 360
[118] Compare with Bishop Cyril blessing Alexander before his trip to Batu, Z*hitie Aleksandra Nevskogo*, 366.
[119] Z*hitie Aleksandra Nevskogo*, 364.
[120] See Yulia Mikhailova, *Property, Power, and Authority in Rus and Latin Europe, ca.1000-1236* (Leeds: ARC Humanities Press, 2018), 28; compare with Jacek Banaszkiewicz, "Bolesław i Peredsława. Uwagi o uroczystości stanowienia władcy w związku z wejściem Chrobrego do Kijowa," *KH* 97.3–4 (1990): 3–35; Jonathan Shepard, "'Adventus', Arrivistes and Rites of Rulership in Byzantium and France in the Tenth and Eleventh Century," in *Court Ceremonies and Rituals of Power in Byzantium and the Medieval Mediterranean*, ed. Alexander Beihammer, Stavroula Constantinou, and Maria Parani, MMED 98 (Leiden and Boston MA: Brill, 2013), 337–71.
[121] See n.84 above.

Galich. This was the center of an important principality in south-western Rus, which in the late 1180s was claimed by several rival princes. The Hungarians arrived as allies of one claimant but ended up giving the throne of Galich to the son of the Hungarian king Bela III, at which point, "the metropolitan said to Sviatoslav and Rurik, 'Behold, foreigners (*inoplemennitsi*) took over your *votchina*; therefore, it is befitting for you to show labor.'"[122] Several aspects of this short statement need to be discussed at length.

One of them is an odd use of the word *votchina*. Its basic meaning is "patrimony," something that belonged to one's father or grandfather. Galich was neither Rurik's nor Sviatoslav's *votchina* in this sense, and none of them ever presented any hereditary claims to it. Characterizing Hungarians in Galich as *inoplemennitsi* is less anomalous – they were, indeed, foreigners, but it is still very remarkable in the context of this particular narrative. Rurik and Sviatoslav answered the Metropolitan's call and went to fight the Hungarians but turned back before reaching Galich. The account of these events is concluded with the information about Hungarians desecrating Galich churches.[123] Nonetheless, the head of the church in Rus is represented as calling on the ruling princes not to defend the Orthodox faith from Catholics, but to defend their *votchina* from foreigners.

Like most Metropolitans of Kiev, Nichephorus was Greek. His unusual appeal to fight for Galich is best explained by the unusual, for Rus, situation that fitted the Byzantine ideology of just war centered on the notion of territorial integrity. It was *not* unusual for Hungarian and other foreign armies to fight on the territory of Nichephorus's metropolinate, but previously they had come as allies of Rus princes in internecine wars. They supported one prince against another but did not seek to establish their own rule. Nor did the most troublesome foreign adversaries, the Cumans, who plundered, and then retreated with their booty back to the steppe. Those steppe nomads who did stay in Rus recognized the authority of its rulers known as the Rurikids (although not all historians accept this term).[124]

In scholarly literature, "Rus" is used to signify the polity ruled by the Rurikids. This territory comprised the ecclesiastical district called the Metropolitanate of *Rhosia* in Greek, but its designation in East Slavonic sources is ambiguous. Originally, "Rus" referred to a region on the Middle Dnieper, much like *Francia* signified the territory around Paris. This narrow meaning gradually expanded; a careful analysis of the context is necessary to understand what

[122] Ipatevskaia *letopis*, PSRL 2:663.
[123] Ibid., 665.
[124] See Donald Ostrowski, "Systems of Succession in Rus' and Steppe Societies," *Ruthenica* 11 (2012): 29–58 at 30–34.

a medieval author means by "Rus" in any given case.

This terminological ambiguity reflects the nature of Rus as an emerging polity. Needless to say, it was very different from late Rome, where "warfare was justified in the name of the – now divinely-ordained – *pax romana*," with the goal of a just war being "the perpetuation of imperial rule over a – by pre-modern standards – fairly stable territory."[125] The Rurikids, in contrast, ruled over a territory that was not stable even by the standards of medieval Europe: on several sides, it was adjacent to tribal societies with no central political authority, where the borders were especially fluid. Applying the Byzantine war ethic rooted in *pax Romana* to Rus was thus no easy task, and yet Nicephorus tackled this challenge when he urged Rurik and Sviatoslav to expel foreigners and to restore the lost part of what he described with the best East Slavonic word for a territory over which a prince had legitimate authority. Apparently, he used *votchina* to render the notion of *patria* and to convey the idea of defending the territorial integrity of the fatherland in the language understandable to the Kievan princes.

