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The case of Agafa-Konchaka in the Tver'-Moscow conflict of 1317–1318

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Abstract. The political situation in North-east Rus' at the beginning of the 14th century was dominated by the Moscow-Tver' rivalry. In the course of these struggles, Agafa – the sister of Khan Uzbek and at the same time the wife of Prince Yurii of Moscow – was taken captive by Tver'. The issue of her captivity, and then also her death, was of great importance for the further fate of the rivalry between the rulers of Moscow and Tver'. The article shows how the case of Agafa was used as an instrument to achieve intended political goals at all costs.

Keywords: *Agafa-Konchaka, Khan Uzbek, Mikhail Yaroslavich, Yurii Daniilovich of Moscow, Golden Horde, Moscow, Tver', yarlyk.*

Anotacija. XIV a. pradžioje – totorių dominavimo Šiaurės rytų Rusijoje laikotarpiu – šiame regione susikūrė du konkuruojantys politiniai centrai: Maskva ir Tverė. Šių kunigaikštysčių kovų metu į Tverės nelaisvę pateko Maskvos kunigaikščio Jurijaus Danilovičiaus žmona ir Aukso ordos chano Uzbeko sesuo Agafija. Jos patekimas į nelaisvę ir greita mirtis neiškiomis aplinkybėmis turėjo didelės reikšmės tolesniam Maskvos ir Tverės valdovų konfliktui. Šiame straipsnyje nagrinėjama, kaip Agafijos mirtis buvo instrumentalizuota, siekiant norimų politinių tikslų bet kokia kaina.

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Esminiai žodžiai: Agafija-Končaka, chanas Uzbekas, Michailas Jaroslavovičius, Jurijus Danilovičius, Aukso orda, Maskva, Tverė, jarlykas.

Introduction

At the beginning of the fourteenth century, North-east Rus', which was under Tatar control from the mid-thirteenth century, was the arena of fierce competition between the princes of Tver' and Moscow for the grand duke's throne and the associated political dominance in the region. In historiography, attention has long been drawn to the fact that both political centres fighting each other presented similar military and economic potential, and in principle it was difficult to predict which side would achieve the final victory.¹ A sensible assessment of the circumstances even allows us to say that the initial situation of Tver' was slightly better than that of Moscow,² but the achievement of the Grand Ducal throne in Vladimir depended not only on the stakeholders themselves. The real possessor of the yarlyk opening the way to Vladimir was the actual overlord of this part of Rus', i.e. the Khan of the Golden Horde.³ The ruler of Moscow, Yurii Daniilovich, wishing to take the grand-ducal yarlyk from the prince of Tver', Mikhail Yaroslavich, knew that the Tatar Khan would ultimately decide on this issue. The Moscow prince managed to have his Tver' rival first deprived of the Vladimir throne, and then also killed. One of the reasons for such a tragic finale of the Moscow-Tver' rivalry was the accusations that Mikhail was responsible for the death of the Khan Uzbek's sister, Agafa-Konchaka. Although the conflict between Yurii Daniilovich and Mikhail Yaroslavich is revealed quite well in the sources and duly elaborated in the historical literature,⁴ the matter of Agafa-Konchaka's death is treated quite incidentally. A few

¹ PASZKIEWICZ, Henryk. *Początki Rusi*. Kraków: Polska Akademia Umiejętności, 1996 (first edition in 1954), s. 346–347; FENNELL, John. *The Emergence of Moscow. 1304–1359*. Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1968, p. 57.

² PASZKIEWICZ, Henryk. *Wzrost potęgi Moskwy*. Kraków: Polska Akademia Umiejętności, 2000, s. 177.

³ GREKOW, Borys; JAKUBOWSKI, Aleksander. *Złota Orda i jej upadek*. Warszawa: Książka i Wiedza, 1953, s. 180.

⁴ The conflict between Mikhail Yaroslavich and Yurii Daniilovich has been considered in many publications devoted to the history of medieval Rus' and its contacts with the Tatars. Among the most important works, it is worth mentioning: СОЛОВЬЕВ, Сергей. *Древнерусские князья*. Санкт-Петербург: Наука, 2010, с. 236–240; i СОЛОВЬЕВ, Сергей. *История России 1054–1462*. Москва: Издательство Фолио, 2001, кн. 2, т. 3–4, с. 279–289; БОРЗАКОВСКИЙ, Владимир. *История Тверского княжества*. Москва: Рубиежи XXI, 2006, с. 103–122; ПРЕСНЯКОВ, Александр. *Образование Великорусского государства*. Петроград: Типография Я. Башмаков и Ко, 1918, с. 121–135; ЧЕРЕПНИН, Лев. *Образование руссково централизованного государств в XIV–XV веках. Очерки социально-экономической и политической истории Руси*. Москва: Издательство социально-экономической литературы, 1960, с. 455–475; FENNELL, John. *The Emergence of Moscow*. Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1968, pp. 60–90; КЛЮГ, Эккехард. *Княжество Тверское (1247–1485 гг.)*. Тверь:

source references to this topic actually make it appear as interesting and mysterious, but still only thread of a larger, more important whole. Meanwhile, a closer look at this issue may shed a little more light on the history of Moscow-Tver' strife in the first half of the 14th century, with the issue of the ability to discern the Tatar factor as an important element in politics at that time.

