

# The Medieval Russian Account of the Fourth Crusade: A New Annotated Translation

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A medieval Russian literary and historic work commonly known as *The Tale of the Capture of Constantinople by the Franks* (Повесть о взятии Царьграда фрягами) is unique in that it is the sole contemporary or near-contemporary account of the Fourth Crusade written by a person not associated with either the Crusader or the Byzantine camp.

The oldest physical record of the Tale is found in the Synodal manuscript of the Novgorod 1<sup>st</sup> Chronicle (N1stC),<sup>1</sup> a work dating from the 13th-14th centuries and one which is strongly associated with the Yuryev Monastery on the outskirts of Novgorod.<sup>2</sup> Linguistic features of the N1stC text of the Tale clearly reflect the Old Novgorodian dialect of the early 13th century, causing its anonymous author to be recognized as a native of the land of Novgorod. There is a near-consensus that the author was likely either an eye-witness of the fall of Constantinople to the Crusaders and its subsequent sacking, or perhaps a person who had arrived on the scene shortly after these things occurred, but it is not known whether the author was there as a permanent resident, a pilgrim, a trader, or in some other capacity.<sup>3</sup> The author's use of the first person singular and plural in his description of the looting of churches after the city had fallen further strengthens the view that he had personally observed the events which he was describing.

The genre of the Tale is atypical of the Novgorod chronicle tradition in that it deals with distant events in a foreign land with no clear connection with Novgorod; it is inserted into the chronicle without warning and ends without follow-up of any sort. Its structure — having a preface, an exposition, and a conclusion— has the earmarks of being a literary composition written outside of the chronicle tradition. It is easy to view the Tale as a pre-existing literary work found to be of interest and put into the chronicle at an appropriate place.

The Tale is found in the N1stC and other chronicles as an entry under the year 6712 *anno mundi* (~1204 AD), but the narrative in the entry actually begins in 1195 with the deposing and subsequent blinding of Emperor Isaac II Angelos, and it continues through the coronation of Baldwin of Flanders in May 1204 and the establishment of the Latin Empire. The Tale ends with a statement that the Franks (Crusaders) were still in control of Constantinople at the time of writing, an indication that it had been composed sometime between 1204 and the fall of the Latin Empire in 1261.

The Tale is found only in Russian chronicles. Aside from appearing in both the older and the younger recensions of the Novgorod 1st Chronicle, it can be found in its unabridged Old Russian form in the Sophia 1<sup>st</sup> Chronicle, the Voskresenskaya Chronicle, the Tver Chronicle, the Moscow Chronicle Compilation of the Late 15th Century, the Vologodsko-Permskaya Chronicle, the Hellenic and Roman Chronicle, and in the Nikonian Chronicle. For the most part the differences among them are small and tend to reflect variations not of content but of stylistics, grammar, and language. The Tale is also found in

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<sup>1</sup>. ГИМ Син. № 786. This manuscript is the sole source of the 13th-14th century "older recension" of the N1stC and it contains the text which, except for Zenkovsky 1982, is the source of all published translations of the Tale. When the abbreviation "N1stC" is used in this paper, it will refer only to this older recension. The Novgorod 1st Chronicle is also found in a "younger recension" in two manuscripts dating from the mid-15th century.

<sup>2</sup>. Kloss 2000, p. v; Gimon 2006, p. 120.

<sup>3</sup>. Gippius 1997, pp. 68-70; Kloss 2000, p. v; Meshcherskij 1956, p. 173; Luchitskaya 2006, p. 117. Jared Gordon disagrees (Gordon 1973, p. 298), contending "that the scribe himself was not an eyewitness to all the events, that the scribe or his source was close to the German camp." In this he concurs with Bicelli (1916, p. 606).

an abbreviated form in the Novgorod 4<sup>th</sup> Chronicle, the Yermolinslaya Chronicle, the Gustynskaya Chronicle, the Lvovskaya Chronicle, the Nikonian Chronicle and several others.<sup>4</sup>

## Existing Translations

Although the Old Russian text of the Tale had been available since the initial publication of the N1stC in 1781, a scholarly publication awaited the appearance of the N1stC in Volume 3 of the Complete Collection of Russian Chronicles (Полное собрание русских летописей) in 1841. Revised editions followed in 1879 and 1888. A critical edition of the chronicle, the work of Soviet historian and philologist A. N. Nasonov, was published first in 1950 and then republished in 2000 in the Complete Collection of Russian Chronicles series.

