Dressing a Wolf in Sheep's Clothing: Toward Understanding the Composition of the Life of Alexander Nevskii

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Dressing a Wolf in Sheep’s Clothing: 
Toward Understanding the Composition of 
the *Life of Alexander Nevskii*

**Donald Ostrowski**

*Harvard University Extension School*

don@wjh.harvard.edu

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**Abstract**

The *Life of Alexander Nevskii* is written in two styles: a hagiographic style and a secular style. Scholarly views are divided over whether the *Life* was written by one person in two different styles or by two persons, either a hagiographic writer and secular editor or a secular writer and hagiographic editor. The present article hypothesizes that the *Life* was probably written initially in a secular style as a military tale (the “wolf”) in the second half of the thirteenth century. This *Tale* was the foundational layer for the subsequent writing of the *Life*. Some time later, probably in the second half of the fourteenth century (before 1377), an ecclesiastical redactor edited the text adding phrases in a hagiographic style (the “sheep’s clothing”), thus creating a chronicle tale about the life of Alexander Nevskii. In the second half of the fifteenth century, a further editing took place as anti-Tatar interpolations were added, thus creating the First Redaction of the *Life of Alexander Nevskii*. Following a text critical analysis, this article reconstructs the First Redaction of the *Life*, in which the two styles are delineated. Then the article provides a translation into English of the hypothetical version of the non-extant military tale about Alexander Nevskii.

**Keywords**

Alexander Nevskii, military tale, saint’s life, hagiography, reconstruction, textual criticism

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A number of investigators have pointed out that the *Life of Alexander Nevskii* juxtaposes hagiographic and secular elements. They have, however, interpreted that combination in different ways in regard both to the authorship question and to how the *Life* was composed.
In the following article, I present my own hypothesis that the composition represented a three-step process. My goal is to shed light on the origins of this singular literary composition. It seems to me that a complete secular military tale was written in the second half of the thirteenth century as a celebratory exposition of Alexander’s military achievements and glory (the “wolf” of the title of this article). Then, some time later, perhaps in the second half of the fourteenth century (before 1377) an attempt was made to transform that secular military tale into a saint’s tale (ПОВЕСТЬ О ЗМЯТИИ) by adding pious sentiments and religious topoi (the “sheep’s clothing”). Only in the second half of the fifteenth century was the final form of the text we know as the First Redaction of the Life completed with the addition of anti-Tatar interpolations.

In 1915, Nikolai Serebrianskii proposed that the Life was written by “a younger contemporary of the prince, a monk of the Rozhdestvenskii monastery” and that it “was written not for placement in a chronicle but for church use.” Thus, he sees the hagiographic elements as preceding many of the secular elements added later, such as the sections pertaining to the six brave men at the battle on the Neva and the khan of the Eastern Country.1 In 1968, Norman Ingham described in some detail the relationship of the styles; namely, that, although the framing of the text is hagiographic, the middle parts “are distinctly secular in substance and style.” The military events are told as they would be in a military tale but with a “few pious” sentiments subjoined. Like Serebrianskii, Ingham deemed it probable that the author was a monk. In contradistinction to Serebrianskii, Ingham thought this same monk adopted a standard style for describing military matters and did not need to borrow from a secular work or have it added by someone else. Thus, the author, according to Ingham, wrote the Life in two distinct styles.2

In 1974, John Fennell also detected two styles in the Life: “the hagiographical passages are distinct from the annalistic episodes, but sometimes religious sentiments are tacked on to purely military clichés.”3 The first example he cited of this adding on of “religious sentiments” is the description of

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1 Nikolai Serebrianskii, Древне-русские княжеские жития. Обзор редакций и тексты (Moscow: Sinodal’naia tipografia, 1915), 178–180.
Alexander’s “returning victorious (vozvratisya s pobedyu)” after the battle on the Neva—the author of the Life tacks on the phrase “praising and glorifying the name of his Creator.”

The second example Fennell cited is Alexander’s treatment of the enemy after he razed the fortress that the Livonian knights had built “on Alexander’s land”: “some he killed, others he took with him, and others he pardoned and let go.” The author of the Life adds, “for he was merciful beyond measure.”

Also, like Ingham, Fennell thought this was the work of only one individual, “a cleric” who could write in both the style of hagiography and in the style of the chronicle military tale. Yet, Fennell implies this may have been a two-step process with the adding-on of pious sentiments to a secular text occurring within an overall hagiographic framework. Fennell pointed to the entry in the Povest′ vremennykh let (PVL) for 1019 and the “Paroemia” of Boris and Gleb, both of which texts describe the Al’ta battle of 1019, as a possible model for the secular parts of the Life.

Also in 1974, Serge A. Zenkovsky, like Serebrianskii but in contrast to Ingham and Fennell, attributed the two styles to different individuals. Yet he reversed Serebrianskii’s order of stylistic composition; namely, a secular author, who was a “feudal warrior,” and a later redactor, who was “some ecclesiastic from the city of Vladimir.” For his determination that a military tale written by a warrior is at the core of the Life, Zenkovsky cited three pieces of evidence: (1) the title, “Tale of the Life and Courage of Prince Alexander,” is uncommon for a saint’s life; (2) the author’s reflection on the demise of Alexander—“A man may leave the house of his father but he cannot leave the house of his good lord; and if he has to, he should share the coffin with him”—is befitting of someone who owed secular allegiance to Alexander; and (3) the description by the author of the particulars of the deeds of those in Alexander’s army shows that whoever wrote the Tale “[p]robably . . . knew many of the prince’s warriors . . . .” The redactor, in Zenkovsky’s view, inserted quotations from and allusions to the Bible while altering the

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5 Begunov, Pamiatnik, 169.
“narrative and stylistic unity” and rearranging things in an unsystematic manner.\(^8\)

In 1979, A. D. Stokes, after discussing the arguments for and against their being genre of military tales in early Rus’, proposed that the *Life of Alexander Nevskii* had been originally written as a military tale that is no longer extant. According to Stokes, military tales may not have conveyed “a religious message.” Once, however, the land of Rus’ fully adopted Orthodoxy, “the defenders of Rus’ became also defenders of the faith, their martial exploits could acquire a religious significance.”\(^9\) He hypothesized that military tales “that praised the exploits of long-dead heroes in long forgotten struggles would hardly have been of interest to later copyists” so they modified them for “contemporary purposes.” As a result, in his view, no pure military tale is extant, but they exist in “adapted ‘adulterated’” form in which “it is difficult now to discern the true nature of the genre behind layers of later accretions.”\(^10\)