Between Tver' and Moscow. The struggle for domination in north-eastern Rus'

The genesis of the Moscow-Tver' conflict dates back to 1304, when Andrey Alexandrovich (the last of the sons of Alexander Nevsky) died. From that moment on, the prince of Tver', Mikhail Yaroslavich, as the last surviving grandson of Yaroslav Vsevolodovich (1238–46), had dynastic rights to the grand ducal throne, which was confirmed by a yarlyk granted to him the following year by Khan Tokhta.⁵ Yuriy Daniilovich of Moscow did not wish to reconcile himself with this decision, and, taking advantage of Novgorod the Great's reluctance to accept the influence of Tver' over Volkhov, constantly contested Mikhail's position in North-east Rus'. No wonder that he tried to pacify his rival by organising two ineffective expeditions directly against Moscow.⁶ The picture of the scale of the conflict for influence in the region is also complemented by the fights waged by the princes from Tver' and Moscow for Pereyaslavl'- Zalesky and Nizhny Novgorod. Although Mikhail was unable to defeat Yuriy and fully enforce the rights resulting from the fact of holding the throne of Vladimir, he still held the grand duke's yarlyk in his hands. The chance to change Tokhta's decision appeared only in 1312, when news reached Rus' about the rather unexpected death of the khan, after whom power in the Golden Horde was taken over by Uzbek.⁷

РИФ, 1994, с. 99–114; НИКОЛАЕВ, Б. А. (ed.). *Михаил Ярославич Великий князь Тверской и Владимирский*. Тверь: Леан, 1995; ГОРСКИЙ, Антон. *Москва и Орда*. Москва: Наука, 2000, с. 42–59; ГОРСКИЙ, Антон. *Средневековая Русь. О чем говорят источники*. Москва: Ломоносовъ, 2016, с. 129–143; БОРИСОВ, Николай. *Политика Московских князей. Конец XIII – первая половина XIV в.* Москва: Издательство Московского Университета, 1999, с. 85–150; БОРИСОВ, Николай. *Иван Калита*. Москва: Молодая Гвардия, 2005, с. 80–125. (Although this work is a biography of Prince Ivan Kalita, the author devoted a lot of attention to the political activities of his brother Yuriy); БОРИСОВ, Николай. *Возвышение Москвы*. Москва: Русский Мир, 2011, с. 222–241.

⁵ Рогожский летописец. *Полное собрание русских летописей* (further ПСРЛ). Москва: Языки русской культуры, 2000, т. 15, стб. 35; ГОРСКИЙ, Антон. *Москва и Орда*. Москва: Наука, 2000, с. 42–44; ПОЧЕКАЕВ, Роман. *Цари Ордынские. Биографии ханов и правителей Золотой Орды*. Санкт-Петербург: Евразия, 2010, с. 84–85.

⁶ БОРИСОВ, Николай. *Возвышение Москвы*. Москва: Русский Мир, 2011, с. 228–229.

⁷ ПОЧЕКАЕВ, Роман. *Цари Ордынские. Биографии ханов и правителей Золотой Орды*. Санкт-Петербург: Евразия, 2010, с. 87 (for rumours about the mysterious death of Khan Tokhta see footnote 185 p. 288).

In accordance with the rule established by the Tatars, Mikhail went to the Horde to obtain confirmation of his yarlyk,⁸ but his stay with the Tatars was prolonged, and the Novgorodians took advantage of this. Once again they rebelled against Tverite rule and sent envoys to Moscow asking for help. Again, Yurii's influence was restored over the Volkhov. Ultimately, however, the Tver' ruler was confirmed by Khan Uzbek on the grand ducal throne, and after returning to Rus', he began to subjugate Novgorod again. At the same time, in 1315, the khan, probably after Mikhail's complaints, summoned Yurii Daniilovich to him.⁹ Contrary to appearances, the trip to the Horde was not associated with the penalties that could befall the Muscovite ruler for following a policy contrary to the interests of the grand duke of Vladimir, who was supported by Uzbek. Quite the opposite happened, for, as recorded in the Nikon Chronicle, under the year 1317:

*Приде князь великы Юрьи Даниловичь Московскій на великое княжение из Орды женився, у царя сестру его понявъ именемъ Кончаку; егда же крестися и наречено бысть ей имя Агафіа.*¹⁰

Reasons for Yurii Daniilovich's promotion and his marriage with Agafa-Konchaka

Older historiography eagerly emphasised that Yurii used his almost two-years' stay in the Horde extremely fruitfully. Nikolai Karamzin emphasised that the prince did obeissance and made gifts all this time in order to earn the young khan's "great favour" as a result.¹¹ "He wasted no time", wrote Sergey Solovyov¹² and Vladimir Borzakovsky;¹³ "he managed to win Uzbek's favour" – these are the general statements of Andrey Ekzemplyarsky¹⁴ and Henryk Paszkiewicz.¹⁵ The opinions of some historians cited here indicate that, according to them, it was the Muscovite prince who was the active party and led his game to change Uzbek's will regarding the yarlyk to the throne of Vladimir. It is difficult to say whether this was actually the case, because the sources are silent on this subject. Supporters of the belief that Yurii actively used his time in the Horde

⁸ ПОЛУБОЯРИНОВА, Марина. *Русские люди в Золотой Орде*. Москва: Наука, 1978, с. 8.

⁹ FENNELL, John. *The Emergence of Moscow*. Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1968, pp. 75–76; ГОРСКИЙ, Антон. *Москва и Орда*. Москва: Наука, 2000, с. 48–49.

¹⁰ Патриаршая или никоновская летопись. *ПСРЛ*. Москва: Языки русской культуры, 2000, т. 10, с. 180.

¹¹ КАРАМЗИН, Николай. *История государства Российского*. Санктпетербург: Типография Н. Греча, 1819, т. IV с. 178.

¹² СОЛОВЬЕВ, Сергей. *История России*. Москва: Издательство Фолио, 2001, кн. 2, т. 3–4, с. 285.