Aside from the relatively few scholars who worked with Old Russian, the Tale remained inaccessible to specialists in the West until 1873 when Charles Hopf, a German scholar, published a translation of the Tale into Latin (!). The 1914 English translation of the Synodal copy of the N1stC by the British scholars Robert Michell and Nevill Forbes allowed widespread access to the Tale by the public, and, in spite of its many faults, its accessibility (through reprints) makes it the most commonly cited translation in the West. Later translations into English were made by Jared Gordon (1973) and by Serge A. and Betty Zenkovsky (1984) and were a significant improvement over the Michell-Forbes work, and Snezhana Rakova has recently (2013) published an English version derived from a translation into Russian by O.V. Tvorogov.

To date there have been twelve translations of the Tale into eight languages. Taken in order of year of publication, they are:

1. Latin: Charles Hopf, *Chroniques gréco-romanes inédites ou peu connues publiées avec notes et tables généalogiques*. Berlin, 1873, pp. 93-98.
2. English: Michell, Robert and Forbes, Nevill, *The Chronicle of Novgorod, 1016-1471*. Camden Third Series, Vol. XXV. London, 1914, pp. 43-48.
3. Spanish: de Mundo, Sara Isabel, "La Cuarta Cruzada según el chronista novgorodense." *Anales de historia antigua y medieval de la Universidad de Buenos-Aires*. 1950, pp. 135-141.
4. Danish: Rahbek-Schmidt, K. (tr.), *Den Forste Novgorod-Kronike: Aldste Affattelse*. København, 1964.
5. German: Dietrich Freydank, "Die altrussische Erzählung über die Eroberung Konstantinopels 1204 (Chronista Novgorodensis)," *Byzantoslavica* 29 (1968), pp. 334-359.
6. German: Joachim Dietze, *Die erste novgoroder Chronik nach ihrer ältesten Redaktion (Synodalhandschrift) 1016-1333/1352*. München, 1971, pp. 79-83.
7. English: Gordon, Jared, "The Novgorod Account of the Fourth Crusade." *Byzantion XLIII* (1973), pp. 297-311.
8. English: Zenkovsky, Serge A. and Betty, *The Nikonian Chronicle. From the Year 1132-1240*. (Volume Two). Princeton, 1984, pp. 218-224.
9. French: Patri, Sylvain. "La relation russe de la quatrième croisade" *Byzantion* 58, 1988, pp. 461-501.
10. Russian (modern): Творогов, О. В. "Повесть о взятии Царьграда крестоносцами в 1204 г." *Памятники литературы Древней Руси (ПЛДР) XIII век*, 1997.

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4. The Novgorod 1<sup>st</sup> Chronicle: ПСРЛ том III, pp. 46-49 (older recension) and pp. 240-246 (younger recension); the Sophia 1<sup>st</sup> Chronicle: ПСРЛ том VI вып. 1, cols. 253-259 and ПСРЛ том XXXIX, pp. 67-69; the Voskresenskaya Chronicle: ПСРЛ том VII, pp. 109-111; the Tver Chronicle: ПСРЛ том XV, cols. 294-300; the Moscow Chronicle Compilation of the Late XV Century: ПСРЛ том XXV, pp. 101-103; the Vologodsko-Permskaya Chronicle: ПСРЛ том XXVI, pp. 57-60; the Nikonian Chronicle, ПСРЛ том X, pp. 37-41; the Hellenic and Roman Chronicle: Летописец еллинский и римский, О. В. Творогов ред., том 1, Текст. СПб, 1999, pp. 507-510. So also in abbreviated form in the Novgorod 4<sup>th</sup> Chronicle: ПСРЛ, том IV ч.1, p. 180; the Yermolinslaya Chronicle: ПСРЛ том XXIII, p. 59; the Gustynskaya Chronicle: ПСРЛ том XL, pp. 108-109; the Kholmogorskaya Chronicle, ПСРЛ том XXX, p. 58; and in the Chronicle Compilations of 1497 and of 1518: ПСРЛ том XXVIII, pp. 43-44, 200-201.