In the present article, I take further Stokes’ proposal that the *Life of Alexander Nevskii* developed from a military tale by attempting to reconstruct that no-longer-extant version of the tale. In contrast to the example of the *Tale of the Destruction of Riazan*, which Likhachev, Fennell, and Stokes saw developing from a bare chronicle account to military tale to a religious tale, I propose that the military tale was used as the basis for the chronicle tale about the saintliness of the life of Alexander Nevskii. The chronicle tale was later modified into the First Redaction of the *Life*. In addition, I incorporate Zenkovsky’s suggestion that a secular author and a subsequent ecclesiastical redactor were responsible for the composition of the work we know as the *Life of Alexander Nevskii*. In doing so, I am not denying the possibility that one


writer—whether secular or ecclesiastic—could write in both secular and hagiographic styles. I am saying, however, that, in this particular case, the circumstance that the secular passages together form a coherent unity (see below), the positioning and wording of the pious sentiments in an awkward manner in relation to the secular passages, and certain structural peculiarities of the Life tend to corroborate Zenkovsky’s hypothesis of a secular author and ecclesiastical redactor. I have argued elsewhere that the author wrote a secular tale sometime between 1263 (the year of death of Alexander) and the 1290s when the author would have been in his 50s (if one supposes he had been a young man in his 20s in the 1260s). I based this age estimate on the opening lines of the Tale concerning how he had been an eyewitness, while growing up, to some of the events he describes and that he obtained other information about Alexander from “my fathers” (“ОТЪ ОТЦЪ СВОИХЪ”). The author also claims that he heard about the details of the Battle on the Neva “from my Lord the Grand Prince Alexander and from others who at that time took part in that battle.”

Fennell cited of two pious motif interpolations, but one can ask how many more of the pious expressions were added during the process of redacting the Tale into the Life. My resulting hypothetical reconstructions (see appendices A and B) are an experiment in progress. I wanted to see how much of the religious wording and other interpolations of the Life it was possible to eliminate and still have a text that made sense. Somewhat surprisingly, I found that all the religious components could be dispensed with and a coherent narrative remain. Whether the original military tale about Alexander Nevskii had no, a few, or many religious components I cannot say. Some scholars may consider this exercise to be pointless, for they may, as Ingham and Fennell did, see only one author of the Life, which was written then as a complete work at one time (although Fennell does seem to imply a kind of two-step process could have been involved). Other scholars may agree that two individuals—an author of the core military tale and a redactor who added hagiographic phrases—are involved but are unwilling to accept that the military tale was written without any expression of pious sentiments. They are welcome to add back religious components as they see fit, but I hope that, when doing so, they will provide reasons for what they are restoring.

The First Redaction of the *Life* is extant in full or in part in 13 MS copies (one of which dates to 1377, two of which date to the second half of the fifteenth century, seven to the sixteenth century, and three to the seventeenth century). The MSS that contain the First Redaction of the *Life* are listed here in alphabetical order according to the sigla that Begunov assigned them:12

- A = RGB, sobranie Moskovskoi dukhovnoi akademii, fond 173, № 208 [ca. 1550];
- A ♠ = GAAO, sobranie rukopisykh knig, № 18 [1550–1575];
- E = GIM, sobranie E. V. Barsova, № 1413 [ca. 1600];
- B = RGB, sobranie Iosifo-Volokolamskogo monastyria, fond 113, № 523 [1550–1575];
- J = IRLI, R. IV, op. 24, № 26 [ca. 1550];
- J ♠ = RNB, F. IV, № 2, fols. 168–1697 [1377] (first part only);13
- M = GIM, Muzeiskoe sobranie, № 1706 [1550–1575];
- O = RGB, sobranie A. N. Ovchinnikova, fond 209, № 281 [ca. 1650];
- II = GAPO, sobranie Pskovo-Pecherskogo monastyria, fond 449, № 60 [1450–1475] (beginning and end only);
- IH = RNB, sobranie M. P. Pogodina, № 641 [1550–1575];
- ] = GIM, Sinodal’noe sobranie, № 154, fols. 156–1627 [end of 15th century];14
- P = RGB, sobranie Olonetskoi seminarii, fond 212, № 15 [1625–1650];
- Y = GIM, sobranie A. S. Uvarova, № 279 [1650–1675].

Five versions of the First Redaction of the *Life of Alexander Nevskii* have been published.15 In 1882, Archimandrite Leonid (L. A. Kavelin) published the *Life* from the MS. Moscow Ecclesiastical Academy (MDA), no. 208

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In 1913, Vilho Mansikka also published the Life from A. Neither Leonid nor Mansikka provided a critical apparatus of readings from other copies. In 1915, Serebrianskii published \( \Pi \) and \( P \) in parallel columns with variants from \( A \).

Also in 1915, S. A. Bugoslavskii, in a review of Mansikka’s book provided the first publication of the Life with a critical apparatus of readings from multiple copies. Bugoslavskii used Mansikka’s diplomatic edition of \( A \) as his copy text and provided variants from seven copies: \( La, \) \( \Pi c, \) and \( \Pi \) from already published versions; \( Hi \) from the MS; and \( B, \) \( P, \) and \( Y \) from readings for those copies that Mansikka gave in his monograph. Bugoslavskii noted that, because Mansikka did not provide all the readings from \( B, \) \( P, \) and \( Y \), his (Bugoslavskii’s) readings from those MSS “are not able to be fully exact.” Instead of altering the copy text, Bugoslavskii separately proposed three pages of improvements to it. In suggesting these improvements, Bugoslavskii depended mainly on agreements of \( \Pi 0 \) and \( \Pi c \) where \( \Pi 0 \) is extant, and on agreements of \( \Pi c \) and \( \Pi h \) where \( \Pi 0 \) is not extant. Begunov was dismissive of Bugoslavskii’s publication: “The attempt of S. A. Bugoslavskii at publishing the ‘original’ redaction of the Life according to the Academy copy (MS. GBL. MDA, \( Na \) 208, XVI c.) with introduced variants from other copies is hardly able to be considered successful.” Furthermore: “The publication of S. A. Bugoslavskii was not exact: the variants are provided from the cited text in Mansikka’s monograph and not from the manuscripts.” This criticism is a little harsh since Bugoslavskii acknowledged that the readings for three of the copies he used were incomplete and based on whatever he could glean from Mansikka’s comparisons, but the readings for the other four were complete, being based on three published versions and one de visu examination of the MS. For 50 years, until Begunov’s editions succeeded it in 1965,

\(^{16}\) Archimandrite Leonid, *Skazanie o podvigakh i zhizni sv. blagovernogo velikogo kniazia Aleksandra Nevskogo*, (St. Petersburg, 1882).

\(^{17}\) Vilho Mansikka, “Zhitie Aleksandra Nevskogo (Razbor redaktssii i teksty),” *Pamiatniki drevnei pis’mennosti*, 180 (St. Petersburg, 1913).

\(^{18}\) Serebrianskii, *Drevne-russkie kniazheskie zhitiia*, Teksty, 109–120.


\(^{22}\) Begunov, “K voprosu,” 349, fn. 5.

Bugoslavskii’s was the best critical edition of the First Redaction available but was rarely cited.

