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947 chronicle texts on Princess Olga's reforms and foundation of Pogosts¹

Abstract

The article discusses the fragment of the 947 chronicle text. It describes the episode when Princess Olga establishes the «pogosts» (administrative units) on the Novgorod land. The author argues that the primary text was artificially attached to the Novgorod Chronicle. The events were unfolding in Drevlyanian and Volynian land, where ran Bulgar-Kyiv-Regensburg international trade route. The war in Drevlyanian land opened up prospects for control of this trade route from Kyiv to the Luga river to the basin of the Western Bug, whence opened the waterway to the Baltic Sea along the Bug and the Vistula. The chronicles description about the events of the year 947 shows the establishment of a new system of administrative centers on the right bank of the Western Bug (in the basin of its right tributary – the Luga river) named «pogosts».

Keywords: chronicles, Rus', Princess Olga, urban reform, administrative reform, Novgorod land, Drevlyanian land, Volynian land, pogosts (administrative units), international trade routes.

Problem Setting. Among the scant reports of urban chronicle of the princely era the earliest evidence of large-scale administrative reform by Princess Olga of Kiev was released and was placed in the Chronicle under the year 947. In the list of administrative measures there is the indication about building of new settlements such as pogosts (administrative units). It is mentioned in the chronicles that it was an early example of systematic Principal Administration's aimed to organize a network of new settlements in Rus'.

There is evidenced in the record that the construction of urban pogosts (administrative units) was provided by reformist ideas of Princess Olga in the taxation, fiscal and customs areas of functioning in Rus' State. Despite a rather comprehensive account of this event in the annals and seemingly definite and unambiguous geographical reference to it, the interpretation faces a number of contradictions that give rise to a critical analysis.

The objective of publication is to verify the well-known in the historical literature interpretations of the 947 Chronicle on Princess Olga's reforms after the war in Drevlyanian land, identifying the reasons for the construction of pogosts (administrative units) and determining of the subject areas for above-mentioned urban initiatives of Kievan administration.

The problems of expanding of the administrative center are associated with the attempt to improve the system of the Ancient Rus' state control and dates back to the times of Prince Oleg. His endeavors to establish new settlements were preceded by the attempts to determine where the princely governors had to reside. Tale of Bygone Years gives evidence that Prince Oleg set his men in Smolensk in Lyubech in his way to Kyiv: «6388–6390 (880–882). *Oleg set forth, taking with him many warriors from among the Varangians, the Chuds, the Slavs, the Merians and all the Krivichians. He thus arrived with his Krivichians before Smolensk, captured the city, and set up a garrison there. Thence he went on and captured Lyubech, where he also set up a garrison*». [14, p. 60-61]; («В лѣтѣ 887 . тѣ . чѣ . К [6390 (882)] [П]оиде Гдлезь поимъ воя многи Варяги. Чюдѣ Словѣни. Мерю. и всѣхъ Кривичи. и приде къ Смоленску съ Кривичи. и прия градъ. и посади мужъ своѣ ѿтуда поиде внизъ. и взѣ Любечъ. и посади мужъ своѣ») [4, col. 22-23].

The next urban initiative of Oleg after ascending to the throne in Kiev was the foundation of new cities on the dependent territories that had to pay taxes (tributes). The Chronicle says: «*Oleg set himself up as prince in Kyiv, and declared that it should be the mother of Rus' cities. The Varangians, Slavs, and others who accompanied him, were called Rus'. Oleg began to build stockaded towns, and*

¹ Translation was done with the support of O. Olzhych Fund in the United States. Translation by Halyna Chumak.

imposed tribute on the Slavs, the Krivichians, and the Merians. He commanded that Novgorod should pay the Varangians tribute to the amount of 300 grivny a year for the preservation of peace. This tribute was paid to the Varangians until the death of Yaroslav». [14, p. 61]; («[и] сѣде Гѣлезь княжа въ Києвъ. и ре^и Гѣлезь се буди мѣи градомъ рускими. [и] бѣша оу него Варязи и Словѣни и прочи прозвашася Русью. се же Гѣлезь нача городы ставити и оустави дани Словѣномъ Кривичемъ и Мери и [устави] Варязомъ. дань даяти ѿ Новагорода гривень. тѣ на лѣ^т мѣра дѣла. еже до смрти Ярославль. даяше Варязомъ») [4, col. 23-24].

