

For Whom the Platter Tolls

Paraliturgical Memory in Rus

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Abstract

This paper deals with memory in medieval Rus. Previous scholarship has focused on organised liturgical commemoration (*memoria*), which relied on complex canonised texts and sophisticated church rituals. This article concerns less formal types of medieval remembrance, like commemorative graffiti, colophons, and simple commemorative rituals. Such memorial devices can be called paraliturgical because they either facilitated liturgical commemoration or derived from liturgical texts and ceremonies, but technically were not part of the liturgy. Paraliturgical remembrance offered a peculiar version of the past. It combined short family memory, which went back to one or two generations, and the mythologised past, which was based on Scripture and inspirational legends, like that about Riurik. Paraliturgical memory was future orientated as it carried information required for salvation, including records of charity and donations. This type of memory also conveyed emotions, genealogical knowledge, and royal mythology. Paraliturgical remembrance crossed institutional and regional boundaries, creating communities of rememberers.

Keywords

memory – liturgy – Kyiv/Kiev – Novgorod – graffiti – Ostromir Gospel – Riurik

Memory studies offer new perspectives on the history of Rus. Memory is central to such issues as individual and collective identity, gender and social relations, the cult of saints and devotional practices, Christian materiality and sacred space, literacy and orality. So far, students have focused on the system of organ-

ised church commemoration (*memoria*). Ludwig Steindorff has pioneered the field by examining the main aspects of *memoria*, including donation, liturgical commemoration, and charity.¹ Organised *memoria* imposed a rigid structure on cultural activities, especially book culture. Marcello Garzaniti reminds us that most church books contain texts structured according to liturgical cycles. The scholar sees such organisation of canonical texts as the foundation of *memoria ecclesiae*, the “memory of the Word”, which created a church community.²

In this paper I will focus on less formal types of medieval remembrance. Such memorial practices can be called paraliturgical because they either facilitated liturgical commemoration or derived from liturgical texts and rituals, but technically were not part of the liturgy.³ One of the earliest manifestations of paraliturgical memory can be found in graffiti on church walls. Generally, such graffiti functioned as records in a society that still lacked a developed system of archival storage. In terms of record keeping, commemorative graffiti predated later memorial lists and books used in liturgical commemoration. Furthermore, as Aleksandr Avdeev notes, they also served as a kind of eternal prayer.⁴ Commemorative graffiti employ different types of memory, as evidenced by a famous graffito in St. Sophia in Kyiv about the demise of a tsar:

In 6562 (1054), on 20 February, the dormition of our tsar on Sunday, in the week of Martyr Theodore [Tiron].⁵

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- 1 Ludwig Steindorff, *Memoria in Altrußland: Untersuchungen zu den Formen christlicher Totensorge* (Stuttgart: Franz Steiner Verlag, 1994).
 - 2 Marcello Garzaniti, “Bible and Liturgy in Church Slavonic Literature: A New Perspective for Research in Medieval Slavonic Studies,” in Juan Antonio Álvarez-Pedrosa, Susana Torres Prieto, eds., *Medieval Slavonic Studies: New Perspectives for Research* (Paris: Institut d’études slaves, 2009), 127–148.
 - 3 Philip Booth, Elizabeth Tingle, “Introduction: Dying, Death, and Commemoration, 1350–1700,” in Booth, Tingle, eds., *A Companion to Death, Burial, and Remembrance in Late Medieval and Early Modern Europe, c. 1300–1700* (Leiden: Brill, 2021), 18.
 - 4 Steindorff, *Memoria*, 145; Simon Franklin, *Writing, Society and Culture in Early Rus, c. 950–1300* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 72–73, 183 fn. 208; Simon Franklin, “On the Pre-History of Inscribed Gravestones in Rus,” *Palaeoslavica* 10 no. 1 (2002), 113; Aleksandr Avdeev, “Put’ formuly ‘Prestavisia rab Bozhii’: Ot pominal’nykh graffiti do epitafii,” in *Histarychna-arkhealohichny zbornik* 30 (2015), 50; M.M. Drobysheva, “Letopisnye nadpisi-graffiti Kievskogo Sofiiskogo sobora (XI–XII vv.) kak forma istoriopisaniia,” in D.D. Beliaev, T.V. Gimon, eds., *Drevneishie gosudarstva Vostochnoi Evropy. 2013 god: Zarozhdenie istoriopisaniia v obshchestvakh Drevnosti i Srednevekov’ia* (Moscow: Universitet Dmitriia Pozharskogo, 2016), 706–724.
 - 5 S.A. Vysotskii, *Drevnerusskie nadpisi Sofii Kievskoi*, issue 1: XI–XIV vv. (Kyiv: Naukova dumka,

The inscription does not identify the ruler, though the date of death and the location of the graffito in relation to other royal graffiti in the cathedral strongly suggest that it refers to Iaroslav Volodimirovich (978 or 988–1054). Scholars often see this graffito not as a commemorative but as a chronicle-type inscription, because it lacks the name of the deceased. But did the missing name hamper the commemoration of the “tsar” in St. Sophia? Probably not, if we consider the exceptional social status of the deceased, as indicated by his imperial title. The possessive adjective and the lack of name (“our tsar”) imply that the graffito was executed by a contemporary of the ruler. The subjects of the recently departed “tsar” surely remembered his name. The graffitist relied on a combination of writing (for recording the date of the ruler’s death, essential information for liturgical commemoration) and unrecorded communicative memory, which was based on personal experience, face-to-face interaction and oral contact.⁶ It was communicative memory that retained the name of the “tsar.” The graffito therefore combines different types of remembrance that united the ruler’s subjects, including the clergy of St. Sophia, in commemorating their monarch.