In 1947, V. I. Malyshev published a diplomatic edition of \( \mathcal{J} \) with facsimiles of the first three folios (fol. 317–318).\(^{24}\) In 1965, in an analysis of the relationship of the *Slovo o pogibele russkoj zemli* to the *Life of Alexander Nevskii*, the researcher Iu. K. Begunov focused solely on the First Redaction of the *Life*. In order to depict the relationship of the known-by-that-time 13 copies of the First Redaction, Begunov constructed a three-branch stemma codicum in which \( \mathcal{J} \) occupied its own distinct branch (see figure 1).\(^{25}\)

![Stemma for the Life of Alexander Nevskii](attachment://stemma.jpg)

*Figure 1* Begunov’s stemma for the *Life of Alexander Nevskii*

The readings of \( \mathcal{J} \), thus, should have equal status in determining the archetype with the readings of the common protograph of \( \mathcal{E}\Pi\mathcal{P}\mathcal{J} \), on one


hand, and ААрВЛМОΠΠи, on the other hand. Begunov provided two edited versions of the text of the Life. In the first version, he presented a diplomatic edition of Πε with a full critical apparatus containing variant readings from the other 12 MS copies. He corrected Πε only when he thought there was a scribal error in it. In the second version, Begunov “reconstructed” what he considered to be a text closer to the archetype of the Life than any single MS. He used Πε as his copy text and provided readings from other MSS only when he changed it. Begunov did not follow his stemma in his reconstruction of the Life. For example, he added the word "ДОМОЧАДЕЦ" after the phrase "Прежде слышали от отец своих," in the introductory paragraph of his reconstruction (187.3), although that word is testified to only by E and P. By the rules of stemmatics it could not have been in the archetype for it would require positing an independent dropping of that word in three different places in Begunov’s stemma—in Lδ, in the protograph of Ps and У, and in the protograph of the right branch. As a result of this and similar counter-stemmatic changes, his “reconstruction” turns out to be further from the archetype than his diplomatic edition of Πε.

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26 Begunov, Pamiatnik, 158–180.
28 See, in particular, adding “бе” in 187.12 on the basis of У, adding “же” in 189.55 on the basis of Б, changing “от Немецкъ” to “нихъ” in 190.12 on the basis of МАрУ, adding “баше” in 191.25 on the basis of ΑУ, changing “Господи” to “Боже” in 191.28 on the basis of Б, adding “а” in 191.39 on the basis of У, adding “в ризах со кресты” in 191.41–42 on the basis of БУ, changing “нихъ” to “ъ” in 192.50 on the basis of БРУ, changing “уже бы ему” to “ему же бы” in 192.52–53 on the basis of РУ, adding “на мир щедротами” in 192.70–71 on the basis of Б, adding “мира” in 192.72 on the basis of Б, adding “учить” in 192.73 on the basis of Б, changing “дина” to “сланца” in 193.75 on the basis of ΛБР, adding “царя” in 193.81 on the basis of Б, adding “господиа” in 193.82 on the basis of Б, adding “до пощения ибо небеса” in 193.83–84 on the basis of Б, adding “уже бо не обретается таковую книж ни единъ в земли Судящихъ” in 194.83–84 on the basis of Б, adding “глаза” in 194.99 on the basis of П, changing “24” to “23 дня” in 194.3–4 on the basis of ПЛБРУ, changing “хотя” to “хотеста” in 194.5 on the basis of П, adding “Богу же нашему слава, прославляемому святья своя в веки вековъ. Аминь,” in 194.8–8 on the basis of ПЛУ.
29 In 1969, Begunov reprinted this version as a plain text in his “Злите Александра Невскогог,” on the even-numbered pages in “Иборник.” Sbornik proizvedenii literaturny drevnei Rusi, ed. L. A. Dmitriev and D. S. Likachev (Moscow: Khudozhestvennaia literatura, 1969), 328–343. It has no italics where he had changed his copy text, no footnotes, and no final hard signs on words. A translation into modern Russian appears on
In 1997, Michele Colucci reassessed Begunov’s stemma and, although accepting for the most part the relationship of copies that Begunov proposed, made one major adjustment. Colucci moved  to the right (AAp BLMO PPy) branch of the stemma (see figure 2). Thus, he argued, in effect, that  should not be given its own equal status with the other two branches in determining primary readings, but that  and (his nt) together determine readings that are equal in status to those of BCPRY (his y). He attributed those cases where the readings of agree with  against those of AAp BLMO PPy to a secondary contaminative influence of on . Colucci pointed out that Begunov did not use his own stemma in reconstructing the text of the Life.


30 M. Koluchchi [Michele Colucci], “Pervonachal’naia redaktsiia ‘Zhitia Aleksandra Nevskogo’: zametki po istorii teksta,” TODRL 50 (1997): 252–260. Colucci’s cases of when  are 162.8–11, 166.92–99, 167.42–43, 167.45–47, 167.51, 167.62–63, and 168.88–92. Of these, all but the first involve a lacuna in the left-branch’s IIe and , which presupposes their absent readings had they existed would have agreed with those of E and . Even Colucci’s first case is not entirely solid since of the right branch agrees with E and P of the left. Colucci’s cases of when  are 160.53, 161.17, 161.28, 161.51, 163.97–100, 163.1, 165.41, 165.52, 166.93, 166.6, 166.12, 166.18, and 168.12. Of these, 166.93, 166.6, 166.12, and 166.18 also involve a lacuna in IIe and , and 165.52 involves an idiosyncratic reading of IIe. The idiosyncratic readings of  that Colucci considers to have “real editorial significance” he gives as 166.8–86, 166.1–5, 166.97–99, and 167.25–26. Colucci numbers his cases according to the page number and variant of Begunov’s critical edition (Begunov, Pamiatnik, 158–180).


Begunov’s use of a “codex interpositus”—that is, a hypothetical intervening copy “between a manuscript (or group of manuscripts) and its protograph” (253). Use of such an intervening copy between the archetype and the readings suggested by the MS copies was also characteristic of Soviet textology. It allowed the modern editor to overrule the testimony of the MS copies by claiming readings for the archetype that were not supported by the MSS.

Figure 2 Colucci’s stemma for the Life of Alexander Nevskii

Here I will limit myself to discussing briefly how I edited the text and why I chose to place /6 above the common protograph of all the other copies. In editing a text for publication, an editor has several options, which are dependent on the goal of the edition and on the relationship of the extant manuscripts to each other. As I wrote recently in the journal Kritika:

If one copy is clearly best representative of the archetype or authorial text, then it should be used as the copy text and variants provided from the other copies only to show the history of the development of the text. If no single copy is best and if the manuscript tradition is “open” (i.e., no clear genealogical relationship

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can be established among the copies), then picking and choosing readings from
different copies based on the knowledge, skill, and intuition of the editor is to be
preferred. If the manuscript tradition is “closed” (i.e., a clear genealogical rela-
tionship can be determined), then a stemma should be used.  

In the case of the First Redaction of the *Life of Alexander Nevskii*, we have a
hybrid situation in regard to the MSS. For the first 44.5% of the text of the *Life*,
in my opinion, a “best” copy exists in \( \mathcal{L} \theta \), but the last 55.5% of the text of the
*Life* is missing in that copy. For the remainder of the text of the *Life* to the end,
a closed tradition exists whereby no one copy is demonstrably better than all
the others, although a clear genealogical relationship can be established. Thus,
for the last part of the text, I resorted to a stemma to help determine the “best”
(i.e., closest to the archetype) reading.