¹³ БОРЗАКОВСКИЙ, Владимир. *История Тверского княжества*. Москва: Рубежи XXI, 2006, с. 114.

¹⁴ ЭКЗЕМПЛЯРСКИЙ, Андрей. *Великие и удельные князя северной Руси в татарский период с 1238 до 1505 г. Биографические очерки. т. 1, Великие князя владимирские и владими́ро-московские*. Санктпетербург: Типография императорский академии наук, 1889, с. 63.

¹⁵ PASZKIEWICZ, Henryk. *Wzrost potęgi Moskwy*. Kraków: Polska Akademia Umiejętności, 2000, s. 178.

must therefore be satisfied with the realistic observation of Nikolai Kostomarov that basically nothing is known about what steps the Muscovite ruler took in the Horde to win the khan's favour and the hand in marriage of his sister.¹⁶ Perhaps attempts to find an answer to the question of what the Muscovite prince did in the Horde are completely unfounded, and these considerations can be concluded with the opinion expressed many years ago by Feliks Koneczny that Yurii was simply "lucky at the Saray court".¹⁷

After all, Uzbek is considered to have been one of the greatest rulers in the history of the Golden Horde,¹⁸ and he had to show his political talent and skill immediately after Tokhta's death. The unexpectedly deceased khan left no decisions regarding his successor, but the Tatar elites wanted his son Ilbasar to be the new ruler of the Horde. So, Uzbek had to make efforts to eliminate his rival and his supporters.¹⁹ This example shows how doubtful it is that a man who was able to fight effectively for power in the Golden Horde would allow himself to be manipulated by the prince of Moscow in matters concerning the *yarlyk*. One cannot ignore the fact that it was the khan who decided who would sit on the grand ducal throne in Rus', and it is first and foremost in the motivations of Uzbek that the reasons for the decision to entrust this function to Yurii should be sought. The only trace of the Muscovite prince's activity may be that he came to the Horde with Novgorodian envoys,²⁰ who certainly did not arrive there empty-handed. It should be remembered that even if the Novgorodians manifested their support for the Muscovite ruler,²¹ the khan's final decision was preceded by quite long calculations.

The rejection of thinking about the causative role of the prince broadens possibilities for interpretation. Already Arseniy Nasonov reversed the perspective and pointed out that Yurii was not summoned to the Horde to pacify him. According to the Russian historian, Uzbek planned to introduce a completely new political concept to Rus', which he preferred to base on the prince of Moscow rather than Mikhail. Hence, Yurii was given not only a *yarlyk*, but he was also given Tatar reinforcements, advisors headed by Kavgadyi, who had extensive powers, and additionally, through marriage with Konchaka, he was related to the Horde's khan by family ties.²² The complete change in

¹⁶ КОСТОМАРОВ, Николай. *Господство дома Владимира. Русская история в жизнеописаниях ее главнейших деятелей*. Москва: фирма СТД, 2008, с. 171.

¹⁷ KONECZNY, Feliks. *Dzieje Rosji*, т. 1: *Do roku 1499*. Komorów: Wydawnictwo Antyk Marcin Dybowski, 2003, s. 380.

¹⁸ General observations on Uzbek rule in Horde, see: ТРЕПАВЛОВ, Вадим. *Золотая Орда в XIV столетии*. Москва: Квадрига, 2010, с. 48–49.

¹⁹ The details of Uzbek's efforts for power presented Arsenij Nasonow: НАСОНОВ, Арсений. *Монголы и Русь. История татарской политики на Руси*. Санкт-Петербург: Наука, 2006, с. 279–280 (note 5).

²⁰ Новгородская четвертая летопись. ПСРЛ. Москва: Языки русской культуры, 2000, т. 4, ч. 1 с. 256.

²¹ This was suggested, for instance, by Anton Gorskiy: ГОРСКИЙ, Антон. *Москва и Орда*. Москва: Наука, 2000, с. 49.

²² НАСОНОВ, Арсений. *Монголы и Русь. История татарской политики на Руси*. Санкт-Петербург: Наука, 2006, с. 281.

the current balance of power in Rus', which was under Uzbek's rule, required him to thoroughly understand the situation and consider whether his candidate really was a trustworthy man. Therefore, Yuri's stay of almost two years in the Horde should not come as a surprise. Careful consideration of this decision was all the more necessary because the khan also changed the previous method of collecting tribute, which until then had been done by *baskaks*. According to the new concept, Tatar officials were to be replaced by Rus'ian princes, over whom more strict control was to be extended. This was to facilitate quarrels between them thanks to skilful juggling of the grand duke's *yarlyk*.²³

The marriages of Rus'ian princes with women from the Golden Horde were nothing special. Just as in the period preceding the arrival of the Tatars in Rus', when local princes often married Polovtsian princesses, later they did not avoid similar matrimonial arrangements with the new rulers of the steppe. Quite often, princes from Rostov, with whom Yuri Daniilovich had dynastic connections, were quite often involved in such affinities.²⁴ Nikolai Borisov, who examined the issue of the marriage of the Muscovite ruler with Konchaka, rightly drew attention to the history of Uzbek's efforts to marry one of the Tatar princesses named Tulunbay to the Mamluk sultan of Egypt.²⁵ Negotiations on this matter lasted from 1314 and ended only in 1320. Finalising the transaction was extremely costly for the Egyptian side, as the Tatar khan demanded a large dowry for the hand in marriage of a representative of the family of Genghis Khan. In the end, however, the whole transaction and arduous arrangements did not have a happy ending. Disappointed with his new wife, the sultan quickly dismissed her and, despite Uzbek's intervention, did not change his decision.²⁶ The story of Tulunbay is important because it shows a few things worth emphasising. The marriage was preceded by long negotiations, its conclusion involving payments to the Golden Horde khan, who was far from indifferent to the fate of the married princess. His complaints addressed to Sultan Al-Malik an Nasir are very telling, in which he expressed dissatisfaction with the fact that a Tatar princess and representative of the Genghisid family was treated unworthily despite her high birth. The surviving records show that Uzbek preferred the truth about her death to confirmation of rumours that the sultan gave her to one of his mamluks.²⁷ Taking into account the above observations, there is no doubt that

²³ ТРЕПАВЛОВ, Вадим. *Золотая Орда в XIV столетии*. Москва: Квадрига, 2010, с. 48–49.