The excerpt from Arabian geographer al-Mas'udi confirms the massive, namely urbanizing, activity of Oleg before his official ascension as Prince. He writes about the contemporary of Kyivan Prince Dir – al-Olvang: «*The next after him [Dir – Y. D.] is king al-Olvang whose domain is vast and the buildings are broad, his army is huge and his ammunition is abundant. He wages war on Rum, the Franks, the Langobards and other peoples. <...> This king is followed by the Turk king from Slovia lands, <...>*»; («Вслед за ним [Диром – Ю.Д.], следует царь ал-Олванг, у которого много владений, обширные стороения, большое войско и обильное военное снаряжение. Он воюет с Румом, франками, лангобардами и другими народами. <...> За этим царем следует из стран славян царь турок, <...>») [6, p. 472]. The name «Turks» (according to Constantine Porphyrogenitus) is used to denote the Hungarians. This fact allows us to localize the al-Olvang's kingdom to the west or south-west of Kyiv. This expert correlates with the word of Persian historian Hardizy. In his work «Zayn al-akbar» («The Beauty of Tales») written within years 1049-53 and reproduced the realities of the beginning of 10th century, Hardizy talks about the Slavonic fortifications: «*They have a tradition of fortress construction. A several men unite to build fortifications, as they are constantly attacked and raided by the Hungarians. They come and the Slavs lock themselves up in these fortifications they have built. Particularly in winter they stay in castles and fortresses and in summer dwell in the forests*» («У них есть обычай строить крепости. Несколько человек объединяются, чтобы строить укрепления, так как венгры на них постоянно совершают нападения и грабят их. Венгры приходят, а славяне запираются в эти укрепления, которые построили. Зимой в большей части они находятся в замках и крепостях, а летом в лесах») [3, p. 58].

The Ustuzhskaya chronicles excerpt about administrative urban undertakings deals not only with the establishment of tax and toll: «*6391. Oleg goes and imposes a tax of black marten on the Drevlians, the Severs and the Kozars and all the Rus' lands and towns*»; (В лета 6391. Иде Олг на древляны, и на северы, и на козары, и наложи на них дань по черной куннице с человека на год, и оброки по всей земли Руской устави, и мнози города постави) [8, p. 18, 57]. This way the chronicles record the conscious attempts of systematic and structural-functional changes in the state order. Their supply demanded the foundation of the settlements that placed the governmental administration submitted to Kiev and independent from the local tribal administrative structures.

The measures undertaken by Prince Oleg found their further development in a sequence of state administrative reforms, executed by Princess Olga. She started her reformatory activity shortly after the demise of Prince Igor in Drevlyanian lands. It was preceded with the fourfold revenge on the Drevlyans. The first Drevlyanian ambassador was buried alive and the second was burned alive in the bathhouse. Further on Olga executed Drevlyans during the mortuary rites of funeral feast on the grave of Prince Igor and burnt down the town of Korosten.

Having punished the Drevlyans, Olga went with her son Sviatoslav to Drevlyanian land, defining regulations and laws and organizing the encampments and *lovischa* (hunting places) on the conquered territory: «*6454 (946). She then passed through the land of Dereva, accompanied by her son and her retinue, establishing laws and tribute. Her trading posts and hunting-preserves are there still. Then she returned with her son to Kiev, her city, where she remained one year*». [14, p. 81]; («и иде Волга по Деревьстѣи земли съ сѣмъ своимъ и съ дружиною оуставляючи оуставы и оуроки. [и] суть становища съ и ловища. и приде въ градъ свои Києвъ. съ сѣмъ своимъ Стѣславомъ. и пребывши лѣто едино.») [4, col. 60]. The following year the Kyivan Princess extended her activities beyond Drevlyanian land: «*6455 (947). Olga went to Novgorod, and along the Msta she established trading-posts and collected tribute. She also collected imposts and tribute along the Luga. Her hunting-grounds, boundary posts, towns, and trading-posts still exist throughout the whole region, while her sleighs stand in*

Pskov to this day. Her fowling preserves still remain on the Dnieper and the Desna, while her village of Ol'zhichi is in existence even now. After making these dispositions, she returned to her city of Kiev, and dwelt at peace with it.» [14, p. 81-82]; («В лѣтѣ .ѿ. ѿ. нѣ. – [6455 (947)] Иде Вольга Новугороду. и оустави по Мьстѣ новосты и дани. и по Лузѣ вброки и дани [и] ^жловища. ся суть по всей земли . знамяныя и мѣста и новосты [правильно в Ипатьевской летописи – погосты – Ю.Д.]. и сани ея стоятъ въ Плесковѣ и до сего днѣ. и по Днѣпру перевѣсища и по Деснѣ. и есть село ея Гѣльжичи и доселе. и изрядив^м и възратисѣ къ снѣ своему Киеву. и пребывавше съ нимъ въ любви.».) [4, col. 60].