In Appendix A, I present my reconstruction of the First Redaction
archetype. For the most part, my reconstruction is similar to the version of the
First Redaction that Begunov edited and published in 1965. It differs from his
version in two major respects. First, I used \( \mathcal{L} \theta \) for the copy text for the first
part of the text and resorted to a stemma for the last part, whereas Begunov
used \( P \alpha \) as his copy text throughout. Second, my understanding of the rela-
tionship of the MSS copies to each other differs from his (see figure 3). As a
result, in particular choice of words and phrases, I accepted the primacy of
readings in the MSS copies in a different hierarchical order; namely, where \( \mathcal{L} \theta \) is
extant, I accepted the reading of \( \mathcal{L} \theta \) except to correct scribal accidental; other-
wise, I considered \( \gamma \) and \( \delta \) to be of theoretical equal value in determining \( \beta \).
In practice, \( \delta \) tends to represent \( \beta \) more often. As Colucci demonstrated the
readings of right-branch MSS are more often closer to \( \mathcal{L} \theta \) than are those of left-
branch MSS. The agreements of \( \mathcal{L} \theta \) with \( \mathcal{N} \alpha \) that Colucci sees as placing \( \mathcal{L} \theta \) in
the right branch of the stemma might better be understood as occurrences of
agreements of the right-branch copies with the primary reading of \( \mathcal{L} \theta \) (\( \alpha \)).
Thus, where \( \mathcal{L} \theta \) is not extant, I tended to favor the agreements of \( \delta \) (agreements of \( P \alpha \), \( \mathcal{A} \), \( \gamma \), \( E \), and \( P \) ) when the
two disagree. Finally, I rarely looked to \( \mathcal{L} \Pi \) alone or \( A_\mathit{Ap}E\mathit{MO} \), except

A. Artamanov, vol. 1: *Povest’ vremennykh let*, vol. 2: *Drevnerusskie literaturnye
proizvedeniiia o Borise and Glebe*, Moscow: Iazyki slavianskikh kul’tur, 2006–2007;
A. L. Nikitin, *Tekstologiiia russikh letopisei XI–nachala XIV vv.*, vypusk 1: *Kieve-Pecherskoe
letopisanie do 1112 goda*, Moscow: Minuvshee, 2006; *Galitsko-Volynskaiia
letopis’*. *Tekst. Kommentarii. Issledovanie*, compiled by N. F. Kotliar, V. Iu. Franchuk,
and A. G. Plakhonin, under the editorship of N. F. Kotliar, St. Petersburg: Aleteiia,
insofar as they agree with \( \Pi t \) or are able to correct some scribal accidental in \( \Pi t \). In the case of certain readings, this represents an almost complete reversal of Begunov’s hierarchical placement and results in a reconstruction that is closer to the text that would result from Bugoslavskii’s proposed improvements than either to Begunov’s critical apparatus version or to his reconstruction. I also see contamination of the common protograph (\( \theta \)) of \( \text{PsU} \) on the common protograph (\( \varepsilon \)) of \( \text{LP} \), whereas Colucci saw the contamination going in the opposite direction. Although I agree with Colucci in general terms concerning the dangers of using a \textit{codex interpositus}, I propose having \( \beta \) as in effect an intervening hypothetical copy between the MSS and \( \alpha \) is justified here.

Figure 3 My preferred stemma for the \textit{Life of Alexander Nevskii}

When turning the military tale into a saint’s tale, the fourteenth-century redactor inserted new sections (indicated as the italicized parts in Appendix A). But, even then in the second half of the fifteenth century, three additional sections were interpolated (indicated with the bracketed designations C-1, C-2, and C-3 in Appendix A). Toward the end of the \textit{Tale}, “a mighty khan of the Eastern Country” summons Alexander to him (section A-1 below). Then Alexander goes to Vladimir with his army. News of his coming reaches the
mouth of the Volga River, and the Moabite women frighten their children, warning them of Alexander’s coming (C-1). He receives the blessing of Metropolitan Kirill to go to the khan (B-1). Alexander goes to the khan who honors him and lets him go (A-2). No explicit description of Alexander’s return from the khan is given in the text of the Life at this point, as the reader is left to construe from the ensuing section that he did return. In that section, Khan Batu gets angry at Alexander’s brother, Andrei, and sends his general Nevruy to devastate the Suzdalian land (C-2). Alexander rebuilds the cities and churches and returns the refugees to their homes. From Alexander’s rebuilding activities, the reader can suppose that Alexander had returned from his visit to the khan, unless he undertook the rebuilding of Rus’ cities and churches from Sarai. A quotation from Isaiah 1: 16, 17, 23 and 56: 1–2 and a peroration about how God had endowed the land “with wealth and glory” follows.

Then the reader is told about the sending of a letter by the Pope to Alexander asking to be allowed to send two cardinals to instruct him in Catholicism, but Alexander turns the request down (B-2). In the next section, “foreign peoples” (inoplemenniki) are violently forcing the Rus’ to serve in the ranks of the army, but Alexander goes to the khan and pleads with him not to drive his people into misery (C-3). The description that Alexander “went” (poide) to the khan is another indication in the Life that Alexander had returned from his previous trip. In the next section Alexander sends his son Dmitrii to the Western country, where he conquers some German land and takes the city of Iur’ev returning with prisoners and booty. The Life then abruptly begins to describe Alexander’s return from the khan without transition. After the previous section describing Dmitrii’s campaign in the Western country, the α reading merely states: “Князь великий Александръ взяе отъ иностранныхъ” (“Grand Prince Alexander went from the foreign peoples”). ПеЕРУ attempt to smooth the transition from the previous section by adding the phrase “Отецъ же ея” (“His father”) at the beginning of the sentence.

The general assumption among scholars is that transmission of the text of the Life remained stable for almost 200 years after it was first composed, from ca. 1280s to the second half of the fifteenth century and that the First Redaction represents the late thirteenth-century version. Only then did

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34 As Zenkovsky pointed out, the campaign of Nevruy against Andrei Iaroslavich occurred under Batu’s successor Sartaq. Zenkovsky, Medieval Russia’s Epics, Chronicles, and Tales, 233, fn. 27. For an analysis of the chronicle accounts of this campaign, see my “The Tatar Campaign of 1252,” Palaeoslavica 17, no. 2 (2009): 46–64.
transmission become volatile with the text undergoing many changes over the course of the next 100 or so years. I have proposed that the text originally composed in the second half of the thirteenth century underwent a major transformation in the mid to late fourteenth century. What resulted was a sequence of nested insertions within a foundational layer framework; that is, these interpolations may have occurred in the mid to late fifteenth century when the First Redaction was created. I have designated that foundational layer with the letter “A”, the first layer of insertions with the letter “B”, and the second (later) layer with the letter “C”.