Like formalised *memoria*, paraliturgical memory was stimulated by donations for future commemoration. The earliest charter of such a donation was issued by Mstislav Volodimirovich (1076–1132) and his son Vsevolod Mstislavich (ca. 1095–1138) for St. Georgii’s (Iur’ev) monastery in Novgorod. In exchange for the donation of land, income from certain territories, and a large silver platter (*bliudo serebr’no*), the abbot and brethren had to commemorate Mstislav and his children, both the living and the dead, as long as “this world stands.” The charter, which scholars date to 1128 or more often to 1130, reserves for the platter the role of a material carrier of paraliturgical memory. The monks had to strike the platter every time the abbot was having a meal. These instructions capitalised on the Studite Rule, which required the brethren to mark certain stages of the refectory meal by tossing their dishes with their spoons.⁷

1966), no. 8: 39–41; Viacheslav Kornienko, *Korpus hrafiti Sofii Kyivs’skoi, XI–pochatok XVIII st.*, 4 (Kyiv: Horobets’, 2013), no. 8: 22–25. Here and below translations are mine unless indicated otherwise.

6 On the graffito about the tsar, see Franklin, “On the Pre-History,” 113; Drobysheva, “Letopisnye nadpisi-graffiti,” 708–712. For communicative memory, see Jan Assmann, *Cultural Memory and Early Civilization: Writing, Remembrance, and Political Imagination* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 36, 41.

7 S.N. Valk, ed., *Gramoty Velikogo Novgoroda i Pskova* (Moscow, Leningrad: Izdatel’stvo AN SSSR, 1949), no. 81, pp. 140–141; I.I. Sreznevskii, *Gramota velikago kniazia Mstislava i syna ego Vsevoloda novgorodskomu Iur’evu monastyriu (1130 goda)* (St. Petersburg: Tipografiia imp. Akademii nauk, 1860), 14–15; A.M. Pentkovskii, *Tipikon Patriarkha Aleksii Studita v Vizantii*

The donators found an ingenious way to secure what we might call multimedia remembrance. The memory of Mstislav and his descendants received legal protection through the issuance of the charter, which was securely kept in the monastery's archive. The names of the donor and his children were surely mentioned during the liturgy. This formal church commemoration was supplemented with paraliturgical remembrance which had an unusual aural aspect. With the platter tolling during the abbot's dinners, the commemoration of Mstislav and Vsevolod continued even outside the liturgical commemorative cycle.

Memory also relied on almsgiving, which believers saw as a gift to Christ himself, following the Gospel maxim: "As much as you did it to one of the least of these my brethren, you did it to me."⁸ Recent studies have shed new light on the royal support of the clerical community of St. Sophia in Kyiv. A.A. Gippius and M.M. Drobysheva have offered a new interpretation of a poorly preserved graffito in St. Sophia in Kyiv which mentions Prince Sviatoslav Iaroslavich (1027–1076), son of Iaroslav Volodimirovich, and certain payment (*ruga*). Traditionally, that *ruga* was understood as a chantry in memory of Sviatoslav, but the scholars note that this meaning is not attested by dictionaries. They convincingly argue that *ruga* refers to payments which Sviatoslav was making to support the clergy of the cathedral during his reign:

Sviatoslav reigned as a prince for four years. A payment (*ruga*) was made on the [19th] day of March. For the first time [such a payment was made] on the Friday of Palm week, during Sviatoslav's coming, amen.⁹

According to the *Primary Chronicle*, after expelling their elder brother Iziaslav, who was the ruling prince of Kyiv, Sviatoslav and his younger brother Vsevolod arrived at the princely residence of Berestovo (Berestove), east of Kyiv, on 22 March 1073, which was indeed Good Friday. Sviatoslav therefore established

i na Rusi (Moscow: Izdatel'stvo Moskovskoi patriarkhii, 2001), 369–370; T.V. Gimon, "Mstislavova gramota," in E.A. Mel'nikova, V. Ia. Petrukhin, eds., *Drevniaia Rus' v srednevekovom mire. Entsiklopediia* (Moscow: Ladomir, 2014), 524–525.

8 Mt. 25:40. See also Steindorff, *Memoria*, 25.

9 A.A. Gippius, M.M. Drobysheva, "Ruga' v graffito no. 9 Sofii Kievskoi," in E.A. Mel'nikova, ed., *Vostochnaia Evropa v drevnosti i srednevekov'e*, 32: *Sravnitel'nye issledovaniia sotsiokul'turnykh praktik* (Moscow: Institut vseobshchei istorii RAN, 2020), 58–65. For earlier interpretations, see Vysotskii, *Drevnerusskie nadpisi*, 1, no. 9, pp. 41–45; A.A. Zaluzniak, "K izucheniiu drevnerusskikh nadpisei," in V.L. Ianin, Zaluzniak, A.A. Gippius, eds., *Novgorodskie gramoty na bereste*, 11: *Iz raskopok 1997–2000 gg.* (Moscow: Russkie slovari, 2004), 281; Kornienko, *Korpus*, 4, no. 9, pp. 80–82.

a fund for the support of the St. Sophia clergy on the day of his ascension. Gippius and Drobysheva interpret this act in political terms, as an attempt to secure the loyalty of St. Sophia's clerics. It is true that Sviatoslav badly needed the backing of the clergy because of his usurpation. But Sviatoslav's support, which apparently continued throughout his reign, was also an act of charity. As Steindorff reminds us, in Christian *memoria*, care for the church was seen as care for the poor, i. e., an expression of love for Christ. The graffitist posthumously recorded Sviatoslav's alms not only for accounting purposes but also with a view to commemorating the prince and retaining special relations with his family (see below).¹⁰ The commemorative aspect of the Sviatoslav graffito helps explain other similar records of royal visits to the cathedral. St. Sophia, which was the metropolitan's church, was frequented by many members of the elite. Why did the cathedral's graffitists record some of these high-profile visits? The graffito on Sviatoslav's *ruga* indicates that the clerics sought to record the names of those visitors who gave alms or supported the cathedral in some other ways. Among such benefactors was probably Sviatoslav's nephew Sviatopolk Iziaslavich of Kyiv (1050–1113), whose visit is recorded in a partially preserved graffito: "Prince Sviatopolk came to"¹¹

Sviatoslav's patronage of the cathedral was continued by the commemorative activities of his descendants in St. Sophia. This tradition of family commemoration is evidenced by a graffito which describes the visit of a royal woman to the cathedral, unfortunately, without giving her name. Scholars have offered different readings of parts of this fascinating inscription:

Volodimir's [widow?]

Here was the grief-stricken Andrei's daughter-in-law, Oleg's, Igor's, and
Vsevolod's sister, on a feast day;
(V.L. Ianin's and A.A. Zalizniak's reading:) and the priest S[a]vl, rich in
sin, wrote [this].