11. Bulgarian: Ракова, Снежана, *Четвъртият кръстоносен поход в историческата памет на православните славяни*. София, 2007.  
12. English: Rakova, Snezhana, *The Fourth Crusade in the Historical Memory of the Eastern Orthodox Slavs*. Sofia, 2013, pp. 165-175.

### Selecting a text for translation

Aside from Zenkovsky's translation of the Nikonian Chronicle text, the common denominator of the above translations is that they are all based upon the text of the Tale found in the Synodal MS of the N1stC.

Therein lies a problem.

There are certain irregularities in the N1stC text of the Tale which point either to carelessness on the part of a scribe or to a defective text which the scribe was copying. The most glaring error, pointed out in the earliest scholarly publication of that chronicle,<sup>5</sup> appears in the context of Alexios IV's visit to Rome to seek the Pope's assistance in obtaining the throne of Byzantium. The passage in question reads in English as follows:

Since Isaac's son was claiming that "Everybody in Constantinople wants me to be the ruler, then place him on the throne and then go to the aid of Jerusalem, but if they do not want him, then bring him back to me, but do no harm to Byzantium.

... якоже рече Исаковиць: всь град Костянтинъ хотять моего царства, такоже посадыче его на прѣстолѣ, поидете же къ Иерусалиму въ помощь; не въсхотять ли его, а ведете и опять къ мнѣ, а пакости не деите Грѣчской земли.

The passage makes no better sense in Old Russian than it does in the English translation. It is clear that several words are missing from the text following the word translated above as "ruler." The missing words destroy the syntax of what follows, and the pronominal phrase "to me" lacks any logical antecedent. Such a lacuna confirms the obvious, namely, that the Tale was not the creation of the chronicle's scribe, but rather was copied by him from some other document.

In order to provide a more accurate translation of the Tale into English, texts of the Tale as found in other chronicles were examined to determine whether the absent text might appear in some other source. Texts of the Tale from ten chronicles<sup>6</sup> were aligned and the results were compared to the N1stC text. With some exceptions, eight of the ten texts closely resembled the Tale as found in the N1stC, their relatively minor differences centering primarily on orthography and word order. The two exceptions were the Tver Chronicle (Тверской сборник) and the Nikonian Chronicle, the latter being a compilation of excerpts culled from many Russian chronicles and other sources.<sup>7</sup>

On close examination, it was noted that disregarding irregularities in orthography, word order and other relatively minor matters, there are over forty instances in which the Tver version of the Tale differed from that which is found in the N1stC.<sup>8</sup> The overwhelming majority of these differences were quite minor

5. The 1841 edition of the N1stC had this comment, immediately following the word "ruler:" "Something is missing here. The quotation of Alexios is interrupted and instead there is an admonition on the part of Emperor Philip or Pope Innocent III to the crusaders, forbidding them to make war on Christians under pain of ecclesiastical excommunication." (ПСРЛ Том III (1841), p. 27.)

<sup>6</sup> The Chronicles were: the Older Recension (Synodal MS) and the Younger Recension (Commission MS) of the Novgorod 1st Chronicle, two versions of the Sophia 1st Chronicle, the Voskresenskaya Chronicle, the Vologodsko-Permskaya Chronicle, the Tver Chronicle, the Moscow Chronicle Compilation of the Late 15th Century, the Hellenic and Roman Chronicle, and the Nikonian Chronicle.