**A-1:** The khan summons Alexander

**C-1:** At the death of his father Iaroslav, Alexander goes to the city of Vladimir and news reaches the mouth of the Volga. Moabite women frighten their children by saying “Alexander the prince is coming.”

**B-1:** Alexander consults with Metropolitan Kirill who gives him his blessing to go.

**A-2:** Alexander goes to the khan, who renders him honor and lets him go.

**C-2:** Batu gets angry at Andrei and sends the general Nevruy with an army to ravage the Suzdal’ land. Prince Alexander rebuilds the destroyed churches and the cities gathering the home of the people who had fled during the invasion. Quotation from Isaiah.

**B-2:** The Pope writes to Alexander wanting to send two cardinals to teach him about the Catholic faith, but Alexander turns his request down.

**C-3:** The foreign people were violent forcing the Rus’ to serve in the ranks of the army, but Alexander goes to the Khan and pleads with him not to drive his people into misery.

**B-3:** Alexander sends his son Dmitrii against the Western land. Dmitrii conquers some of the German land and takes the city of Iur’ev, returning to Novgorod with prisoners and booty.

**A-3:** Alexander returns from “the foreign people” (“отъ инопле-менникъ”), goes to Nizhni Novgorod, then Gorodets where he falls ill and dies.

Thus, if one reads sections A-1 / A-2 / A-3 one after the other, one has a complete narrative: Alexander is summoned by the khan, he goes to the khan, is
honored, and returns from the khan. This sequence is what I posit was the way the Tale originally read; that is, the foundational layer. The second (B-1), fourth (B-2), and sixth (B-3) interpolations were most likely added in the fourteenth century (pre-1377) when the military tale was turned into a saint’s tale. Thus, one can read the sequence as A-1 / B-1 / A-2 / B-2 / B-3 / A-3 for the sequence as it probably was in the continuation of Hit. The first (C-1), third (C-2), and the fifth (C-3) interpolations were most likely added in the post-1448 period, when anti-Tatar rhetoric began to pervade Church literature about the steppe people. That is the sequence of the First Redaction as we now have it.

For the sake of consistency, I normalized the text throughout, which includes standardizing spelling, expanding abbreviations, adding front and back yers after superscript consonants in final position, and inserting modern punctuation. I have not provided variant readings, for which one may consult the diplomatic edition of Hit with critical apparatus that Begunov edited and published in 1965. Those parts that I believe were added to the Tale to transform it into a Life are italicized. In Appendix B, I provide an English translation of the non-italicized parts; that is, of the Tale as it may have existed before attempts were made in the fourteenth century to turn the military tale into a saint’s tale. Here we see a spare but structurally well-organized Tale with an introduction, in which the “thematic clue” is a story about a brave ruler; in this case, the Emperor Vespasian. Then follow three stories—the first involves a ruler from the Northern Country, the second involves a ruler from the Western Country, the third involves a ruler from the Eastern Country. The Tale closes with Alexander’s death and a lament by the author. Into this foundational layer were added religious sentiments, biblical allusions and quotations, and digressive stories in the mid-fourteenth century to make the saint’s...
tale, almost half of which appears in Ṭe, and then into the First Redaction in the second half of the fifteenth century.

Appendix A

Житие Александра Невского. Первая редакция (реконструкция)

Того же лета. Преставился великий князь Александръ сынъ Ярославъ. Скажемъ же мужество и житие его. О Господинъ нашемъ Иисусъ Христъ Сынъ Божий азъ худьше трьыныъ недостоиный начинать писати житие великаго князя Александра сына Ярослава внuka Всеволода понеже слышахъ отъ отецъ своихъ и самовидецъ емъ въразу его и радъ быхъ исповѣдать святое житие и честное и славное какъ же Притокнися рече: „В злотку душо не внедеть премудростъ на высокихъ бо краяхъ есть посредъ же степь столицъ премудрость при сидеть…“ 36 Аще и трубъ есмъ уполомъ молитвою святое Господи Богородицы поспѣшение святае князя Александра начатокъ положо.

Си бъ князь Александръ Богомъ рожень отъ отца милостиваго и мужа милостиваго какъ же кроткою князя великаго Ярослава и матери святое Федосьи. Яко же рече Исайя пророкъ: „Тако гласомъ Господи: „Князя азъ училъ священи бо суть азъ въ вожю““. 37 Воистину безъ Божия бо повеленья же бъ княженье его. Но и въразу его наче иныхъ человѣкъ, и глас его—жажда труба въ народѣ и лите его—аки лице Исифа 38 иже бъ поставить его Египетскими цесаръ втовоцесаръ въ Египтъ. Силъ бъ его—часть отъ силы Самсонъ. Дать бъ емъ Богъ премудростъ Соломону и храбрство же аки цесаръ Римскаго Есипина иже бъ пливть всю Поднѣпрыскую землю и ныдъ исполнися къ граду Атапату приступити и шедше граждане и овидѣща полкъ его, и останъ единъ, и, въразати силу ихъ ко вратомъ ко граднимъ, и постѣся друзьяию своеи, и укори я, река: „Оставите мя единого“. Также и сии князь Александръ бъ побѣжая а не побѣдимъ.

36 Cf. Wisdom 1: 4; Proverbs 8: 2–3.
37 азъ вожу changed from а вожу in Ṭe.
38 Cf. Isaiah 13: 3.
39 Исифа changed from Есива in Ṭe.
И сего ради нькто силен оть Западных странъ иже нарицается слуга40 Божья оть тьхъ приде, хотя видѣти дивиенъ то взрастъ его яко же древле цесаря Усекая приходь къ Соломону хотѣлъ слышиш преумудрость его. Также и се именемъ Андрѣя, видѣль князъ Александръ возвратись къ своимъ и рече: „Прошедъ страны, и языки, не видѣлъ таковаго и въ цесаря ни въ князяхъ князя“.

Се же слышавъ, король части Римского оть полуночиная страны, такое мужество князя Александра и помышли въ собѣ: „Да поиду плнью землю Александрову“. И собра силу велѣ въ польны корабля многи полковъ своихъ подвижъ въ силъ тажь исполись духомъ ратнымъ. И приде въ реку Неву шатая бездумемъ, послѣ слы загордѣвся ко князю Александру въ Новгородѣ рече: „Аще можешь противиитись мнѣ то се емѣ здѣ уже плнью твою“. 

Александръ же, слышавъ слова ихъ, разгорѣсь сердцемъ и выйд въ церковь святя Софья, падъ на колѣна предъ алтаремъ, нача молитися со слезами: „Боже ювальны, и праведны Боже велики и крѣпки Боже правдыъ создавшы небо и землю и постави правды языкъ и повелъ жити не преставля въ чюю часть“41 И вѣрцимъ псалмическую пѣмъ рече: „Суди, Господи, обида и мнѣ вѣрки боролись со мнѣ, приимъ оружье и идете стани въ помощь мнѣ“.42 Сконецъ молитву вставъ поклонился архиписку. Архиписку же Спиридонъ благослови его и отпусти. Онъ же выйд изъ церковь утира слезы, и нача крѣпити дружину своему, и рече: „Не въ силѣхъ Божіхь въ правдѣ. Помянемъ Псаломъ 73:11 “Си во оружъ си на коне мы же во имя Господя Бога нашаго приозвемъ ти силы божи и подимъ мы же вѣстомъ прости бытий“43 И си речъ поидя на ны въ маль дружинѣ, не сождався со мною силою своею, но уповалъ на святву Троицу.