10 Samuel Hazzard Cross, Olgerd P. Sherbowitz-Wetzor, eds., *The Russian Primary Chronicle: The Laurentian Text* (Cambridge, MA: The Mediaeval Academy of America, [1953]), p. 155 (hereafter, Cross, *RPC*); Donald Ostrowski, ed. and collator, with David Birnbaum and Horace G. Lunt, *The Povest' vremennykh let: An Interlinear Collation and Paradosis* (Cambridge, MA: Distributed by Harvard University Press for the Ukrainian Research Institute, Harvard University, 2004), online version last updated 15 June 2014: <https://donostrowski2.bitbucket.io/pvl/index.html> (hereafter Ostrowski, *PVZ*), line 182,25; Gippius, Drobysheva, "Ruga," 61; Steindorff, *Memoria*, 25.

11 Vysotskii, *Drevnerusskie nadpisi*, 1, no. 6, pp. 34–37; Kornienko, *Korpus*, 8 (Kyiv: Horobets', 2018), no. 6, p. 61.

(V.V. Kornienko's reading:) the priest Dm[itr], rich in sin, wrote [this] by scratching (*skoblia*).¹²

Unlike Zalizniak, Kornienko examined the graffito *de visu*, but his reading is problematic for linguistic and palaeographic reasons.¹³ Fortunately, scholars generally agree on those parts of the inscription that are most relevant to *memoria*. The graffito refers to the unnamed wife of Prince Volodimir Andreevich of Dorohobuzh, grandson of Volodimir Monomakh. The woman and her brothers Oleg, Igor, and Vsevolod were grand grandchildren of the above-mentioned Sviatoslav Iaroslavich, who paid a *ruga* to the cathedral's clergy. The woman's birth family thus had long connections with St. Sophia, going back to Sviatoslav Iaroslavich's reign and by extension to the founder of the cathedral, Sviatoslav's father Iaroslav. According to the *Hypatian Chronicle*, the princess transported the body of her husband, who died in 1170, for burial at St. Andrei's monastery in Kyiv.¹⁴ Nevertheless, the long association of the widow's family with St. Sophia facilitated the prestigious commemoration of her husband at the metropolitan's cathedral. Such practice of "external" remembrance could make the programme of commemorative activities very intensive. The clerics of large cathedrals with busy schedules of commemorative services, like St. Sophia in Kyiv and St. Sophia in Novgorod, even marked the number of such services with strokes on the walls.¹⁵

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- 12 S.A. Vysotskii, *Kievskie graffiti XI–XVII vv.* (Kyiv: Naukova dumka, 1985), no. 307, pp. 25–31; V.L. Ianin, "Epigraficheskie zametki," *Voprosy iazykoznaniiia* 2 (1992), 30; Zalizniak, "K izucheniiu," 284; Kornienko, *Korpus*, 10 (Kyiv: Horobets', 2020), 1: no. 307, pp. 255–257, 355 (photo).
- 13 The words "Dmitr" and "by scratching" are particularly doubtful in Kornienko's reading. No letters that, according to Kornienko, form the name Dmitr are visible in the photograph of the graffito in his edition. Dictionaries register the word *skobliti* (to scratch) starting from the sixteenth century only; some letters in that word (as read by Kornienko) differ from the same letters in other parts of the graffito. I.I. Sreznevskii, *Materialy dlia slovaria drevne-russkago iazyka*, 3 (St. Petersburg: Tipografiia imp. Akademii nauk, 1912), col. 376; *Slovar' russkago iazyka XI–XVII vv.*, 24 (Moscow: Nauka, 2000), 216. On Kornienko's edition in general, see Timur Bobrovskii (Tymur Bobrov's'kyi), "Breshi v korpus: Zametki o monografii V.V. Kornienko, *Korpus hrafiti Sofii Kyiv's'koi*," *Ruthenica* 9 (2010), 110–130.
- 14 For the identification of the princess and her brothers, see Vysotskii, *Kievskie graffiti*, no. 307, pp. 26–29; *Polnoe sobranie russkikh letopisei*, 2 (Moscow: Iazyki russkoi kul'tury, 1998), cols. 546–547.
- 15 V.V. Kornienko, "'Malaia eskhatologiiia' Drevnei Rusi v kontekste novykh epigraficheskikh otkrytii v Sofii Kievskoi," *Drynov's'kyi zbirnyk* 5 (2012), 298–299; A.A. Gippius, S.M. Mikheev, "O podgotovke Svoda nadpisei-graffiti Novgorodskogo Sofiiskogo sobora," in A.M. Moldovan, ed., *Pis'mennost', literatura, fol'klor slavianskikh narodov. Istoriiia slavistiki. xv Mezhd-*

For the relatives of the deceased, visits to the cathedral were moments of highly emotional experience. Generally, the church discouraged the excessive demonstration of grief as it might look like a disbelief in the doctrine of the Resurrection. Based on canonized texts and procedures, *memoria ecclesiae* left no room for emotions. But emotions caused by death could not be eliminated completely, and paraliturgical memory was flexible enough to convey them. The inscription of the daughter in law is one of the rare graffiti that express the sorrow of separation (for another emotional inscription, see below).¹⁶ Curated by the widow, the remembrance of Volodimir Andreevich brought together the family of her husband and her birth family. But the circle of people mentioned in the daughter in law's graffiti is limited to two generations, the generation of the deceased and that of his father. The above-mentioned charter of Mstislav Volodimirovich to St. Georgii's monastery also fails to recollect distant ancestors. In fact, Mstislav requested commemoration for himself and his children but did not mention any ancestors at all. In theory, all forms of *memoria* sought to secure eternal and regular commemoration for all deceased members of a family. However, in practice, commemoration normally operated within short family memory.