Cited events are usually explained as the reforms of Kievan Princess in Novgorod, after which she returned to Kiev, visiting Pskov on her way home. However, the well-known Russian researchers of the chronicle text emphasized that the story that is closely tied with the events of the Drevlyanian war is likely a literary fiction that emerged among the local scribes who tried to correlate the activity of Kievan Princess with historical and geographical realities of Novgorod. Archimandrite Leonid (Cavelin) [1, c. 218], Alexei Shakhmatov [9, p. 84-86; 10, p. 84-88] and Dmitriy Likhachev [7, p. 305–306] suggested that the considered passage is a later insertion of a chronicler, who believed that Olga visited a part of Novgorod land, called «Derevskaya land», «Dereva», and later – «Derevskaya Piatina».

Besides this, the chronicle indication of Olga's campaign «*to Novgorod*» doesn't relate to Novgorod the Great because of the fact that in the middle of the tenth century such urban settlement did not exist. As the results of a long archaeological research show, there were a few scattered settlements on its area at that time. Actually the fortresses, which could be called a «city», appeared only on the initiative of Yaroslav Mudry in the middle of the eleventh century [11, p. 41-42; 12, p. 71].

In addition to it, according to the chronicles, all Novgorod officials until the time of Prince Yaroslav, were regularly giving to Kyiv the same two thousand hryvnyas of tribute. Besides, since Oleg's reign and till Yaroslav's reign Novgorod citizens also paid 300 hryvnyas. Long-term stability of the tributary relations between Kiev and Novgorod since Oleg reign to the time of Yaroslav obviously contradicts the message of the 947 chronicle about the trip of Princess Olga to Novgorod, aiming to establish taxes and tributes. This fact is an argument in favor of the textologists' assumption about its artificial link to Novgorod land.

Neither in the middle of the tenth century, nor later had Kievan Administration a real means to intervene actively in the economic development of future Novgorod land. The slightest possibility of such Kiev's intervention is denied by the whole course of the contractual relationship of the elite of the north-western tribes with their invited prince. In addition, the assumption of the possible annexation of these areas to be controlled by Kiev contradicts with the topography of the findings of ancient coins, on the basis of the analysis in which Vladimir Yanin proved that in IX, X, and in the XI century there were two economically enclosed area with their own special money turnover in Eastern Europe: north-west (Novgorod) and southern (Kiev) [13, p. 160-193].

We arrived to the conclusion, that both textual analysis and comparative studying of the political and economic development of the north-western and southern Rus' lands completely deny the possibility of Princess' Olga campaign to Novgorod. Therefore a reasonable question arises: What territory did Kievan administration choose to introduce a number of reforms, backed up by urban reforms of the pogosts foundation?

In this context we draw our attention to the comment of Andrei Nikitin, who emphasized the fact, that «*the expression 'after msta' (ie. – «after avenge») was interpreted as an indication of the river Msta <...>».* [5, p. 39, 221].

This observation links even closer the further actions of Princess Olga with her western neighbor – Drevlyanian Land. The fact also opens unexpected perspectives for understanding the geographical direction of Kievan Administration reforms after the Drevlyanian war. In our opinion, the relevant initiatives of Olga were oriented westward from Kiev. The Chronicles call this territory (as cited) «*on The Luga*». It mentions the Luga that is the right tributary of the Western Bug – the Volynian Luga. This fact shows that the next year after the Drevlyanian war (literally – after revenge/«after msta») Kiev incorporated Volynian lands reaching the Luga and the Western Bug.

Such an interpretation of the events described in the 947 Chronicle eliminates a number of fundamental contradictions. Moreover, it proves that some credible textual critics were right,

considering these events to be artificially associated with Novgorod land. But the newly united with Kievan State Volynian land obviously needed the same administrative and financial measures as those taken by Princess Olga a year before in postwar Drevlyanian Land. After having reached the Bug River territory the following year after the Drevlyanian revenge («after msta»), Princess started forming the churchyards on the territory of the Volynian Luga (fig.).