Жалостно же и слышати яко отецъ его, честны Ияславъ велики въ вѣдаль такого встаны на сына своего, милого Александра, ни оному бысть послати когда въсть къ отцю: еже бо ратнии приближиша. Тѣже мнох Новгородци не

40 слуги added.
41 Deuteronomy 32: 8; 2nd Kings 19: 15.
42 Psalms 34: 1–2.
43 Psalms 19: 8–9.
совокупились братья понеже ускорили князя посты.

И прииде на княгь въ день всередне, на память святых:

600 и 30 бывши збора въ Халкидонь и святым мученику Корика и Улити и святото князя Володимера крещившия Русскому землю и мяшше же въру велику къ тьмъ мученикомъ Бориса и Глеба.

И во некто мучь старыхъ въ земли Иерусалимъ именемъ Пелагия поручено же бысть ему стражь морскаг.

Всприят же святого крещине и живши посредь роду своего понима суща. И нарече бысть имя егов въ святомъ крещении Филипъ. Жившне болудно въ среду и въ плоток пребывалъ въ адьбѣ. Тьмже сподоби егь Божь видити видныя страшико во ть день. И сказемъ вкратчѣ.

Зидны сильу ратныхъ, иде противу князя Александра, да сказать ему станы и обратъ яхъ. Стопоно же ему при крае моря, стряхает съ обои пути, и пребысть всю ночь во бдѣмь.

Якоже нача всходить сонце и свяма идаль страшища по морю и видь насадъ едино гребецъ, посредь насада стояла мученику Бориса и Глеба въ одежахъ червлениныхъ, и бьсть руь держаща на рымъ гребиже съ единою икно милою одыми. И рече Борисъ: Брате Глебе, поеми грешни да поможе молвить своему Александру видище же таковое видныя и свяма таковыя гласъ отъ мученику, стопиштъ трепещеть, дондеже насадъ очи его.

Потомъ скоро пришла князя Александра, онъ же видивъ князя Александра радостныма очима исповѣди ему единому. Князь же рече: Сего не рцъ никому."

Оттоль потшався наѣ на нѣ въ 6 часъ днѣ [въ лето 6748]. Бысть сѣча вѣнца надъ Римляна, и изби множество бежесильно ихъ и самымъ королевъ вложи печать на цѣ острымъ своимъ копьемъ.

Здѣ же явиться 6 мучь храбрыхъ [съ самымъ съ нимъ ис полку его].

Едию именемъ Гаврило Алексичъ сенъ наѣ на шиюко

44 Corrected from Жерекъ.

45 Bracketed words are not in ААрБВЛМОППерѣМУ. УПП read: се же бысть въ лето 6745.

видвь королевича мя под руку и въѣха по досцѣ и до самогу коробля по неи же хожиху с королевичем иже текоша передь нимъ а самого емше свергша и с конемъ в вodu48 з доскы и Божью мистство неврежень49 бысть и паки нажъ, и биа с самымъ воеводою середи полку ихъ.

2 именемъ Свѧлѧвъ Якуновичъ Новгородецъ, сиѣ50 нажъ многажды на полкъ ихъ и бяшется единьмъ топоромъ не имъ страха в душѣ своєй. И паде ньколою от руку его и подвишяся силъ и храбрьству его.

3и Яковъ родомъ Полочанинъ ловчии бѣ у князя. Сиѣ51 нажъ на полкъ с мечемъ и похвали его князъ.

4 Новгородецъ именемъ Мѣша. Сиѣ52 пыш натече на корабли и погуби. 3 корабли з дружиною своею.

5и Отъ молодыхъ его именемъ Сава. Сиѣ53 вѣша в шатерь велики, королевь золотоверхъ и подъ столь шатерны. Полчи Александрови, видвше шатра паденье възрадовался.

6и Отъ слугъ его именемъ Ратмѣръ. Сиѣ55 биа пыш и оступиша и миоз. Онь же отъ многыя ранъ паде и тако скончаш. Си же вся слышахъ отъ господина своего великого князя Александра и отъ навѣръ, иже в то время обртоса в тои сыщи.

бысть же в то время чудо дивно. яко же во древняя дни при Ежихи цэсарь, еиа придѣ Сенахиримъ, Асуринския, цэсарь на Иерусалимъ готы пѣнити56 градъ сѣлъны Ерусалимъ въззапу извѣдѣ анекъ Господинъ вѣръ и отъ полка Асуринска 185 тысячь. И въставше утро, обрѣлоса пѣнитя мертвы всѣ. Также бысть при побѣдъ Александрови, еиа побѣдъ короли объ отъ полкъ рѣки Ижеръ, иже же не бѣ проходи полку Александрову. Здѣ

47 сиѣ changed from се in Lv.
48 ААрВЛМОП; море; БР; Неву; ЩПсУ: lacuna.
49 Corrected from непрѣрѣ в in Lv.
50 сиѣ changed from се in Lv.
51 Сиѣ changed from Се in Lv.
52 Сиѣ changed from Се in Lv.
53 Сиѣ changed from Се in Lv.
54 Corrected from вѣша
55 Сиѣ changed from Се in Lv.
56 пѣнити changed from пѣнити in Lv.
обратила много множество избытных от ангела Господня. И остановил победою трупы мертвых своих на каменном корабле истопош корабля в море. Князь же Александр возвратился с победою, хвалу и славу имя своего Творца Отца и Сына и Святого Духа.

В 2-е же лето по возвращении с победою князя Александра, придоша отъ западныя страны и въгл руби 57 градъ въ отечествѣ Александровъ. Князь же Александръ изыде на ня воскоре и изверже градъ ихъ изъ основаня, а самихъ изъ идъ итъ съ собою приведе, а иныхъ, помноже, отпусти: бь бо множеству паче мори.

По победѣ же Александровъ, яко побдѣ короля, въ третии годѣ, въ зимнее время, понде на землю немецкую въ силу величъ, да не хвалиться, руку: «Укоримъ Словенскіе языки ниже себѣ».