In this respect, Nicephorus built on precedents of creative adaptions of the Byzantine military ideology to the Rus conditions. An especially interesting example is the cult of Boris and Gleb, modeled on the Byzantine military saints. Among "subtle but important" departures from the Byzantine model was the geographic specificity of Boris and Gleb's powers.[126] In one miracle story, they leave for the "Greek Land" for three days, and complete the miracle upon returning to the "Rus Land."[127] In another hagiographic text, they are favorably compared to St. Demetrius, who protects only his native town, while Boris and Gleb "offer care and prayers not for one town and not for two, and not for a district, but for the whole land of Rus."[128] The hagiographer asks them to remember their earthly fatherland (*otechestvo*), which may be one of the earliest uses of this word. Such texts undoubtedly helped forge the notion of the fatherland to be defended in a just war, translating the central tenet of the Byzantine military ideology to a Rus context.

Another aspect of this ideology may be seen in a liturgical reading on Boris and Gleb that begins with quotations from the Proverbs, where the verse "A lover of sin rejoices in strife (*svarom*)" (Proverbs 17:19) is altered. *Svarom* (plural accusative of *svar*) signifies a verbal, rather than physical, quarrel. In the reading on Boris and Gleb, however, a lover of sin rejoices "in war and bloodshed" instead of *svarom*.[129] Paradoxically, the reading then proceeds to

[125] Stouraitis, "State War Ethic," 59, 62.
[126] White, *Military Saints*, 3, 140.
[127] *Skazanie chudes*, 334, see also at 330.
[128] *Skazanie i strast*, 310.
[129] *Mesiatsa iulia 24, Sviatuiu mucheniku Borisa i Gleba, ot Bytia na vecherne chtenia 3*, in Milutenko, *Sviatye*

describe the bloodshed occurring during the war that Yaroslav waged against Sviatopolk to avenge the murder of Boris and Gleb. This is the only war mentioned in the reading, and it is presented in a highly positive way, as fighting for a noble and just cause.[130] In this context, the alteration of the Biblical verse to condemn "war and bloodshed" instead of "quarrel" appears incomprehensible, unless this is a reference to a widespread Byzantine motif that first emerged as a reaction to the rise of Islam.

Byzantine authors, opposing the Roman-Christian war ethic to jihad, argued that Muslims impiously claimed that God rejoiced in war.[131] Nicetas Choniates later applied this motif to crusaders, when he expressed his hopes that they would be punished by Christ "who does not rejoice in bloodshed."[132] "Rejoicing in war and bloodshed" thus was associated with a condemnation of holy war and with the view of warfare as a necessary evil. This phrase may have been included in the liturgical reading in order to reinforce the idea that Boris and Gleb helped in just wars, although more research is needed to explain this alteration of Proverbs 17:19 with certainty.

Remarkably, the "rejoicing in bloodshed" motif found its way into the political discourse and was used to facilitate peace-making between princes, as reflected in chronicles.[133] If this motif, indeed, goes back to the Byzantine anti-jihad literature, this would be another example of the Byzantine influence not limited to the religious life of Rus, but impacting the behavior of its secular elite. When it comes to the princes, however, this was not the only influence. The secular elite received inspiration not just from the "Greeks," but also from the "Varangians," that is from Latin Europe.