²⁴ In 1302, the widowed father of Yuri Daniilovich's first wife, Konstantin Borisovich Rostovsky married the daughter of a Tatar noble. ПРЕСНЯКОВ, Александр. *Образование Великорусского государства*. Петроград: Типография Я. Башмаков и Ко, 1918, с. 129 (note 1); БОРИСОВ, Николай. *Иван Калита*. Москва: Молодая Гвардия, 2005, с. 90–91.

²⁵ Ibid., с. 90.

²⁶ GREKOW, Borys; JAKUBOWSKI, Aleksander. *Złota Orda*. Warszawa: Książka i Wiedza, 1953, s. 84–85.

²⁷ Сборник материалов, относящихся к истории Золотой Орды, т. 1: *Извлечения из сочинений арабских*. Ed. В. Г. Тизенгаусен. Санктпетербург: изд. на иждивение гр. С. Г. Строганова, 1884, с. 527.

the marriage of the khan's sister with the prince of Moscow had political significance, and her devotion to the Rus'ian ruler was undoubtedly his distinction. The marriage was preceded by the baptism of Konchaka, who along with this sacrament received a new name: Agafa.

Mikhail of Tver' and the death of Agafa

When the Muscovite prince and the Tatar envoy Kavgadyi returned to Rus', there was a meeting with the prince of Tver', accompanied by the Suzdal' princes in Kostroma. The chronicles mentioning this event contain a record that the meeting was long: *стояша о Волгу дълго врьмя*,²⁸ which may suggest that Mikhail had some reluctance to accept Uzbek's decisions regarding the rule of the principality of Vladimir. Finally, he accepted the khan's will and withdrew to Tver', where he prudently proceeded to strengthen the local kremlin.²⁹ Indeed, shortly from then on, Yurii Daniilovich made an attempt finally to subdue his Tverite rival and, at the end of the year, marched his army into Mikhail's lands. However, Mikhail looked to his defence, and managed to defeat a Moscow army that was supported by the Tatars on December 22, 1317 at the battle of Bortenevo. The defeated Yurii managed to escape from the battlefield and take refuge in Novgorod, but his brother Boris and his wife Agafa were taken prisoner in Tver'. In the face of Yurii's defeat, Kavgadyi started negotiations with Mikhail.³⁰

The chronicles mentioning the battle and the taking of Agafa prisoner also inform us that during her stay in Tver', Yurii's wife died. Although the issue of her death was of great importance for the further fate of Mikhail and Yurii, it has long been noticed that the accounts preserved on this subject are very ambiguous and do not help to learn the truth about this event.³¹ It is not known when it happened or what was the cause of her death. The Tver' chronicles are silent about Agafa's death, the Nikon chronicle mentions a rumour that Uzbek's sister was poisoned in Tver',³² the poisoning was mentioned directly in the *Troitskaya letopis'*³³ and the Sofiysky Chronicles,³⁴ and still other

²⁸ *Рогожский летописец. ПСРЛ*. Москва: Языки русской культуры, 2000, т. 15, стб. 37.

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ FENNELL, John. *The Emergence of Moscow*. Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1968, pp. 83–84; ГОРСКИЙ, Антон. Москва и Орда. Москва: Наука, 2000, с. 50; for detailed information on the Battle of Bortenevo see: МАЛЫГИН, Петр. Сражение 22 декабря 1317 года. Предпосылки, летописные источники и проблема локализации. In: *Михаил Ярославич Великий князь Тверской и Владимирский*. Тверь: Леан, 1995, с. 329–352.

³¹ СОЛОВЬЕВ, Сергей. *Древнерусские князья*. Санкт-Петербург: Наука, 2010, с. 239; БОРЗАКОВСКИЙ, Владимир. *История Тверского княжества*. Москва: Рубежи XXI, 2006, с. 118, 346–347 (note 473).

³² *Патриаршая или никоновская. ПСРЛ*. Москва: Языки русской культуры, 2000, т. 10, р. 181.

³³ ПРИСЁЛКОВ, Михаил. *Троицкая летопись. Реконструкция текста*. Санкт-Петербург: Наука, 2002, с. 356.