It is notable that the trading routes on the Novgorod rivers the Msta and the Luga (traditionally acknowledged as the ones Princess Olga has taken) are the part of Vogla-Baltic aqueous system and their hypothetical positioning didn't appear useful to Kyiv. However establishing the borders of Rus' on the Western Bug (with the important right inflow of the Lug) Kievan administration has taken the control over the strategically important and safe (considering the actual threat from Pechenigs) trading route, that bound Kiev with the outlet markets for Rus' products on Bavarian part of the Danube through the densely forested areas of Drevlyanian and Volynian lands. The control over the Volynian part of this international route, that reached out to the Luga and the Western Bug in the area of the future Vladimir and Ustiluga, and gave Kyiv another huge advantages such as is the direct (without the Novgorod or Polotsk help) access to Baltic through the Bug and the Vistula. In that way, without any exaggeration Ustilug has become the Kyiv Baltic port. Corroborated by the massive findings of the XI-XII cen. trade seals in Drohychyn, the researchers have reached the conclusion of the customs post established in that place. In that point the transit goods were over freighted and resealed. The comparative analysis of such lead seals on the territory of Eastern Europe astonishes with a disproportion in favor of Drohychyn. Out of the overall amount of 15000 seals the 12000 (80 %) are found in Drohychyn and its surroundings. The amount of northern Rus' was only 2500 (17 %) seals, out of which 1000 are found in Novgorod, Gorodets and Volga region. The remaining 3 % cover the other lands.

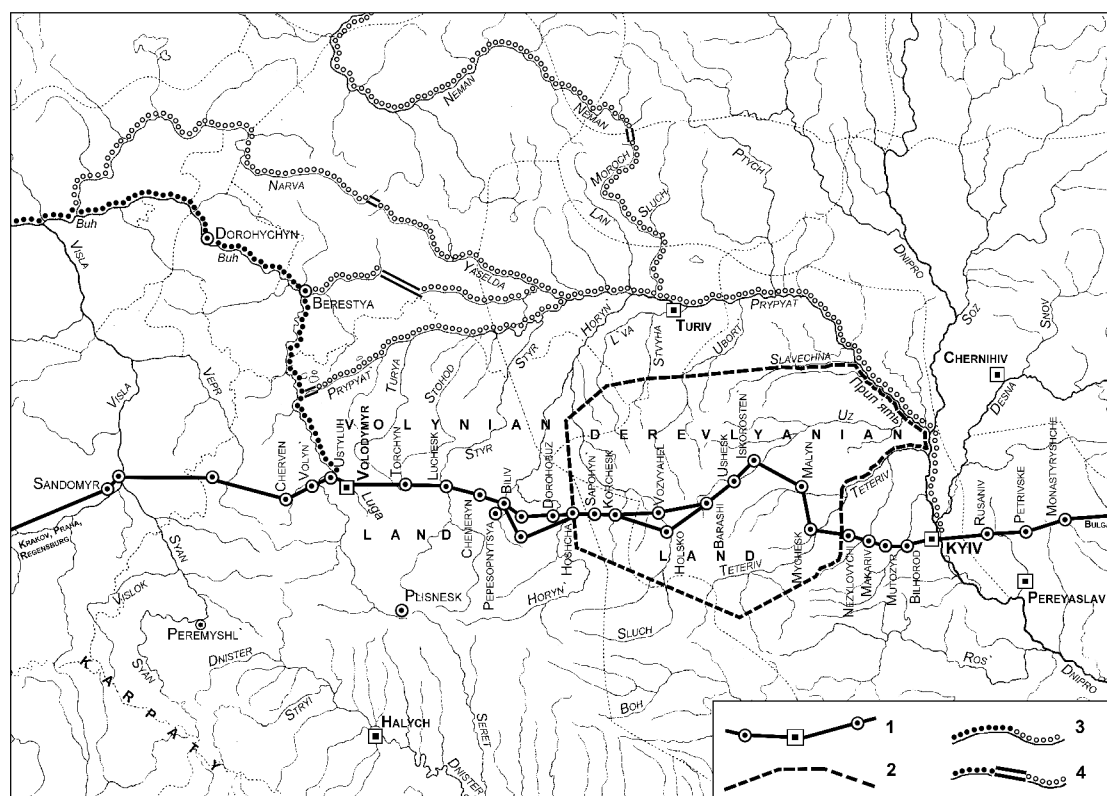


Fig. Drevlyanian and Volynian lands in the system of land and water trade routes of the 10-th century:

1. – Overland Bulgar-Kyiv-Regensburg route; 2. – Boundaries of tribal Drevlyanian territory;
3. – Waterways (the dotted line shows the route up/down the Bug); 4. – Dies on the waterways

A final mention about the sledges which Olga left in Pskov as though they were stored there as relic, doesn't have connection with historical realities and is an arbitrary interpretation

of the primary chronicle editorial text about ritual sledges, which were left at the foot of Prince Igor burial mound. The reason for such an interpretation of the chronicle text was the news from the «Pilgrim's Book» by Anthony of Novgorod, a Russian archbishop, who described: «*the dish is a great gold of Olga*» and «*silver cart of Konstantin and Elena*», which was kept in the treasury of Constantinople Sofia [2, p. 9-28].

Conclusions. The chronicles description about the events of the year 947 shows the annexation of Volynian land to ancient Kievan state and the establishment of a new system of administrative units on the right bank of the Western Bug (in the basin of its right tributary – the Lug river) named «pogosts». These events allowed Kyiv to take the control of an important geographical site in which the trade routes were crossed. They connected Rus' with the Danube and Baltic markets.

At last quarter of the 10-th century Prince Volodymyr Sviatoslavovych adopted a number of measures for additional control of Kyiv over the important border area in the Western Bug. If Princess Olga had adopted authority of Kyiv on the right bank of the Bug, the Meadow, so in the year 981, her grandson was strengthened by its left bank, as the chronicle reported: «6489 (981). Vladimir marched upon the Lyakhs and took their cities: Peremyshl', Cherven, and other towns, all of which are subject to Rus' even to this day». [14, p. 95] («В лѣтѣ. 89. ѿ. 6489 (981)] Иде [Володимѣръ] к Ляхомъ и зая грады иѣ. Перемышль Червень. и ины грады. еже суть и до сего днѣ подъ Русью») [4, col. 81].

Having moved the boundary to the west of the Bug, Prince Volodymyr not only strengthened the control over the Baltic route, but also extended the power of Kiev on the next leg of overland trade route, which took place on the territory of Chervensk castles and continue through Krakow and Prague in Regensburg. Among urban undertakings of Vladimir Svjatoslavovich should be mentioned the institution of a namesake city of Volodymyr in the year 992 in the Volynian Luga.

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Летописное известие 947 г. о реформах княгини Ольги и основании погостов

Резюме

Статья посвящена исследованию фрагмента летописной статьи 947 г. о реформаторской деятельности княгини Ольги и основании новых административных центров (погостов) в Новгородской земле *«по Мьстѣ»* и *«по Лузѣ»*.

Известные российские текстологи (Л. Кавелин, А. Шахматов и Д. Лихачев) ставили под сомнение возможность северного похода княгини Ольги и считали анализируемый отрывок летописного текста позднейшей вставкой. По их мнению, новгородский летописец (считая, что Древлянская земля находилась в Новгородских владениях) привязал сообщение о маршруте княгини Ольги к местным географическим ориентирам – рекам Мсте и Луге.

По мнению Ю. Дыбы, реформаторская деятельность киевской княгини была вызвана исключительно теми перспективами, которые открывались перед киевской княгиней после усмирения Древлянской земли, описанного в летописях в виде мести княгини Ольги, буквально за текстом – *«по мьстѣ»* (по отмщении). Урбанистические и административные реформы княгини Ольги разворачивались в Древлянской и Волынской землях, через которые пролегал международный торговый путь Булгар-Киев-Регенсбург. Война в Древлянской земле открыла перед киевской администрацией перспективы контроля важного участка этого торгового пути от Киева до правой притоки Западного Буга р. Луги, откуда открывался водный путь в Балтийское море вдоль Буга и Вислы.

Река Луга протекает через район, расположенный на пересечении важных торговых путей. И княгиня Ольга построила погосты именно в Волынской земле, вдоль реки Луга. Административно-территориальная реформа была одной из частей государственных реформ Киевской администрации по совершенствованию управления на новых покоренных территориях.

Ключевые слова: летописи, Русь, княгиня Ольга, урбанистическая реформа, административная реформа, Новгородская земля, Древлянская земля, Волынская земля, погосты (административные центры), международные торговые пути.