<sup>7</sup> The Nikonian Chronicle also contains several texts devoted to events in Constantinople in 1204. Zenkovsky's translation of the Tale uses only one of these texts, but the others have been translated into English and can be found Rakova 2013, pp. 215-221.

<sup>8</sup> S. Patri appears to have been the first to have documented the differences in the various texts of the Tale and the

and insignificant, such as "he summoned his brother Isaac" (N1stC) as opposed to "he summoned his brother Isaac *Angelos*" (Tver), or "seated him on the throne" (N1stC) as opposed to "seated him on the *imperial* throne" (Tver). But that enigmatic passage cited above,

"Since Isaac's son claimed that "Everybody in Constantinople wants me to be the ruler, then place him on the throne and then go to the aid of Jerusalem, but if they do not want him, then bring him back to me, but do no harm to Byzantium,"

becomes much more sensible when read from the Tver Chronicle :

"Since Isaac's son was claiming that "Everybody in Constantinople wants me to be the ruler," *he (the Pope) sent word to many of the Franks, saying, 'If they do want him, then place him on the throne and then go on to the aid of Jerusalem, but if they do not want him, then bring him back to me, but do no harm to Byzantium.'*"

There are other instances in the Tver version of the Tale which might represent phrases which might have been omitted when the Tale was copied into the N1stC, for example, the assertion that the corpse of Alexios IV was handed over to the Franks, a suggestion that graves in Constantinople were looted by the Franks, and assertion that packets of gold were confiscated from the fleeing patriarch, abbots and abbesses.

An examination of the Nikonian Chronicle version of the Tale revealed that although in certain places it resembles the Tver Chronicle in that it supplies words and phrases not present in the N1stC text, at other times it lacks words and phrases which are present in the Novgorod Chronicle. The Tver text was therefore deemed to be the more complete and accurate text of the Tale and it was therefore used as the basic text from which a translation would be made.

What might it have been that caused the Tver version of the Tale to differ so from the N1stC and from all other versions of the Tale? An answer will have to await a deep textological analysis involving all extant versions of the Tale, an analysis which is beyond the scope of this paper. Perhaps the source of The Tale might be found. A likely candidate is a hypothetical document known to scholars as the Novgorod Episcopal Chronicle (Новгородская владычая летопись),<sup>9</sup> created in the course of the 12th through 14th centuries under the aegis of the bishop of Novgorod. Scholars point with confidence to the Novgorod Episcopal Chronicle as not merely the source of the Novgorod 1st Chronicle, but as a source for many other Novgorod Chronicles as well; it is also, ultimately, a source of information for the Tver Chronicle. Extensive parallels exist in the texts of the N1stC and Tver chronicles, and it has even been asserted that the Tver Chronicle contains a number of readings of greater antiquity than those found in the N1stC.<sup>10</sup> Perhaps this is what we are seeing in the Tver version of the Tale.

## **The Translation**

The English translation which follows has been created to take into account current scholarship regarding the Tale and to eliminate the errors found in earlier translations without, it is hoped, introducing any new ones. The translation is based on the text as it is found in the Tver Chronicle. Although it is thought that the Tver text more accurately reflects the original text of the Tale than does the N1stC version, it is certainly possible that some of the differences between the Novgorod and Tver texts reflect additions of a later date.

There are four Emperors of Byzantium mentioned in the Tale by the name of Alexios, namely Alexios II, III, IV and V. Alexios IV was the son of Emperor Isaac II, and as such he is usually called not Alexios but rather "the son of Isaac." To avoid confusion, each of these individuals is usually identified

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<sup>9</sup> Gimon 2006, pp. 115-116; Gippius 1997, p. 6ff.

<sup>10</sup> D. S. Likhachev, *Новгородские летописные своды XII в.* (Dissertation ), Leningrad, 1941, pp. 205-207, cited in Gimon 2006, p.115.

when appropriate.