Уже бо бяще взятъ градъ Псковъ, и тиуны у нихъ посажени. Техъ же князъ Александр ныма и градъ Псковъ свободи отъ плена. А землю ихъ повоева и пожжие и полона взъ безъ числа, а овъ ихчек. Оне же, изъ городъ, совокупиша и рѣша: «Понедель побдимъ Александра и имеемъ его рукамъ». Егда приближишаася, и поочити слежа. Князь же Александъ оплычился и поидоша противу себѣ, и наступиша море Чудское обонь множества. Отецъ же его Ярославъ послалъ бѣ ему на помощь брата меньшаго Андрѣя въ мноoze храбрыхъ, яко дрѣле у царя Давида силы, крѣпци. Тако и мужи Александровы исполнимы духа рати: взя бо сердча ихъ, аны моли, и рѣша: «О книге наши драсть! Нынѣ приспь врѣмъ намъ положитѣ главы свои за ты». Князь же Александръ, воздвѣлъ руци на небо, и рече: «Суди, Боже, и разсуди про мое отъ языка величаваго и помоги мнѣ. Боже, яко же дрѣле Монсвовы на Амакика и правдѣ мое му Ярославу на оживлении Салтополка».

Бѣ же тогда день субботны, въсходою солнцемъ, состояшаася бою. И бысть сила зла и трусь отъ хопи змѣнения и звукъ отъ мечаго сччения, яко же морю помертвию двинусться; не бѣ видыми леду; покры бо его кровью.

57 въгра changed to въгл руби in Лев. End of Лев.
Си же слышах от самозвида, иже рече ми, ако видихъ полкъ Божии на вълдуся, пришедши на помощь Александрови. И побъди я помощью Божею, и да си патиц плаща свой и съчаху я, понцце, яко по аеру, и не въ како утеши. Эже просиша Богъ Александра въ полкъ мои полки, яко Иоанна Навания у Ереона. А иже рече: «Ишемъ Александра руками», сего дасть ему Богъ въ ручъ его. И не обратихся противникъ ему въ брани никогда же. Возвратися князъ Александъ съ побъдою славною. Быше множество попону въ полку его, ведуихъ бося подлъ кони, иже именуютъ ридали.

И яко же приближися князъ къ граду Пекову, ище ми же и попове и весь народъ срътъ предъ градомъ, подающе къву Богову и славу господину князю Александру, понцце пъвъ: «Пославъ ся господи, кроткому Давиду победити меньсемъники и върному князю нашему оружемъ крестъмъ свободити градъ Плесковъ отъ низлычицъ рукъ Александровъ».

«О, немлыси плесковичи! Аще се забудете и до праўнячатъ Александрышъ, уподобихися Жидолъ, ище же прпяша господь въ простры манною и кралемъ печами, и съ всехъ взыша Божъ свое, извлечено и изъ работы Египетскаго».

И нача слышъ имя его по свѧмъ странамъ и до моря Египетскаго, и до горъ Араатскихъ, и обону страну моря Варяжскаго, и до великаго Рима.

Въ то же время умножися языцы Литовскими и начаша пакостити волости Александровъ. Онъ же, выездя, и нача избиать я. Единою клеотися ему выехать, и побъди 7 рати единъ выездомъ, множество князей ихъ ихъ, а овцъ руками иными; слуги же его, ругающеся, взахуло я къ хвостомъ коней своихъ, И начаша блюсться имени его.

[A-1] Въ то же время некто царь сидѣлъ на Восточни странь, etu we be Bogw pokoribw mnogia azyki, ow wstoka duae i do zapada. Ты же царь, слышавъ Александра тако слова и храбра, пославъ къ нему послы и рече: «Александре, въся ли, ако Богъ покори ми многи языки. Ты ли едино не хочеши покоритися силье моей? Но аще хочеши съблости землю свою, то скорон прияди къ мнѣ, и да узури честь царства моего».

[C-1] Князъ же Александро прииде во Володимеръ по умертии отца своего въ силъ величъ. И бысть грозенъ пришедъ его, и промчался въсть и до усть Волы. И начаша жены
Сдумавъ же князь Александръ, и благословилъ его епископъ Кирилъ, и пошёлъ къ цареви.

И видѣвъ его царь Баты, и подиоись, и рече велиможъ своимъ: "Воистину мнѣ повѣдѣлъ, яко нѣсть подобна сему князю... Пожалуй же и честно, отпусти и.

И потомъ же разъяриваясь царь Баты на брата его, мекциломъ Андрея, и посла въ варваро своего Невру пожъвона землю Судальскую. По плывенни же Невры, князь великий Александръ церкви зѣдвину, люди исполняющи съба въ домы свои. О таковыя бо рече Иисусъ пророкъ: "Князь блаженъ въ странахъ — тихъ, умилый, кротокъ, съ мирень — по образу Божию есть." 59 не вкнилъ богатьства не презъ крови праведничко, сиротъ и вдовищи въ правду судъ, милостию люби, благъ донащжемъ своимъ и взычаннъ отъ странъ приходящимъ кормилецъ. На таковый Богъ призираетъ: Богъ бо въ человекъ любить, но человекъ бо въ щедрости и показаетъ на миръ милость свою. Распостраня же Богъ землю его богатьствомъ и славою, и удолѣжъ Богъ людамъ.

Никогда же прихода къ нему послы отъ папы, изъ великого Рима, ркуще: "Папа нашъ тако говорить: "Слынющимъ та князь честная и дѣла, и земля твоихъ велика. Сего ради посланъ къ тобѣ отъ донашедшъ кординалу два жытрея — Алде да и Гьмонта, да послушаете учения ихъ о законѣ Божиѣ"." Князь же Александръ, здѣзванъ съ мудрецъ своими, встепна къ нему и рече: "Отъ Адама до потоа, отъ потоа до раздѣления землѣ, до началь Абраамъ, отъ Абраамъ до пророка Исаака свыше Черное море, отъ сего свыше Исаака свыше Давида царь, отъ началь царства Соломона до Августа и до Христова рождества, отъ рождества Христова до спрастии и воскресения господния, отъ въкресения же его и до воззѣления на небеса, отъ въззѣления на небеса до царства Константинова, отъ началь царства Константинова до первого собора, отъ первого собора до седьмого — съ всѣ добръ съѣдае, а отъ всѣ учения не приймаеъ." Они же въкратица въ съвѣси. И умножиша дни живота его. Богъ бо добрѣю и мѣньшѣ добрѣю и кишаю люби, митрополита же и

епископы чтили и акы самою творца.

[C-3] Бь жо тогда нужна велика отъ попаны: тонутъ христианъ, вельме съ собою воинствовати. Князъ же великий Александръ поиде къ цареви, давы отмоги люди и отъ боды.

[B-3] А сына своею Дмитрія посланъ на Западныя страны, и вся почтвы свои посланъ къ нимъ, и въ мыхъ своихъ домахъ, рече къ нимъ: "Служите сыновъ мосему, акы самому лики, всемъ живополъ своимъ. Поиде Ярославъ съ сыновьямъ своимъ въ силъ вельменъ, и плавиа градъ Юрьевъ, и възершился въ свою съ многимъ полономъ и съ великую честью.

[A-3] Князъ велики Александъ взыде отъ иноплеменникъ и доеди Новагорода Нижнаго и ту пребывъ мало здравъ, дошедь Города, разболся.

О, горь тобъ, вельмен человече! Како можеш написати кончину господина своего! Како не испадета ти зъзии вкупъ съ слезами! Како же не урвется сердце горчакъ тугъ! Отца бо человекъ можетъ, а добра господина не могу оставити: аке бы ль, и въ гробъ бы льять съ нимъ!