A series of important graffiti in Kyiv and Novgorod, including some newly discovered ones, provide important evidence on the political and social roles of paraliturgical remembrance. One of such inscriptions is a well-known graffiti in St. Sophia in Kyiv which mentions the placement of the sarcophagus of Prince Vsevolod (in baptism Andrei, or grecianized Andreia) Iaroslavich, who died on 14 April 1093:

A sarcophagus (*raka*) was placed on Maundy Thursday. It is Andreia, the pious prince of Rus (*rous'skyi k'niaz' blagyi*) [who lies in it]. And Dmitr, his little junior military servitor (*otroch'k*), wrote [this] on 14 April. And [Andreia] died on Wednesday afternoon.¹⁷

The burial of Vsevolod Iaroslavich together with his father Iaroslav at St. Sophia in Kyiv legitimised succession within Vsevolod's family, including Vsevolod's son Volodimir Monomakh, who of course curated the burial of his father. In

dunarodnyi s'ezd slavistov. Minsk, 20–27 avgusta 2013 g. Doklady rossiiskoi delegatsii (Moscow: Drevlekhranilishche, 2013), 162.

16 Madeline Gray, "Deathbed and Burial Ritual in Late Medieval Catholic Europe," in Booth, Tingle, *Companion*, 128; Steindorff, *Memoria*, 97.

17 Vysotskii, *Drevnerusskie nadpisi*, 1, no. 4, pp. 18–24; no. 8, pp. 39–41; Zalizniak, "K izucheniiu," 258–262; Kornienko, *Korpus*, 3 (Kyiv: Horobets', 2011), no. 4, pp. 101–103.

this respect the inscription serves as a device for shaping the collective memory of Monomakh's family. The mentioning of Vsevolod-Andreia's sarcophagus also marks the St. Sophia cathedral as his commemorative edifice.¹⁸ The date of burial is particularly important in the context of liturgical commemoration because it fell on Maundy Thursday. As Steindorff explains, Maundy Thursday occupies a special place in Christian *memoria* because the church remembers the Lord's Supper on this day. This is why Maundy Thursday is exempted from the general rule that no full liturgy is allowed during Great Lent and Holy Week from Monday to Friday. On Maundy Thursday, the liturgy of St. Basil is celebrated after the evening service. Vsevolod-Andreia could thus be remembered during the liturgy on the day of his burial.¹⁹

Finally, the identity of the graffitist, Vsevolod's junior servitor Dmitr, brings us to the prince's court, which is often overlooked in *memoria* studies. The *Primary Chronicle* reports that the junior military servitors (*otrotsi*) of a prince transported his body to the burial place.²⁰ But their role was not limited to the logistics of royal funeral. Dmitr's graffito finds a parallel in recently discovered graffiti in the Annunciation church in Gorodishche in Novgorod. Taken together, the Kyivan and Novgorodian inscriptions provide important insight into the relationship between the prince and his elite servitors in Rus. Two Novgorodian graffiti commemorate the death of the above-mentioned Prince Vsevolod Mstislavich in Pskov on 13 February 1138. One of these graffiti (no. 2, according to Gippius and S.M. Mikheev) is a typical commemorative inscription, short and unfinished: "On 13 February, the Lord's servant Gavriilo died, in the world [called] Vse[volod]."²¹ But another graffito on Vsevolod (no. 1) is really illuminating:

In the year of 6645 (1138), on 13 February, Christ's servant, the pious [Prince] Vsevolod, in holy baptism Gavriilo, [son] of Mstislav, died. And he happened to be then in Pskov, [and] he died there. And [his death] was concealed for seven days. And his brother Sviatopolk was there too. And his [Vsevolod's] armed retinue (*druzhina*) wept and cried for him a lot. And he was buried at Holy Trinity [in Pskov], which he built himself. And

18 For the church building as a commemorative edifice, see Franklin, "On the Pre-History," 110.

19 Steindorff, *Memoria*, 63.

20 Cross, *RPC*, 169; Ostrowski, *PVL*, lines 206,13–206,16. Cf. S.M. Mikheev, "Iarop'l'chia družhina 7 psali: Avtografy voinov Iaropolka Iziaslavicha na stene Sofii Novgorodskoi," *Drevniaia Rus': Voprosy medievistiki* 2(64) (2016), 23–27 (hereafter *DRVM*).

21 A.A. Gippius, S.M. Mikheev, "Nadpisi-graffiti tserkvi Blagoveshcheniia na Gorodishche: Predvaritel'nyi obzor," *Arkhitekturmaia arkheologiia* 1 (2019), 41.

after the funeral members of the retinue went their own separate ways, like cattle (*nouta*) deprived of the herder (*pastukha*). And their heart was sad because of mourning for their prince. O Lord, rest the soul of your servant, the deceased Gavrilo, faithful prince!²²

As we can see, the same prince could receive several commemorative graffiti in one church. Such intensive commemoration is explained by the fact that the Annunciation church was erected to commemorate Vsevolod's birth.²³ But graffito no. 1 also tells us about how members of the retinue commemorated their prince. Traditionally, studies of the retinue in Rus focus on its structure and its role in state building.²⁴ As we can see, retainers also contributed to the commemoration of their masters in different towns, from Kyiv to Novgorod. As graffito no. 1 shows, Vsevolod's military servitors developed close connections with their prince, transformed them into emotionally charged *memoria* after his death and established cross-institutional commemoration of their master in the Novgorodian Annunciation church, even if the prince was buried in Pskov. The Novgorodian graffitist recollects the bond between the departed prince and his servitors using Biblical images of cattle and herder (the respective words, *nuta* and *pastukh*, appear in Slavic Scripture). In Kyiv and Novgorod, royal retainers organised the commemoration of their masters, acting as commissioners and executioners of commemorative inscriptions.

Paraliturgical memory was not limited to the commemoration of the dead. Such remembrance also consolidated the relations between living princes and their relatives. The earliest precisely dated East Slavic book, the Ostromir Gospel (1056–1057) shows us how remembrance cemented family identity through a complex interaction between liturgical and paraliturgical memory.²⁵ The commissioner of the book, Ostromir, was the mayor of Novgorod from 1054. He died during a campaign against the Chud' in the late 1050s. Ostromir and other Novgorodians, who perished during the campaign, are probably commemorated in a graffito in St. Sophia in Novgorod.²⁶ The book commissioned

22 Gippius, Mikheev, "Nadpisi-graffiti," 36–39.

23 Gippius, Mikheev, "Nadpisi-graffiti," 42.

24 P.S. Stefanovich, *Boiare, otroki, družhiny: Voенно-politicheskaia elita Rusi v x–xi vekakh* (Moscow: Indrik, 2012).

25 *Ostromirovo evangelie 1056–1057: [Faksimil'noe vosproizvedenie]* (Leningrad, Moskva: Avropa, Izdatel'skii otdel Moskovskogo Patriarkhata, 1988); the Russian National Library website on the Ostromir Gospel: <http://www.nlr.ru/exib/Gospel/ostr/descript.html> (accessed 30 September 2022).