³⁴ Симеоновская летопись. *ПСРЛ*. Москва: Знак, 2007, т. 18, с. 88

versions can be found in the First Novgorodian Chronicle. The younger redaction of this source contains the uncommented information that Agafa died in captivity (тамо умориша),³⁵ and in the older redaction it was written that she had been put to death (тамо ю и смерти предаша).³⁶ The latter message may therefore suggest that a trial of the captive princess was held in Tver'. The issue of the death of Yurii's wife is obscured by an interesting, isolated record of the Sofiysky Chronicle, which was once pointed out by Ekkehard Klug.³⁷ According to this account, Prince Boris was killed in Tverite captivity, but Agafa was spared: *и тамо [in Tver' – M.G.] умориша кн(я)зя Бориса, а кн(я)з(и)ню Юрьеву и Кончака не убиша*.³⁸ This intriguing information, however, is not confirmed by other sources, according to which Prince Boris died only in 1320 and was buried in Vladimir on the Klyazma.³⁹

The chronicle testimonies cited above clearly show how confusing the issue of Agafa's death in Tverite captivity is. Even so, as Vladimir Borzakowski pointed out many years ago, her very presence on a military expedition seems quite strange, and thus also mysterious.⁴⁰ Unravelling the mystery of Agafa's death is also not facilitated by the lack of information about the moment when it happened. It is known that Yurii did not want to accept defeat, and, being in Novgorod, gathered more forces, enlisted the support of Pskov and at the beginning of 1318 he moved against Tver' again. Ultimately, no battle took place, and both sides began to negotiate. The talks resulted in the signing of a tripartite agreement between Mikhail Yaroslavich, Yurii Daniilovich and Novgorod in February 1318.⁴¹ As noted in the earlier redaction of the First Novgorodian Chronicle, after the agreement was finalised, both princes agreed to go to the Horde for further settlements, and Mikhail declared the release of Yuri's brother and wife held in Tver'.⁴² This modest source reference seems to suggest that in February 1318 Agafa was still alive. At about the same time, as a pledge of his innocence and loyalty the Tver' ruler sent his own 12-year-old son, Konstantin to the khan.⁴³ It is doubtful whether the prince

³⁵ *Новгородская первая летопись старшего и младшего изводов*. Ed. А. Насонов. Москва: Издательство Академии Наук СССР, 1950, с. 338.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, с. 96.

³⁷ КЛЮГ, Эккехард. *Княжество Тверское (1247–1485 гг.)*. Тверь: РИФ, 1994, с. 141 (note 76).

³⁸ Софийская первая летопись старшего извода. *ПСРЛ*. Москва: Языки русской культуры, 2000, т. 6, вып. 1, стб. 375.

³⁹ Московский летописный свод конца XV века. *ПСРЛ*, т. XXV. Москва: Языки славянской культуры, 2004, т. 25, с. 166.

⁴⁰ БОРЗАКОВСКИЙ, Владимир. *История Тверского княжества*. Москва: Рубежи XXI, 2006, с. 116.

⁴¹ For a detailed description of the arrangement and the circumstances of the conclusion of these talks, see: КУЧКИН, Владимир. *Договорные грамоты московских князей XIV века. Внешнеполитические договоры*. Москва: Древлехранилище, 2003, с. 11–67.

⁴² *Новгородская первая летопись старшего и младшего изводов*. Ed. А. Насонов. Москва: Издательство Академии Наук СССР, 1950, с. 96.

⁴³ Рогожский летописец. *ПСРЛ*. Москва: Языки русской культуры, 2000, т. 15, стб. 38; БОРЗАКОВСКИЙ, Владимир. *История Тверского княжества*. Москва: Рубежи XXI, 2006, с. 116.

would have made such a gesture if he had had the life of Uzbek's sister on his conscience. Everything indicates that Agafa died at the earliest on the verge of spring 1318.

The mystery of the death of Uzbek's sister cannot be solved. However, there is no doubt that this event greatly complicated Mikhail's situation. It must be made clear that the Tverite ruler had no interest in the murder of his rival's wife.⁴⁴ The tempting thesis about a possible conspiracy or intrigue cannot be proven, so the only assumption is that Agafa's death was an unfortunate accident. However, Yurii Daniilovich decided to take advantage of the new situation. Upon hearing the news of his wife's death, Yurii most likely began to harden his position towards the prince of Tver'. While in February 1318 he was willing to negotiate, he deliberately rejected further negotiations. Sent from Tver', Alexei Markovich, who appeared in Moscow with: *посолством о любви*, was unceremoniously killed.⁴⁵ In addition, Yurii and Kavgadyi began to slander Mikhail in front of Uzbek.⁴⁶ So far, he was accused of financial embezzlement, which angered the khan so effectively that he began to starve Konstantin Mikhailovich, who was in Saray. Eventually, however, he released him from the Horde, and summoned Mikhail himself.⁴⁷

Trial of Mikhail

The tragically ended stay of the Tverite ruler in the Horde was accurately reported in an important work of Old Rus'ian literature, called "The life of Mikhail Yaroslavich".⁴⁸ Although this is a hagiographic work, aimed at presenting the prince as an innocently killed martyr – *strastoterpets* (*страстотерпец*)⁴⁹ – the fact that the probable author of this work was an eyewitness of the events he described, the value of the information contained in this source cannot be underestimated. "The Life" permanently emphasises

⁴⁴ КЛЮГ, Эккехард. *Княжество Тверское (1247–1485 гг.)*. Тверь: РИФ, 1994, с. 108; ГОРСКИЙ, Антон. Москва и Орда. Москва: Наука, 2000, с. 50.

⁴⁵ Рогожский летописец. *ПСРЛ*. Москва: Языки русской культуры, 2000, т. 15, стб. 38.

⁴⁶ СОЛОВЬЕВ, Сергей. *Древнерусские князья*. Санкт-Петербург: Наука. 2010, с. 239; KONECZNY, Feliks. *Dzieje Rosji*, т. 1: *Do roku 1499*. Komorów: Wydawnictwo Antyk Marcin Dybowski, 2003, s. 380.

⁴⁷ Рогожский летописец. *ПСРЛ*. Москва: Языки русской культуры, 2000, т. 15, стб. 38.

⁴⁸ Житие Михаила Ярославича Тверского. *Библиотека литературы Древней Руси*. Ed. Д. Лихачев et al. Санкт-Петербург: Наука, 2005, т. 6, с. 68–91.