## The Capture of Constantinople by the Franks<sup>11</sup>

When Isaac (II) Angelos was reigning as emperor, he was taken prisoner and blinded by his brother Alexios (III) Komnenos, who then reigned for eight years and six months as the emperor in Constantinople. Alexios (III) then imprisoned Isaac's son Alexios (IV), placing him under guard behind high walls to prevent him from escaping.<sup>12</sup>

After some time had passed, Isaac ventured to petition that his son be freed from such imprisonment prior to his own release. He convinced his brother to do just that, and thus Isaac's son (Alexios IV) was released. Isaac and his son took an oath promising that they would not plot against the throne, and as a result he (Alexios IV) was released from prison and lived as a free man. Emperor Alexios (III) was not concerned about him because he trusted his brother Isaac and Isaac's son because of the oath which the two of them had taken.

Some time later Isaac had second thoughts, and he began to long for the throne. He secretly contacted his son and urged him to action by saying, "I have done well by my brother Alexios (III), ransoming him as I did from the pagans, but he has repaid my kindness with evil by blinding me and by depriving me of my throne." Isaac's son (Alexios IV) was eager to act, so the two of them looked for a way for him (Alexios IV) to leave the city for distant countries and to seek the throne from abroad. He was brought to a ship and was placed in a barrel which had a false bottom: he crouched below the false bottom and the other end was filled with water and had a bung.<sup>13</sup> There was no other way to leave the city, so that is how Isaac's son (Alexios IV) left Byzantium. When the Emperor noticed his absence, he ordered that a search be made, so they began to look for him all over. They boarded the ship where he was hidden and they searched all over; when they pulled the bungs from the barrels, they saw that water poured out, and so they left without finding him, and then the ship set sail.

Thus Isaac's son (Alexios IV) escaped and came to German King Philip, his brother-in-law, and his sister.<sup>14</sup> The German king sent him to the Pope in Rome<sup>15</sup> and the two of them admonished him<sup>16</sup> not to make war on Constantinople. Since Isaac's son (Alexios IV) was claiming that "Everybody in Constantinople wants me to be the ruler," he (the Pope) sent word<sup>17</sup> to many of the Franks, saying, "If they do want him, then place him on the throne and then go on to the aid of Jerusalem, but if they do not want him, then bring him back to me, but do no harm to Byzantium."

Isaac's son (Alexios IV) had promised to give them (the Franks) a large amount of gold and silver, and since the Franks and all their commanders lusted for the gold and silver which he had promised, they paid no attention to the orders of the king and of the pope that no harm be done to

<sup>11</sup> The Older and the Younger Recensions of the N1stC lack a title for the Tale. Several other chronicles have as a title variants of "Concerning the Capture of Divinely-protected Constantinople by the Franks." The "*Franks*," of course, were the Crusaders from several kingdoms.

<sup>12</sup> The three individuals named here are the Emperors Isaac II Angelos 1156-1204 (reigned 1185-1195, 1203-1204), Alexios III Angelos ~1153-1211 (reigned 1195-1204 (the Tver Chronicle errs in referring to him as Alexios III *Komnenos*), and Isaac II's son, Alexios IV Angelos ~1182-1204 (reigned 1203-1204). A fourth emperor, Alexios V Doukas "Murtzuphlus" ("beetle-browed") 1140-1204 (reigned February-April 1204), will appear later in the Tale.

<sup>13</sup> There is a lacuna here in the Tver Chronicle. The words "*he crouched below the false bottom and the other end was filled with water*" are lacking, but they are present in the N1stC and in every other chronicle account of the Tale.

<sup>14</sup> The "*German king*" was Philip of Swabia (1177-1208), who was the Duke of Swabia 1196-1208 and the King of Germany (King of the Romans) 1198-1208. He had married Irene Angelina (1181-1208), the daughter of Isaac II and the sister of Alexios IV.

<sup>15</sup> The pope was Innocent III (reigned 1198-1216).