26 V.L. Ianin, *Novgorodskie posadniki* (Moscow: Iazyki slavianskoi kul'tury, 2003), 70–71; Gippius, Mikheev, "O podgotovke," 162–163.

by Ostromir is a Gospel lectionary which is used in church services. In this respect the Ostromir Gospel is part of the established liturgical tradition. However, the Ostromir Gospel stands out for its huge size, exquisite miniatures, and the gorgeous design of the page. Furthermore, despite its age, the book is in remarkably clean condition, something which suggests that it was not heavily used, unlike other liturgical books.²⁷ To explain all these exceptional features, we need to take a closer look at the text of the manuscript. The main text of the book is not different from other Gospel lectionaries. What is special about the Ostromir Gospel is the colophon written by one of the three scribes of the manuscript, Deacon Grigorii:²⁸

Glory be to thee, O Lord, King (*Ts[a]riu*) of Heaven, for you graced me to write this Gospel. And I began to write it in the year of 6564 (1056) and finished it in the year of 6565 (1057). And I wrote this Gospel for God's servant called in baptism Iosif, in the world Ostromir, a relative of Prince Iziaslav. And at that time Prince Iziaslav held both dominions, that of his father Iaroslav and that of his brother Volodimir. And Prince Iziaslav himself ruled the throne of his father Iaroslav in Kyiv and entrusted the throne of his brother to his relative Ostromir in Novgorod. And may God grant many years to him who has commissioned²⁹ this Gospel for the consolation of many Christian souls. May the Lord God grant him the blessing of the holy Evangelists John, Matthew, Luke, Mark and of the holy forefathers Abraham and Isaac and Jacob, both to himself and his spouse Theophana (*Feofana*), and to their children and the spouses of their children. May you fare well for many years to come, as you maintain your trust. Amen.

I, Grigorii, Deacon, wrote this Gospel, and whoever may write it better, do not act wickedly³⁰ toward me, a sinner. And I began to write in the month of October, on the 21st, on the memorial day of Hilarion, and finished in

27 O.G. Ul'ianov, "Proiskhozhdenie Ostromirova Evangelii: K rekonstruktsii drevneishego ustava na Rusi", in I.A. Savkin, ed., *Kirillitsa: Ot voznikoveniia do nashikh dnei* (St. Petersburg: Aleteia, 2011), 164–194; Simon Franklin, "Dirty Old Books," in Valerie A. Kivelson, Joan Neuberger, eds., *Picturing Russia: Explorations in Visual Culture* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2017), 12–16.

28 Ostromir Gospel, fols. 294–294v. This translation has benefitted from Ian Press' translation, which, however, is not free from misinterpretations and errors. Ian Press, *A History of the Russian Language and Its Speakers* (Munich: Lincom Europa, 2007), 45.

29 *s"tiazhav"shoumou*, despite Press who mistranslates it as "compiled." See Sreznevskii, *Materialy*, 3: col. 857; Press, *History*, 45.

30 *ne mozi zaz'reti m'ne*, cf. Gen. 12:7.

the month of May, on the 12th, on the memorial day of Epiphanius. And I beg all reading it, do not curse me, but having corrected it, read on. For thus says the holy Apostle Paul, "Bless and do not curse."³¹ Amen.

Scholars usually see the colophon as a source on the history of the manuscript. Indeed, Grigorii reports invaluable information about the commissioner, Ostromir, his family and kin relationship with Kyivan and Novgorodian royalty, as well as the dates of the book production. But there are also other, non-factual elements of the colophon which help us understand why the book was conceived as a unique object. In the colophon, Grigorii pleads God for granting blessing to the donor and his family. Grigorii's appeal echoes another type of written invocation, supplicative graffiti, which explicitly ask for God's help "for many years to come" (*na m'noga leta*).³² Like inscriptions incised in stone, the pristine condition of the manuscript guaranteed that Grigorii's supplication for blessing would be preserved for a long time to come, in theory, forever. The colophon creates what scholars call prospective memory. The prospective aspect of memory projects the individual's present achievements into the future. In medieval Christianity, the future was of course shaped by the teaching about the end of the world and salvation. Christian perspective memory focused on the individual's deeds that would secure his or her salvation on the Judgment Day.³³ As a physical object, the book carried the memory of Ostromir's pious sponsorship, which would bring about salvation for him and his family.

A.L. Lifshits has drawn our attention to some important details in Grigorii's supplication. In it, the scribe calls for blessing from the Evangelists and Old Testament forefathers. What is interesting is that Grigorii lists the Evangelists in the same order as their Gospels appear in the manuscript.³⁴ As a Gospel lectionary, the book contains New Testament texts organized in the yearly liturgical cycle of reading, whereas the colophon is of course outside the liturgical cycle of Gospel texts. But the boundaries between liturgical and non-liturgical memory are permeable. Grigorii projects the structure of the liturgy on his non-

31 Rom. 12:14.

32 S.A. Vysotskii, *Srednevekovee nadpisi Sofii Kievskoi: po materialam graffiti XI–XVII vv.* (Kyiv: Naukova dumka, 1976), no. 105, p. 31; no. 132, p. 49; no. 150, p. 60; Kornienko, *Korpus*, 10, 1: no. 105, pp. 279–280; Kornienko, *Korpus*, 10, 2 (Kyiv: Horobets', 2020), no. 132, pp. 109–110; Kornienko, *Korpus*, 8, no. 150, p. 400.

33 James Fentress, Chris Wickham, *Social Memory* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1992), 51; Jan Assmann, *Cultural Memory*, 45–46; Reinhart Koselleck, *Futures Past: On the Semantics of Historical Time* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1985), 7–8.