⁴⁹ The author of "The life of Mikhail Yaroslavich" was most likely the spiritual father of the prince, Ihumen Aleksander. The original version of the work was written down relatively early, in the years 1319–1320. КУЧКИН, Владимир. *Повести о Михаиле Тверском. Историко-текстологическое исследование*. Москва: Наука, 1974, с. 224–225; 232–233; КЛЮГ, Эккехард. *Княжество Тверское (1247–1485 гг.)*. Тверь: РИФ, 1994, с. 109; КЛОСС, Борис. *Избранные труды. Очерки по истории русской агиографии XIV–XVI веков*. Москва: Языки русской культуры, 2001, т. 2, с. 175. Aleksandr Khoroshev pointed out that the cult of Mikhail as a *strastoterpets* was a hagiographic device aimed at emphasising the need for unity amongst Rus'ian princes and indicating what mutual feuds and disputes lead to. ХОРОШЕВ, Александр. *Политическая история русской канонизации (X–XVI вв.)*. Москва: Издательство Московского университета, 1986, с. 78–79.

the innocence of the prince of Tver'. When Mikhail's fights with Yurii and Kavgadyi are described, the author points out that Mikhail was only defending himself. His military actions were justified, because, as written in the source, Yurii's conduct was very cruel.⁵⁰ In the light of this work, Mikhail's resistance was not motivated by a desire to fight for power, but by the need to defend his subjects against a Muscovite-Tatar invasion. The fair fight ended with the righteous victory of the Tverite ruler, who was supported by his patron saint, Archangel Michael the Taxiarch, at the significant battle of Bortenevo. Recalling this battle, the author of the work, unlike the chroniclers, did not mention a word about taking Agafa and Prince Boris prisoner. It was emphasised that the Tatar leader Kavgadyi, despite his hostile actions, was received in Tver' with dignity, and showered with gifts.⁵¹

The above-mentioned Kavgadyi – undoubtedly the greatest “villain” of “The Life” – ignored Mikhail's good will and continued his political game with Yurii, which, as has already been noted, ended in the summons of the Tverite prince to the khan. When he set out for Saray, the prince of Tver' had a bad feeling from the beginning and expected that he might die. Despite this knowledge, he travelled to the Horde with the conviction that it was his duty to lay down his life for his people. When his sons tried to persuade him to give up the trip, Mikhail gave them an eloquent answer:

*царь не требуетъ вас, детей моихъ, ни иного кого, но моей головы хочетъ (...)*лучши ми есть нынѣ положити душу свою за многия душа.⁵²

On September 6, 1318, the prince sailed along the Don to the shores of the Azov Sea and from there continued his journey to the capital of the khan. On the spot, however, it turned out that the case of the accusations against the ruler of Tver' was not particularly urgent, because his trial was delayed for almost six weeks, and additionally Uzbek assigned Mikhail a personal escort as the prince awaited trial. This information is quite puzzling, as it suggests that Uzbek did not feel any particular hostility towards the Tverite prince. Taking into account the story of Tulunbay cited at the beginning of this article, it is rather doubtful that the khan would have been indifferent to the fate of his sister. However, it is difficult to say anything about this, because “The life of Mikhail Yaroslavich” was written at a time when Uzbek was still alive, and Tver'-Tatar relations had not been undermined by Shevkal's rebellion of 1327.⁵³ The author was

⁵⁰ *Прииде князь Юрий ратию ко Тфери, совокупя всю землю Суздальскую, и с кровопийцем с Ковгадыемъ множество татаръ, и бесерменъ, и мордвы, и начаша жеици города и села. И бысть туга и скорбь велика, поймающе бо мужи, мучиша различными ранами и муками и смерти предаяху, а жены ихъ оскверниша погании. И пожгоша всю волость Тверскую и до Волги, и поидоша на другую страну Волги, в той странѣ то же, хотѣша сътворити. Житие Михаила Ярославича, с. 74–75.*

⁵¹ Ibid.

⁵² Ibid., с. 76.

⁵³ For this event, see the comprehensive study: FENNELL, John. The Tver Uprising of 1327. A Study of the Sources. *Jahrbücher für Geschichte Osteuropas*, 1967, Bd. 15, H. 2, pp. 161–179.

not free to write the full truth, and he was constrained in expressing his judgments; he covered the essence of the matter with biblical quotations, understatements and allusions.⁵⁴ Hence, in the work reveals reduced Uzbek's responsibility for the death of the Tverite ruler can be seen. The khan was presented as a person who, wanting to remain impartial, passed judgment on Mikhail over to his officials. Consequently, this and not another creation of the figure of Kavgadyi, who is considered the main culprit of the martyrdom of the prince of Tver'.⁵⁵

Despite the ideological burdens that affected the information provided in "The Life", it is worth taking a closer look at the issue of Mikhail's trial itself, as described in this work, which took place during the second half of November. The trial began by explaining the issues that provoked the summons of the Tver' prince to the Horde, i.e. the problem of tribute. Prosecutors presented the court with fabricated documentation, according to which the prince had hidden part of the fees owed to the khan. Mikhail was able to refute the accusations against him and even expose the lies of the slanderers. Those, undaunted by their embarrassment, then raised the issue of Agafa, and told the prince that: *княгиню Юрьеву повелѣлъ еси уморити*.⁵⁶ Faced with blame for Agafa's death, Mikhail was helpless, and this powerlessness is extremely intriguing. It is written in "The Life" that the prince began his defence by calling God as his witness and declaring that he had not even thought about killing Uzbek's sister: *глаголаше, яко «ни на мысли ми того сътворити*.⁵⁷ The mention of such an emotional explanation proves that Mikhail was not ready to deny the accusation of complicity in the murder of the khan's sister. This is in stark contrast with the way in which the prince of Tver' refuted accusations of appropriating part of the tribute. Contributions and taxes are inherently quantifiable and verifiable, and any discrepancies can be explained by meticulous summaries. Since Mikhail was able to defend himself against accusations of financial embezzlement and expose the falsified records, he must have known in advance what the main subject of the court hearing would be. This knowledge enabled him to prepare an appropriate line of defence. He had no such counter-arguments when the Agafa case was raised.