One of the most prominent examples is the holy war rhetoric that is sometimes present in the most common military rite reported in East Slavonic sources – public prayers and speeches delivered by princes and explaining the religious significance of their wars. In Rus, they could go well beyond stressing the "wrong" faith of the opponents, as was typical of the Byzantine military leaders. According to the eulogy for Mstislav Rostislavich in the *Kievan Chronicle* entry for 1179/80, this prince was accustomed to tell his soldiers, "If we now die for the Christians, we will be cleansed of all our sins and God will count us among martyrs."[134] These are the key elements of holy war typical of the Western crusading discourse: soldiers

kniazia-mucheniki, 346.
[130] Ibid., 350–52.
[131] Stouraitis, "Jihad," 15–16.
[132] Nicetas Choniates, *Annals*, in *O City of Byzantium: Annals of Niketas Choniatēs*, ed. and trans. Harry J. Magoulias (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1984), 362.
[133] Ipatevskaia *letopis*, PSRL 2:301–2, 487; *Letopis po Lavrentevskomu spisku*, PSRL 1:402.
[134] Ipatevskaia *letopis*, PSRL 2:611.

fighting infidels are martyrs, they receive a plenary remission of sins, and their salvation is ensured by virtue of their death in battle. As discussed above, the notion of fallen soldiers as martyrs was rejected by the Byzantine Church, and Emperor Heraclios's explicit reference to "the crown of the martyrs" received by those who die fighting the Persians remains an isolated incident.

In contrast, the *Kievan* chronicler presents invocations of the holy war ideology as habitual: Mstislav Rostislavich spoke in this way "whenever he saw Christians captured by pagans."[135] Another prince issued a call for an anti-Cuman campaign, and received an enthusiastic response from "all his brethren," that is, lesser princes subordinate to him: "May God grant us that we die for the Christians and for the Rus Land and are counted among the martyrs."[136] Coming from "all" the princes addressed by the call, this response suggests a widespread influence of the crusading ideology on the secular elite of Rus in the later twelfth century.

This ideology did not supplant the Byzantine ethic of a just war, but the two often intertwined. Thus, the same eulogist, who enthusiastically quoted Mstislav's holy war rhetoric, claimed that all the wars waged by this prince were defensive. Unembellished chronicle reports show that Mstislav raided the territories adjacent to the Novgorod Land, but the eulogist claims that the pagan tribal population of these territories presented a threat to Novgorod, and the raids were conducted in self-defense.[137] In other words, the opponents' paganism was not in itself a sufficient ideological justification for war, only real or pretended territorial defense was.

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Religious rites of war performed by the secular elites in Rus and the in West had significant similarities. Before the battle, Rusian princes publicly prayed and inspired their troops by the speeches that were often saturated with religious rhetoric; they had their priests accompany them on campaigns and hold church services in tents. However, there is no evidence that these services included any special prayers or rituals intended to bring victory, in contrast with wartime "Masses against the Pagans" or a "Mass for the King on the Day of Battle" found in

[135] Ibid.

[136] Ibid., 538. This information is found in the early part of entry for 1169/1170, which reports the events taking place in 1167/1168. See Berezhkov, *Khronologia*, 180.

[137] Ipatevskaia *letopis*, PSRL 2:610: "stvorshemu tolikoiu svobodu Novgorodtsem on poganykh, iakozhe i ded tvoi … svobodil ny biashe ot vsekh obid."

Carolingian sacramentaries.[138]

In the pre-Mongol Rus sources, there is nothing comparable to the Polish accounts of the Płock bishops playing an important role in the defense of their diocese against pagan raiders. The Novgorod bishop's bishop’s prayer for victory remains an isolated episode, and so does Metropolitan Nicephorus’s call on princes to fight for Galich. The former may have resulted from Novgorod’s extensive contacts with Latin Europe, and the latter represented a unique situation when a foreign dynasty sought to take over a territory traditionally ruled by the Rurikids and belonging to the ecclesiastical jurisdiction of the metropolitan of Kiev. On this occasion, the metropolitan invoked the Byzantine ideology of just war in defense of the territorial integrity of the fatherland, which went back to the late Roman Empire.

The present paper sought to show that this ideology profoundly affected Rus. In practice, it could sanction an aggressive war, casting it as a retaliation for past invasions or a preemptive strike against an outside threat. What is important in the context of religious military rites is that the Church justified war in territorial, not religious, terms. Religious justification was provided by secular rulers. The notion of holy war, borrowed from the Latin West, was present in the mentality of the secular elite, but never promulgated by the Church.