34 A.L. Lifshits, "Dva blagosloveniiia dlia posadnika Ostromira," *Slověne* 1 (2017), 500.

liturgical supplication for blessing. In this respect, liturgical memory, or *memoria ecclesiae*, shapes the family memory of Ostromir. The list of the forefathers in the colophon also strengthens family identity. The scribe draws parallels between the donor's baptismal name, Iosif (Joseph), and the Old Testament Joseph, son of Jacob. Grigorii appeals to God to encourage the direct ancestors of the Biblical Joseph (his father Jacob, grandfather Isaac and great-grandfather Abraham) to bless the donor and his kinsfolk.

Lifshits sees this Old Testament genealogical reference as Grigorii's intellectual mind game and sophisticated flattery toward the patron.³⁵ Memory studies offer a broader perspective on the role of the Biblical pedigree in Grigorii's text. In early Rus literature, genealogies and lists of princes served as charters that shaped the collective identity of royalty. Generally, the genealogical knowledge of the ruling Rus elite was limited because, as we have seen, family memory was quite shallow. Rus literati did not produce long princely pedigrees. Rather, they employed Old Testament genealogies for acculturating the family memory of royalty. The *Primary Chronicle* (1110s) utilises Jacob's pedigree as a model for the enumeration of the children of Prince Volodimir Sviatoslavich. The chronicler seeks to present Volodimir as the founder of Christian princely families in Rus, like Jacob, who established the twelve tribes of Israel.³⁶ We can find a similar type of genealogical knowledge in the hagiography of ss. Boris and Gleb, including the anonymous *Tale and Passion and Encomium of the Holy Martyrs Boris and Gleb* (hereafter, *Anonymous Tale*) and the *Lesson Concerning the Life and Murder of the Blessed Passion-Sufferers Boris and Gleb (Lesson)* by Nestor of the Caves monastery. Both hagiographical works appeared probably soon after 1117. The *Anonymous Tale* reproduces the chronicle genealogy of Volodimir's children with some variations. An accomplished hagiographer, Nestor utilises the *Anonymous Tale* in his *Lesson* but rejects the princely pedigree. Still, he resorts to the Old Testament genealogy of Jacob to explain how fatherly love may spark a conflict among brothers. According to Nestor, both Jacob and Volodimir had numerous children. However, Jacob favoured two sons, Joseph and Benjamin, while Volodimir preferred Boris and Gleb. In both families, such preference caused jealousy among other siblings.³⁷

35 Lifshits, "Dva blagosloveniiia," 502.

36 Sergei Bogatyrev, "Memory and Politics in the Chronicle Lists of Princes, 12th–15th Centuries," *Canadian-American Slavic Studies* 53, no. 4 (2019), 452–460.

37 Paul Hollingsworth, ed., *The Hagiography of Kievan Rus'* (Cambridge, MA: Distributed by Harvard University Press for the Ukrainian Research Institute, Harvard University, 1992), 10, 97, 98; D.I. Abramovich, *Zhitiia sviatykh muchenikov Borisa i Gleba i sluzhby im* (Petrograd: Tipografiia imp. Akademii nauk, 1916), 7, 27, 28; Gail Lenhoff, *The Martyred Princes*

There is no evidence that the above-mentioned literati were familiar with Grigorii's colophon. Still, the chronicle and hagiographical works help us understand why Grigorii resorted to the Biblical genealogy of Jacob. The Rus literati usually reserved parallels with Jacob's genealogy for the most prominent members of royalty. According to the colophon, Ostromir was a relative of Prince Iziaslav Iaroslavich of Kyiv, though the degree of this relationship remains unknown.³⁸ The fact that the colophon connects the genealogy of Ostromir with the Old Testament genealogy of Jacob indicates that Ostromir's position in the princely family was very high. The Gospel commissioned by Ostromir was therefore an act of devotion and also an exercise in shaping the paraliturgical memory of the high-ranking donor, who was very close to Kyivan royalty, and two generations of his family.

The commemorative function of Grigorii's colophon extends to Ostromir's royal relatives as it contains the names of three princes. Typically, Grigorii's recollection is limited to two generations of the ruling family, Iaroslav Volodimirovich and his sons Iziaslav and Volodimir. The colophon focuses on Iziaslav as Ostromir's patron. However, the figure of another royal relative, Iziaslav's brother Volodimir was also important for the cultural memory of Ostromir's family. Volodimir was the prince of Novgorod from 1036 until his death in 1052. He predeceased his father Iaroslav (d. 1054) and never occupied the throne of Kyiv. Volodimir's premature death relegated his son Rostislav to the status of *izgoi*, i. e., disinherited outcast, because princes could claim only those thrones that their fathers occupied in the past. After the death of his father Rostislav had no prospects for becoming prince of Kyiv. In theory, he could claim Novgorod, but he had to leave the town, apparently pressured by his uncle Iziaslav.³⁹ Rostislav eventually usurped Tmutorokan, expelling his predecessor Gleb Sviatoslavich from the town. Rostislav's descendants lost control of Tmutorokan but became important princes in the Halychyna region.

Rostislav was the first Rus prince to give the name of Riurik to one of his sons. Riurik is of course the main protagonist of a Novgorodian legend, which tells

Boris and Gleb: A Socio-Cultural Study of the Cult and the Text (Columbus, OH: Slavica Publishers, Inc., 1989), 92. For the dating of the *Anonymous Tale* and the *Lesson*, see my article "The Early Patronage of the Cult of ss. Boris and Gleb," *Canadian-American Slavic Studies* 57, no. 1-2 (2023), 20-53 and subsequent Erratum (forthcoming).

38 For various speculative genealogies of Ostromir's family, see D. Prozorovskii, "Novyia rozyskaniia o novgorodskikh posadnikakh," in *Vestnik arkheologii i istorii, izdavaemyi Arkheologicheskim institutom* 9 (1892), 100; A. Poppe [Andrzej Poppe], "Feofana Novgorodskaia," in *Novgorodskii istoricheskii sbornik* 6 (16) (1997), 102-120.