The question remains as to whether the issue was so hopeless that it could not be defended, or other factors were at play. In the absence of reliable information about the date and circumstances of Agafa's death, it can be assumed that the death of Uzbek's sister did not cause any controversy, until the accusations against Mikhail. This may explain the relatively good reception of the prince of Tver' immediately after his arrival at the khan's court, and his complete surprise when the matter of Yurii's wife was brought up. It

⁵⁴ КУЧКИН, Владимир. *Повести о Михаиле Тверском. Историко-текстологическое исследование*. Москва: Наука, 1974, с. 247.

⁵⁵ ЧЕРЕПНИН, Лев. *Образование руссково централизованного государств в XIV–XV веках. Очерки социально-экономической и политической истории Руси*. Москва: Издательство социально-экономической литературы, 1960, с. 496.

⁵⁶ Житие Михаила Ярославича, с. 78.

⁵⁷ Ibid., с. 80.

cannot be ruled out that the accusations that Mikhail contributed to Agafa's death were caused by this embarrassment of the accusers. Seeing that the prince of Tver' began to reveal political intrigues of his enemies, the accusers decided to make a new charge, according to which Mikhail was guilty of the death of the khan's sister. Perhaps, just as the evidence in the case of tax fraud was fabricated, so in this case they went for a lie. Who knows, maybe it was then that the first rumours about her possible poisoning or planned execution appeared. As has been shown, the prince of Tver' was surprised by such an accusation, he was unable to defend himself as effectively as in the case of allegations regarding tributes. Perhaps, in addition to swearing by God, Mikhail tried somehow to prove his innocence, but upon hearing of the fate of Agafa, the judges became very angry, which, according to the author of "The Life", completely blinded them.⁵⁸ Eventually, Mikhail was sentenced to shameful torture and death, which occurred on November 22, 1318.⁵⁹ Soon after, Mikhail's body was brought from Horde to Rus' and solemnly buried in Tver'.⁶⁰ It was there that the cult of the prince-martyr began to grow relatively quickly, and over time he became the first saint of Tver'.⁶¹

Opinions appeared in historiography that the role of Yurii of Moscow in these dramatic events for Prince Mikhail was secondary. Tatars with Kavgadyi at the forefront were responsible for the main course of events: military operations in Rus' and false accusations in court. According to Arsenyi Nasonov, Yurii was a tool in the hands of the Tatars.⁶² This was most rightly opposed by Lev Cherepnin, who stated that all Yurii's efforts to obtain a yarlyk at the expense of Mikhail indicate that the possibility of the active participation of the Moscow prince in the activities aimed at the execution of the ruler of Tver' should not be rejected.⁶³ The fact that Yurii was involved in Mikhail's death is best evidenced by the reaction of Dmitriy Mikhailovich "Groznyye Ochi", who a few years later murdered the Moscow prince in revenge for his father's death.⁶⁴

Leaving aside the fate of Prince Mikhail, it must be emphasised that the case of Agafa's death, raised in November 1318, was a kind of double-edged sword. By deciding to raise this issue, the accusers of the Tver' ruler, and above all Kavgadyi and Yurii of Moscow, took a huge risk. Instead of accepting Mikhail's guilt, Uzbek might as well have accused his brother-in-law of failing to keep his sister safe, especially since the circumstances of her being taken prisoner in Tver' were very embarrassing for Yurii. As

⁵⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁹ Ibid., p. 86.

⁶⁰ Description of the solemn funeral see: Тверская летопись. ПСРЛ. Москва: Языки русской культуры, 2000, т. 15, стб. 412-413.

⁶¹ ХОРОШЕВ, Александр. Политическая история, с. 94-95.

⁶² НАСОНОВ, Арсений. Монголы и Русь. История татарской политики на Руси. Санкт-Петербург: Наука, 2006, с. 285.

⁶³ ЧЕРЕПНИН, Лев. Образование руссково централизованного государств в XIV-XV веках. Очерки социально-экономической и политической истории Руси. Москва: Издательство социально-экономической литературы, 1960, с. 472.

⁶⁴ Патриаршая или никоновская. ПСРЛ. Москва: Языки русской культуры, 2000, т. 10, с. 189.

already noted, in face of the defeat at Bortenevo, the Moscow prince fled the battlefield, leaving his wife to fend for herself. An accomplice to Agafa's death may also have been Kavgadyi, who, while in Tver', took gifts from Mikhail, but failed to lead to the release of the khan's sister. Bringing the case of Agafa was very dangerous for Mikhail's accusers, and the fact that they decided to take such a step best shows how high the stakes were between the rulers of Moscow and Tver'. The risk taken paid off for Yurii, as Mikhail Yaroslavich lost his life. Such a result also proves that Yuri was much better informed than his opponent in matters of the Horde, probably thanks to his cooperation with Kavgadyi.