Пострада жо Боговъ царство, остави же земное царство и бысть мнѣих: бо бо желание его паче лиры вельменскаго образа. Способъ же его Богъ вельминъ чинъ принати - скину. И тао Господеви душе своє предатъ, съ миромъ месяца ноябръ въ 14 день, на память святого апостола Филиппа.

Митрополитъ же Кирилъ глаголаше: Чтада моя, разумьшъ, ако же заидъ сонце земли Суздалской! Первы и діакони, черкозы, ницы и богатъ, и вси люди глаголашъ: "Уже помышаетъ!"

Святъ же тьло его понесоа къ граду Володимерю. Митрополитъ же князъ и боаре, и весь народъ, маны и вельминъ, съльпошъ и въ Богобиовъ съ сельвами и съ кандылами. Народъ же съкатахутся, хотыше прикоснутия честьмъ одръ святаго тьла его. Бысть же вопль и кричанне, и туга, ако же жить было, тако, я и земли потрястиа. Положено же бысть тьло его въ Рожестве святаго Богородице, въ архимандриты вельминъ, месяца ноябръ въ 24, на память святаго отца Амфилодий.

Бысть же тогда чудо дивно и памятъ достойно. Едва убо положено бысть святого тьло его въ раку, тойда Савастия и Кирилъ митрополитъ хотя посяти ему руку, да
That same year [6771] Grand Prince Alexander, son of Iaroslav, passed away. Let us speak [about] his courage and life as I have heard it from my fathers, as well as that which I was an eyewitness to while growing up.

Prince Alexander was born from a father Grand Prince Iaroslav, and from a mother Theodosia. He was taller than other men, and his voice as a trumpet reached the people. His bravery was like that of the Roman emperor Vespasian, who conquered the entire Judean land. Once, during the siege of the city of Jotapata, the burghers of the city sallied forth and defeated his regiment, and he remained alone. But he still chased their force to the city gates and thereafter he jeered at his own retinue and reproached them, saying: “You left me alone.”

So also was the Prince Alexander: he used to defeat [others] but was never defeated. Once, because of this, a certain powerful man, whose name was Andreas, of those who call themselves “the servants of God,” came from the Western Country for he wanted to see the marvel in the fullness of his life. He saw Prince Alexander, returned to his people, and told them: “I traveled through many countries and saw many people, but I have never met such a king among kings, nor such a prince among princes.”

Hearing about the courage of Prince Alexander, the king of the Roman part of the Northern Country, thought to himself, “I will go and conquer Alexander’s land.” And he gathered a great force and filled numerous ships with his regiments and he moved forth with great strength being inspired by a martial spirit. He came to the river Neva and, being carried away with madness, sent his envoys, filled with pride, to Prince Alexander in Novgorod, saying, “If you are able to resist me then [do so for] I am here already conquering your land.”
Upon hearing these words, Alexander’s heart burned and he led his small retinue against them, not waiting for the large force. It is a pity to hear that his honorable father, Iaroslav the Great, did not know of such an attack on his son, dear Alexander. Alexander did not have time to send news to his father for already the enemy was approaching. Even many Novgorodians had not joined him because the prince had already set out against them. He decided to go against them in the sixth hour of the day. There was a great battle with the Romans, and he killed a numerous amount of them. On the face of this king, he left a mark with his sharp spear. Here six brave men appeared.

The first was Gabriel by name, son of Alexis. He attacked a ship and, seeing there the royal prince sword in hand, he rode onto the gangway. Everyone escaped from the king back to the ship, but thereafter they turned and threw him and his horse from the gangway into the water. He got out of the water uninjured, charged them again and fought with the general, himself, among his troop.

The second, a Novgorodian Sbyslav by name, son of Iakun, on several occasions charged their troop and fought only with a battle-ax, not having fear in his heart. And several fell from his hand. The people marveled at his power and his bravery.

The third, Iakov, a man from a Polotsk clan, was the prince’s huntsman. He charged the troop with a sword, and the prince praised him.

The fourth one was a Novgorodian, Misha by name, who fought on foot in the stream against the ships. He destroyed three of the ships with his detachment.

The fifth, also from his young [men], Savva by name, entered into a large, royal golden-crowned tent and cut the tent pole. When Alexander’s regiments saw the tent fall, they were joyful.

The sixth, also from his servitors, Ratmir by name fought on foot and was encircled by many. He fell from many wounds several times and subsequently died. All this I have heard from my Grand Prince lord Alexander and from others who at that time took part in that battle.

In the second year after the return of Prince Alexander with his victory, they came once more from the Western Country and built a town on Alexander’s patrimony. Prince Alexander went quickly against it and razed the town to its foundations. Some of the enemy were executed and others were taken prisoner.

In the third year following Alexander’s victory, when he defeated the king, in the winter, Alexander went with a great force against the German land, “Let them not boast saying, ‘Part of the Slavic nation is beneath us.’” They had already taken Pskov town and installed their agents. Grand prince
Alexander Iaroslavich captured them and freed Pskov town from bondage. And he waged war against and set fire to their land. He took numerous prisoners and cut others to pieces. In the towns, they got together and said, “Let us go and subdue Alexander and take him with [our] hands.”

When they approached, the guards saw them. Prince Alexander drew up his regiments and went against [their] warriors. And when they came to Lake Chud there were many soldiers on both sides. His father Iaroslav sent him help [in the form of] his younger brother Andrei along with many brave men.

Prince Alexander returned from the victory with great glory. There were a multitude of prisoners accompanying his regiment. They who called themselves knights were walking shoeless next to the horses. When the prince approached Pskov town, the entire population met him in front of the town glorifying lord Prince Alexander.

And they began to hear his name throughout all countries, up to the sea of Egypt, to Mount Ararat, and on both sides of the Varangian Sea, and to Great Rome.

At that time, the Lithuanian nation was increasing and they began to sack Alexander’s territory. Going out against them, he began to defeat them. During one campaign, he defeated seven armies, killed many of their princes, and captured others. Mocking them, his servants tied them to the tails of their horses. And, they began to be aware of his name.

At that time, there was a powerful khan of the Eastern Country. That khan, hearing of the glory and courage of Alexander, sent him envoys, saying, “Alexander, do you not know that God has submitted many nations to me? You are the only one who is not willing to submit to my power. But if you want to save your land, then come soon to me and you will see the honor of my khanate.”

Having given due thought, Prince Alexander went to the khan. Upon seeing him, the Khan Batu marveled and said to his dignitaries: “I was told the truth—that there is no other like this prince.” Bestowing on him honor, he let him go.

The great Prince Alexander went from the foreign people to Nizhnii Novgorod and stayed there a few days in good health, but when he reached Gorodets, he became ill. Woe to you, poor man. How are you able to describe the passing of your lord? How do your eyes not fall out with tears? How does your heart not break from bitter straits? A man may leave his father, but cannot leave a good lord, and if need be, he lies with him in the grave.