39 Martin Dimnik, *The Dynasty of Chernigov, 1054-1146* (Toronto: Pontifical Institute for Medieval Studies, 1994), 46-47.

us that he was a Scandinavian (Rus) chieftain, who came to the area of Novgorod at the invitation of feuding local communities. Riurik became prince of Novgorod, and his descendants ruled Kyiv. The legend has come down to us as part of the *Primary Chronicle*, which reworked the story about Riurik into a foundation myth of Rus royalty.⁴⁰ On the basis of the chronicle version of the legend, scholars usually assume that all princes, including Rostislav, saw Riurik as the founder of the main ruling dynasty in Rus, the Riurikids. But for Rostislav, the Riurik story had a different meaning. It carried the memory of Novgorod, where his father was buried. The legend also provided a model of a daring ruler who succeeded in Rus even without having any hereditary rights. The Riurik legend therefore performed different commemorative functions in Rostislav's family and in the *Primary Chronicle* which was compiled by a monk of the Caves monastery in Kyiv.

The transmission of the legend from Novgorod to Kyiv was a crucial moment in shaping the collective memory of royalty in Rus. Students have attributed the legend either to oral or written memory, or a combination of both. A.A. Shakhmatov and Gippius trace the origin of the legend to a Novgorodian oral tradition. According to Shakhmatov, the legend appeared in Novgorod in the first half of the eleventh century and then was recorded in the hypothetical Novgorodian compilation of 1050, from where it migrated to the *Primary Chronicle* via a series of other hypothetical compilations.⁴¹ Gippius has modified Shakhmatov's scheme by questioning the existence of the Novgorodian compilation of 1050. Rather, Gippius argues that the legend belongs to the earliest part of the chronicle text (conventionally called the *Oldest Tale*, *Drevneishee skazanie* or the *Core Text*, *Iadro*), which originated from an oral tradition and eventually formed the *Primary Chronicle*. He dates the recording of the *Oldest Tale* to the early eleventh century but acknowledges that this dating is most venturous.⁴²

According to other scholars, the transmission of the legend was facilitated by members of Ostromir's clan. As early as 1945, D.S. Likhachev offered a fanciful genealogy of seven generations of Ostromir's ancestors and descendants who

40 I discuss the chronicle interpretation of the Riurik legend in my forthcoming book on family memory in Rus.

41 A.A. Shakhmatov, *Istoriia russkogo letopisaniia*, 1 (St. Petersburg: Nauka, 2002), 1: 431–432. Cf. Shakhmatov, *Istoriia*, 1 (St. Petersburg: Nauka, 2003), 2: 199, 224.

42 A.A. Gippius, "K probleme redaktsii Povesti vremennykh let. 1," *Slavianovedenie* 2007, no. 5: 35; A.A. Gippius, "Do i posle Nachal'nogo svoda: Ranniaia letopisnaia istoriia Rusi kak ob'ekt tekstologicheskoi rekonstruktsii," in N.A. Makarov, ed., *Rus' v IX–X vekakh. Arkheologicheskaiia panorama* (Moscow, Vologda: Drevnosti Severa, 2012), 54, 61.

shared their oral memories with various chroniclers.⁴³ In 1956 B.A. Rybakov asserted that the legend was part of a hypothetical chronicle which he attributed to Ostromir. Rybakov's idea to focus on written texts coming from Ostromir's circle is productive. However, his interest in Novgorodian written culture was inspired not by the Ostromir Gospel but by the discovery of birchbark documents in Novgorod in 1951. Rybakov of course knew the colophon of the Ostromir Gospel but used it mainly as a source of factual material on Ostromir. Furthermore, the scholar seriously misinterpreted the purpose of the colophon which he saw as a political programme of separatism promoted by Novgorodian boyars.⁴⁴

In fact, as we have seen, the colophon of the Ostromir Gospel emphasises the kin ties between Ostromir and royalty and incorporates his family memory in the salvific discourse of Old Testament genealogy. The book appeared in Ostromir's entourage, which included quite a few literate people. In addition to Deacon Grigorii and two other scribes of the Gospel, the major's circle also contained at least two literate members of the lower clergy (*diaks*), Petr and Prokhor, who left graffiti in St. Sophia in Novgorod.⁴⁵ These literati were capable of producing short narrative texts on royalty for Ostromir and also possibly for his children. According to the *Primary Chronicle*, one of Ostromir's children, Vyshata, accompanied Rostislav Volodimirovich when he left for Tmutorokan.⁴⁶ We do not need to concern here with other chronicle references to Vyshata and his son Ian. There is much uncertainty about whether the chronicler knew only one Vyshata, son of Ostromir, or two different Vyshatas.⁴⁷ What is important is that, judging by his naming politics, Rostislav had a keen interest in stories about Novgorodian princes. At the same time, Vyshata's family had cultural resources for adapting and recording such stories. It is conceivable that Vyshata commissioned a church book which contained a colophon or marginalium with the Riurik legend. Following the example of the Gospel commissioned by Vyshata's father Ostromir, we can conventionally call that hypothetical book the "Vyshata Gospel."

43 D.S. Likhachev, "Ustnye letopisi' v sostave Povesti vremennykh let," in *Istoricheskie zapiski* 17 (Moscow: Izdatel'stvo Akademii nauk SSSR, 1945), 213–222; D.S. Likhachev, "Povest' vremennykh let: Istoriko-literaturnyi ocherk," in Likhachev, ed., *Povest' vremennykh let*, 2nd ed. (St. Petersburg: Nauka, 1996), 276–277.

44 B.A. Rybakov, "Ostromirova letopis'," *Voprosy istorii* 1956, no. 10: 46–59.

45 Gippius, Mikheev, "O podgotovke," 162.

46 Cross, *RPC*, 144; Ostrowski, *PVL*, lines 163,24–163,25c.

47 For different views, see A.V. Poppe, "A.A. Shakhmatov i spornye nachala russkogo letopisaniia," *DRVM* 3 (33) (2008), 80–82; Vadim [Vadym] Aristov, "Iz biografii Iania Vyshaticha," *Ruthenica* 9 (2010), 141–142.