<sup>16</sup> "*the two of them admonished him*" — the verb is aorist dual, so the two people appear to be King Philip and Pope Innocent III

<sup>17</sup> "*he sent word*" The Tolstoy MS (PHB F.IV.91) of the Greek and Roman Chronicle (EL2) has "*the Pope sent word*." The grammar in the Tver Chronicle is a bit garbled here, but the sense is clear.

Byzantium.

Upon arriving at the Golden Horn, they broke the iron chain<sup>18</sup> and came close to the city and rained fire onto buildings in four locations. Emperor Alexios (III) saw the flames,<sup>19</sup> (but) declined to join battle. He summoned his brother Isaac Angelos, whom he had blinded, seated him on the imperial throne and said, "Even if you are responsible for this, brother, forgive me, for this throne belongs to you!" and Alexios fled from the city.

The city burned<sup>20</sup> and so did innumerable churches of ineffable beauty; the atrium<sup>21</sup> of St. Sophia burned with its images of all the patriarchs, and so also did the Hippodrome and the area down to the sea [of Marmara], and from there the fire went along the chain anchorage structure<sup>22</sup> and up as far as the Golden Horn. Isaac's son (Alexios IV) and the Franks set out after Emperor Alexios (III) but they could not catch up with him, so he returned to the city. He (Alexios IV) removed his father (Isaac II) from the throne saying to his father, "You are blind, so how can you be the emperor? I am the emperor!" At that point Emperor Isaac grieved over his city and his throne and the looting of the monasteries and the gold and silver which had been promised to the Franks and which the two of them<sup>23</sup> had given to them. He fell into depression, was tonsured and became a monk, and after a brief illness he departed this earthly world.

At Isaac's death the people rose up against his son (Alexios IV) because of the conflagration in the city and the spoliation of the monasteries; the commoners assembled and consulted with reputable men regarding who ought to be made emperor. Everybody wanted Radinos,<sup>24</sup> but he was unwilling, so he disguised himself in a monk's habit and went into hiding. They brought his wife to St. Sophia and put pressure on her, saying, "Tell us where your husband is," but she refused to tell them. Then they took a soldier by the name of Nicholas,<sup>25</sup> and placed the crown on him in the absence of the patriarch, and remained with him in St. Sophia for six days and six nights.

The emperor, Alexios (IV), the son of Isaac, was at Blachernae,<sup>26</sup> and he had made plans to let the Franks into the city secretly, without the courtiers knowing of it. But when the courtiers learned about it, they persuaded the Emperor not to allow the Franks to enter, saying "We support you!" Then the members of the court, still fearing an influx of the Franks, allied themselves with (Alexios V Doukas) Murtzuphlos and detained Emperor Alexios (IV), the son of Isaac, and crowned Murtzuphlos emperor.

<sup>18</sup> Access to the Golden Horn was blocked by an iron chain which stretched from the Old Galata Tower to Pera on the opposite side of the sound. The Galata Tower was captured in the first military action against the city proper, and a short time later the chain was snapped by a ship with a reinforced prow.

<sup>19</sup> Constantinople suffered three major fires during the Fourth Crusade. The First Fire, the work of the Crusaders during their first attack on the city, occurred on 17-18 July 1203 and did considerable damage to the area adjacent to the upper end of city wall on the Golden Horn, between the hill of Blachernae and the Monastery of Evergetes. (See Madden 1992 in its entirety.)

<sup>20</sup> Although it is not apparent from the narrative, the description of the fire here is that of the Second Fire, which occurred about a month later after the First, on 19-20 August, 1203. This fire, which was massively destructive, raged for two days and two nights and swept a broad path from the Golden Horn to the Sea of Marmara. The Third Fire, not mentioned as such in the Tale, took place on 12-13 April and was set by the Franks after they had entered the city; it destroyed about a ten-acre portion of the port area along the Golden Horn. Altogether, the three fires destroyed about 600 acres (243 hectares) of the 3,500 acres (1,416 hectares) of the city.

<sup>21</sup> "Atrium," not the vestibule, porch, or narthex of St. Sophia, for the reasons given in Madden 1992, pp. 78-79, 82-83.