The arguments of some scholars that Rus clerics participated in warfare just like their Western counterparts[139] are not supported by sources pre-dating the Mongol invasion. Priests accompanied troops on campaigns and held church services in camps, but they remain largely invisible in the military narratives up until the start of peace talks. By the same token, bishops and monks are not represented as inspiring troops before battle, but instead appear prominently in accounts of peace-making, where they urge princes to stop internecine wars, facilitate peace treaties, and seal them by performing the rite of kissing the Cross. Sources do mention princes attending a church service, making a pilgrimage to a monastery, or receiving a blessing from a churchman before going on a campaign; however, princes did so on other occasions as well, and there is no indication of any special rites or ceremonies that clerics would perform for a prince and his troops before, during, or after battle.

In short, Rus’ had nothing comparable to the Western “liturgy of war.” Liturgical readings prescribed for the time of war were grouped together with those for earthquake and drought, presenting war as God’s punishment for sins. The only liturgical source containing the motif of military victory is the *Canon to the Venerable Cross* sung on the Feast of the Elevation of the Cross. However, no source mentions clerics singing this hymn before battle, with the

[138] McCormick, *Eternal Victory*, 351–52.
[139] See n.12 and n.22 above.

possible exception of the *Hypatian* entry for 1111, where "*troparia* and *kontakia* of the Venerable Cross" sung by Monomakh's priests were, in all likelihood, parts of the *Canon*. Other military narratives that report religious hymns and psalms sung before battle do not mention clergy. Some chronicle passages, considered in conjunction with the Slavonic *Digenes Akrites* suggest a custom of soldiers singing psalms while preparing for battle, but it is unclear how widespread this practice was and what, if any, part the clergy played in these rituals.

The best attested religious ritual of war in Rus is a public prayer by the prince leading the troops, sometimes followed by an invocation of the prince's dead male ancestors presumed to be in heaven and believed to pray for their living kin. Prayers, as well as speeches that princes made before and after battles, normally provided justifications for the war being waged, which could include both secular and religious rationales and often drew inspiration from multiple traditions.

Common themes found in these prayers and speeches were a "wrong" religion of the enemy, fighting infidels as a path to salvation, and a need for territorial defense. Prayers and speeches during internecine wars addressed legitimacy of the claims to specific princely seats and territories, and often invoked the idea of war as God's judgment, expressing a belief that God would grant victory to the side fighting for the just cause. Another common theme was the power of the Cross to bring victory and to avenge perjury of those who broke their oaths sealed by the ritual of Cross-kissing.

In addition to God's judgment and the power of the Cross, victories were commonly attributed to the prayers of the Theotokos and the saints, especially Sts. Boris and Gleb and St. Michael, as well as to the prayers of the living and dead family of the prince. Warfare was thus closely connected with religion, as was typical of medieval Europe; what separated Rus from Latin Europe was the subdued role of the local church in military matters. Assistance of God, Theotokos, and the saints in battle was obtained through prayers and acts of piety performed by the prince, his men, and "all the people," both lay and clerics, as when the monk in the *Kievan Paterikon* story admonished solders to "seek prayers from all." There is no indication that acts of piety performed before battle differed in nature from those performed before other important undertakings.

The paucity of information concerning the religious rites of war and the virtual absence of the clergy from East Slavonic military narratives produced before, or soon after, the Mongol invasion reflect the Byzantine view of war as a secular matter, a necessary evil permissible for the goal of territorial defense, but not for religious reasons. This view, going back to the late Roman Empire, apparently underwent a change in the wake of the Fourth Crusade, when the

Byzantines may have become more open to the holy war ideology brought from the West. The ideas of holy war nevertheless had some influence in pre-Mongol Rus; they apparently gained more strength later, which may have led to the modification of existing, or emergence of new, religious rites. More research is needed to reconstruct the evolution of the military ideology and religious rites of war among the Orthodox East Slavs over time. This paper has sought to show that, in the pre-Mongol period, the church in Rus, in accordance with the Byzantine tradition, did not declare or sanction war and did not perform any specific rites to bring victory.

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