Vyshata was a relative of Rostislav and a member of his court. As we have seen, these categories of high-ranking people actively contributed to the commemoration of Rus princes. Rostislav died and was buried in Tmutorokan in 1067. He had no brothers to take care of his funeral, and his sons, including the elder one called Riurik, were still small. Rostislav's wife is an elusive character who never appears in extant medieval sources.⁴⁸ Rostislav's funeral was apparently curated by his non-royal relatives and retainers, such as Vyshata. The patrons of Rostislav's funeral had to interact with the local clergy to secure his commemoration. It was Vyshata who was probably responsible for transmitting the Riurik legend to the brethren of the Caves in Kyiv during the commemoration of Rostislav. One of these Kyivan monks, Nikon, resided in Tmutorokan during Rostislav's reign. Nikon was a co-founder of the Caves monastery in Kyiv, but, for unclear reasons, left it for Tmutorokan and established a monastery near the town. Nikon was well connected with royalty. After Rostislav's death, Nikon facilitated, at the request of the citizens of Tmutorokan, the restoration of Gleb Sviatoslavich to the Tmutorokan throne. Then Nikon returned to the Caves monastery, where he earned the trust of Abbot Feodosii and won the succession struggle after Feodosii's death in 1074, becoming the superior of the monastery. Nikon remained in charge of the Caves monastery until his death in 1088.⁴⁹

Nikon was a man of books, though the nature of his engagement with book culture is debatable. Shakhmatov believed that Nikon was responsible for the compilation of a monastic chronicle that reported, among other things, events in Tmutorokan and the southern region in general, but not the Riurik legend. However, modern scholars have conflicting views on Nikon's contribution to chronicle writing because there is no hard textual evidence confirming the existence of his chronicle.⁵⁰ It looks as though Nikon's involvement with books

48 Later sources claim that Rostislav was married to a Hungarian princess called Lanka, but this is a myth perpetuated by early modern chronicists and later historians. See Aleksandr Musin, Natalia Voitseshchuk, "Peremyshl' ta 'Hirs'ka kraina Peremyshl's'ka': Mezhi zemli [ta] hrani istorii," in Volodymyr Aleksandrovych and others, eds., *Kniazha doba: Istorii i kultura* (Lviv: Instytut ukrainoznavstva im. I. Kryp'iakevycha, 2020), 96–99.

49 On Nikon, see Iu. A. Artamonov, "Nikon," in Mel'nikova, Petrukhin, *Drevniaia Rus'*, 542.

50 Shakhmatov asserted that Nikon started reworking an earlier chronicle compilation in 1072 and added his continuation to it in 1073. According to Mikheev, Nikon was either the author or one of the main informants of a compilation which appeared between 1078 and 1087. Gippius dates the compilation that Shakhmatov attributed to Nikon to the early 1060s (with subsequent continuation in the 1070s) but does not explain the role of Nikon in it. Finally, Alan Timberlake rejects the existence of Nikon's compilation of 1073, calling it a chimera. Shakhmatov, *Istoriiia*, 1, 1: 286–309; S.M. Mikheev, *Kto pisal "Povest' vremennykh let"* (Moscow: Indrik, 2011), 126; Gippius, "Do i posle Nachal'nogo svoda," 61; Alan Timber-

was more technical than creative. Upon his return from Tmutorokan, he gave all his possessions to Feodosii and became engaged in bookbinding.⁵¹ Could Nikon's possessions have included a book with the Riurik legend? As we have seen, *memoria* required donations. The commemoration of Rostislav may have involved the donation of the Vyshata Gospel, which contained the Riurik story, to Nikon's monastery in Tmutorokan. If so, the Riurik legend travelled from Novgorod to Kyiv via Tmutorokan, with members of Rostislav's retinue and Nikon facilitating the transition. Like other theories of the transmission of the legend, this scenario is of course hypothetical. But it is highly probable for several reasons. It relies on paraliturgical memory, which, unlike hypothetical chronicle writing, is well documented for the eleventh century. Also, Nikon was perfectly positioned to transmit the Riurik story from Rostislav's court, where the legend surely circulated, to the Caves monastery, whose monks later utilised the tale about Riurik for the *Primary Chronicle*. Whether the Vyshata Gospel existed or not, the story about the invitation of Riurik travelled as part of paraliturgical commemoration, which easily crossed regional and institutional boundaries.

Paraliturgical memory derived from and supported liturgical practices. But, unlike *memoria ecclesiae*, which relied on complex canonised texts and sophisticated church rituals, paraliturgical remembrance utilised simple but efficient and accessible devices, like short texts in the forms of graffiti, colophons, and marginalia. According to Oleksiy Tolochko, in early Rus such "elementary notations" performed the function of historical writing which aimed not at recording the past but at fixing the present "so that it would not vanish from memory."⁵² In my view, in the eleventh century most of such short pieces still belonged not to history writing but to paraliturgical memory, which of course concerned with the present but also offered its own version of the past. Grigorii's colophon discusses the recent past, such as the history of Iziaslav's and Volodimir's reigns. At the same time, Grigorii engages the distant mythological past of the Old and New Testaments. Paraliturgical memory also carried embryonic royal mythology, as evidenced by the commemorative graffiti containing the title of tsar. As we saw, the Riurik legend could have also been part of

lake, "The Origins of the Boris and Gleb Cycle in the Chronicle," *Zeitschrift für Slawistik* 55, no. 1 (2010), 44, 46.

51 Muriel Heppell, ed., *The Paterik of the Kievan Caves Monastery* (Cambridge, MA: Distributed by Harvard University Press for the Ukrainian Research Institute, Harvard University, 1989), 40–41, 51–53.

52 Oleksiy P. Tolochko, "Christian Chronology, Universal History, and the Origin of Chronicle Writing in Rus," in Ildar H. Garipzanov, ed. *Historical Narrative and Christian Identity on A European Periphery* (Turnhout: Brepols Publishers, 2011), 214.

paraliturgical family remembrance. The paraliturgical memory of the Christian elite was future orientated. Rememberers sought to secure commemoration and salvation with records of charity, donations, and biographical notes. Future remembrance also relied on paraliturgical ceremonies, which were simple but notable, like hitting a platter at the abbot's meal. Engaged in a constant dialogue with *memoria ecclesiae*, paraliturgical memory expressed the emotions of individual members of the elite and strengthened family identity. Commemorative activities also created larger communities of rememberers by bringing together princes, their relatives and retainers, monks and scribes.

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