<sup>22</sup> "the chain anchorage structure" The Old Russian wording here is "ц(е)аревъ затворъ (Ts(es)arev zatvor)" and it has caused problems for all translators. It has been variously rendered as "the Tsar's Palace" (Forbes and Michell), "the emperor's palace" (Zenkovsky), "the emperor's courtyard" (Gordon), "the tsar's dungeon" (Rakova), "Kaiserpalast [?]" (Dietze), and "le palais de l'empereur" (Patri). I prefer the explanation put forward by O. V. Tvorogov (1969, p. 724) and seconded by S. I. Luchitskaya (2006 p.116) that the reference here is to the location or structure (or both) where the southern terminus of the iron chain was anchored.

<sup>23</sup> "the two of them" -- this might refer to the brief co-regency of Isaac II and Alexios IV. The flight of Alexios III and the reinstatement of Isaac as emperor took place on July 18, 1203. On August 1, 1203, Alexios IV was declared co-emperor. Isaac's health deteriorated and he died on January 28, 1204.

<sup>24</sup> Radinos appears to have been a nobleman. Little is known about him. (Queller & Madden 1997, p.161)

<sup>25</sup> After a reign of six days, Nicholas Kanabos (Canabus), a young noble, was arrested, imprisoned and executed.

<sup>26</sup> Blachernae, the site of the imperial residence, was located in the northern apex of the triangle of Constantinople. Besides the palace, it contained the Church of the Holy Theotokos, the Chapel of the Reliquary, and the Sacred Bath.

Murtzuphlos had been released from the dungeon by Isaac's son (Alexios IV) because he had made a promise not to seek the throne as long as (Alexios IV) was emperor, but rather he promised to help him retain it. (Alexios V) Murtzuphlos then sent word to Nicholas and to the people at St. Sophia: "I have captured your enemy, Isaac's son (Alexios IV). I am now your emperor, and I am appointing Nicholas to be the senior courtier;<sup>27</sup> take off the crown!" The people would not stand for him removing his crown, so they kept on swearing, "To hell with anyone who abandons Nicholas!"

(Alexios V) Murtzuphlos waited until the sun had set and everyone had dispersed, and then he had Nicholas and his wife arrested and put into a dungeon, and Isaac's son Alexios (IV) was put in prison as well.

Murtzuphlos himself then became emperor on February 5 and made plans to defeat the Franks.

When the Franks learned that Alexios (IV), Isaac's son, had been taken into custody, they began fighting in the district surrounding Constantinople and said to (Alexios V) Murtzuphlos: "Hand over Isaac's son (Alexios IV) to us, and we will return to the German king who sent us, and the throne will belong to you." However, Murtzuphlos and all the courtiers refused to give him up alive; they put him to death and said to the Franks: "He is dead. Come and take a look for yourselves," and they handed over to them the corpse of the son of Isaac (Alexios IV). When the Franks saw (the corpse)<sup>28</sup> they regretted their insubordination, because by disregarding the orders of their king, that they had not behaved as they had been instructed by the German king or by the Pope of Rome, for they had indeed done harm to Constantinople. So they all said to one another, "Since we no longer have the Isaac's son (Alexios IV) who came with us, it would be better for us to die here in Constantinople than to leave in disgrace."

They then began to make preparations for attacking the city. As they had done before, they placed scaling ladders on the yards of some of their ships, on others they constructed throwing machines<sup>29</sup> and ladders, and on yet others they placed kegs of pitch which, with wicks afire, would be tossed across the defenses to land on buildings, just as had been done when the city was set afire earlier.

The assault on the city began on Friday, April 9, the Feast of St. Eupychius the Martyr, in the fifth week of Lent. Success eluded the Franks, and they lost almost a hundred men.