Mikhail died because his rival was able skilfully to use the circumstances of Agafa's death. The ruler of Tver', by holding Uzbek's sister captive, also consciously took a certain risk. Capturing a Tatar princess could be interpreted as a kind of demonstration of independence or disrespect to the khan.⁶⁵ The very fact that Mikhail did not let release her to Kavgadyi proves that he regarded her in terms of internal games with Yurii, and to some extent ignored her origin and the fact that she was sent to Rus' (for some purpose) by the khan himself. This could indeed infuriate Uzbek. The ruler of the Golden Horde could also be frightened by the growing strength of Mikhail, who at Bortenevo defeated Muscovite forces supported by Kavgadyi's troops. Tver' appeared to be too powerful a political centre, which led to the upsetting of the Golden Horde's policy of "balance of power" between the Rus'ian principalities.⁶⁶

Conclusions

The Tver'-Moscow conflict of the early 14th century was a fierce rivalry that took place at various levels: political, military and ecclesiastical. The case of Uzbek's sister Agafa-Konchaka shows that both sides tried to use every opportunity to slander their rival in front of the Tatar ruler. Her probably accidental death meant that Yurii of Moscow was able to accuse Mikhail successfully of contributing to the death of the khan's sister. Eventually, the prince of Tver' himself was killed in the Horde and became a saint, symbolising the unfortunate fate of Rus' under the Tatar Yoke. This inevitably affected the image of Yurii, who, regardless of the role of Kavgadyi emphasised in the sources, had the blood of his neighbour on his hands. The image of Mikhail, murdered by order of Uzbek, was written in such a way as to show him primarily as an innocently martyred saint. Meanwhile, it is worth considering what would have happened if Agafa had not died in Tverite captivity. What did Mikhail need her for? It should be remembered that he was a calculating ruler who did not shy away from brutal political games. Let

⁶⁵ ГОРСКИЙ, Антон. *Москва и Орда*. Москва: Наука, 2000, с. 51.

⁶⁶ ГРЕКОВ, Игорь. *Очерки по истории международных отношений Восточной Европы XIV-XVI вв.* Москва: Издательство восточной литературы, 1963, с. 30.

his slander of Metropolitan Peter for simony be a proof of this.⁶⁷ Regardless of how he was portrayed hagiographically in “The Life”, he was a consummate political player. He was supposed to promise Yurii the imminent release of Agafa from captivity, but he might as well have used her for other purposes. If it had been otherwise, he would have released her together with Kavgadyi, whom he honourably hosted in Tver’. Perhaps Mikhail wanted to try to win her sympathy, which, considering the cowardly way her husband had abandoned her, must not have been particularly difficult. He could have taken her ostentatiously to the Horde and returned her to Uzbek, showing how irresponsible Yurii was. Perhaps then it would have been the Muscovite ruler would have had a yoke on his neck and been tortured to death.

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⁶⁷ СКРЫННИКОВ, Руслан. *Крест и корона. Церковь и государство на Руси IX–XVII вв.* Санкт-Петербург: Искусство СПб, 2000, с. 45–46.

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Agafijos-Končakos vaidmuo Tverės ir Maskvos konflikte 1317–1318 metais

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Santrauka

Totorių dominavimo Šiaurės rytų Rusijoje laikotarpiu regione susikūrė du konkuruojantys politiniai centrai: Maskva ir Tverė. XIV a. pradžioje tarp vietinių kunigaikštysčių valdovų Jurijaus Danilovičiaus ir Michailo Jaroslavovičiaus vyko arši kova dėl jarlyko Vladimiro didžiojo kunigaikščio sostui užimti. Šių varžybų sėkmė labai priklausė nuo gebėjimo pelnyti Aukso ordos chano palankumą. Tai 1317 m. pavyko Maskvos kunigaikščiui Jurijui, kuris ne tik gavo trokštamą jarlyką, bet ir vedė chano Uzbeko seserį Končaką. Totorių princesė atvyko į Rusiją ir po krikšto, kurio metu jai buvo suteiktas Agafijos vardas, tapo Maskvos valdovo žmona.

Turėdamas Uzbeko paramą ir susaistytas su juo giminystės ryšiais, Jurijus nusprendė pagaliau susidoroti su savo Tverės varžovu. Michailas sėkmingai gynėsi nuo maskvėnų puolimo, o per kovas Tverėje į nelaisvę pateko Jurijaus žmona Agafija. Kunigaikštienė netrukus mirė Tverės nelaisvėje gana neaiškiomis aplinkybėmis. Jurijui kartu su savo totorių bendrininku Kavgadijumi pavyko sėkmingai įteigti Uzbekui, kad Michailas buvo atsakingas už Agafijos mirtį. Totorių nuosprendžiu Michailas buvo nužudytas 1318 m. lapkričio mėn. Šiame straipsnyje pabandyta įsivaizduoti, kokį vaidmenį Tverės ir Maskvos konflikte suvaidino Agafijos

mirties byla. Svarstant buvo atkreiptas dėmesys į tai, kad Jurijus žmonos likimą traktavo gana instrumentiškai. Norėdamas paskandinti savo varžovą, jis ėmėsi kaltinimų žaidimo, nors pats galėjo būti apkaltintas, kad tinkamai nesirūpino Agafija. Galiausiai dėl jo veiksmų Michailas buvo nužudytas Ordoje, o tai įrodė, kad Maskvos valdovas gerai išmanė totorių reikalus. Agafijos atvejis rodo, kad varžybose dėl dominavimo Šiaurės rytų Rusioje tiek Tverė, tiek Maskva sugebėjo pasinaudoti bet kokia proga pakenkti savo varžovui. Kita vertus, chano Uzbeko sesuo buvo tapusi brutalaus politinio žaidimo įkaite.

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