The Franks remained in position for three days, and then at sunrise on the Monday of Holy Week they approached the city along a line stretching from [the Monastery of] the Holy Savior Evergetes and the Eis Pegas (Gate)<sup>30</sup> to as far as Blachernae. They advanced in forty large ships lashed together<sup>31</sup> two by two, and there were armor-clad horsemen in them on horses which were likewise protected by armor. Other ships and galleys remained in the rear, keeping their distance to avoid being set on fire, for on an earlier occasion<sup>32</sup> the Byzantines had sent ten burning sailing ships against the Franks and at midnight on

<sup>27</sup> *"the senior courtier"* (1 въ боярехъ) is probably a calque from πρωτοστράτωρ (Meshcherskij 1954, p.141).

<sup>28</sup> *"and they handed over to them the corpse of the son of Isaac, (Alexios IV). When the Franks saw (the corpse)..."* This information is unique to the Tver Chronicle.

<sup>29</sup> *"throwing machines"* The Old Russian word is "порокъ (porok)" which is frequently mistranslated as "(battering) ram" as in Michell & Forbes 1914, p. 46; Tvorogov ("таран") 1969; Gordon 1973, p. 308; Patri ("bélér") 1988, p. 489; Rakova 2013, p.171. Villehardouin notes that the vessels were equipped with two types of throwing machines, perrieres and mangonels. (Villehardouin 1872, p. 135, para. 232; p. 139 para. 238.)

<sup>30</sup> The Eis Pegas Gate (Πύλη εις Πηγάς, Cibali Kapısı) was on the western side of the Golden Horn and the Evergetes Monastery was nearby. Blachernae was roughly one and a half kilometers northwest of the Eis Pegas Gate.

<sup>31</sup> *"lashed together"* The word translated as "lashed together," изременани (izremenani) is a hapax, not found elsewhere in Old Russian. Russian scholar N.A. Meshcherskij (1954, p. 267; 1956, p.176) argued that the word is actually a misreading of the Greek δρομώνων, "dromon," a type of naval transport vessel. Tvorogov 1969 accepts this explanation. This is unneeded, as pointed out by Villehardoin (1872, p. 140, para. 240; in English translation Villehardouin 1967, p. 90): "This time they would have the ships that carried the scaling ladders bound together, two by two, so that each pair could make a combined attack on one tower. This plan was adopted because, in that day's engagement, they had noticed that when only one ship had attacked each tower, the greater number of men on a tower than on a ladder had made it too heavy a task for a ship to undertake alone. It was therefore reasonable to assume that two ships together would do more effective damage than one. This plan of binding the ships in pairs was carried out while the troops were standing by on Saturday and Sunday." Dromons may or may not have been used at Constantinople in 1204, but the Tale is silent about them. Patri (1988 p.472) likewise sees little value in the *dromon* hypothesis as does Dietz (1975 p. 589); see also Pronchatov 1967.

the feast of St Basil the wind changed direction and thus prevented them from doing harm to the Franks' ships; Isaac's son (Alexios IV) had forewarned them that the Byzantines had been directed to send their ships against them. That is why the Franks' ships were not set afire at that time.

Thus came the capture of Constantinople the Great: the wind brought the ships to the city walls. The ladders on the ships had been built so tall that they were higher than the city walls and stretched over them and the lower ladders were level with the battlements. From the high ladders they rained down rocks and arrows and javelins and arbalests upon the Byzantines and Varangians<sup>33</sup> in the city, while the men on the lower ladders crossed over the city walls, and thus they captured the city.

Emperor (Alexios V) Murtzuphlos kept encouraging his courtiers and all the people to join in battle then and there with the Franks, but they all ignored him and ran away. Then too the Emperor fled from them (the Franks), but they caught up with him in the horse market<sup>34</sup> where he complained considerably about the courtiers and the people. At that point the emperor fled from the city, as did the courtiers and all the people.

All the Franks entered the city on April 12, the feast of St. Basil the Confessor, and they rested at the place near Holy Savior (Evergetes), where the Byzantine Emperor used to stay, and remained there for the night.

At sunrise the following morning, Tuesday of Holy Week, they entered St. Sophia and tore down the doors and hacked them to pieces. They did the same to the ambon all clad with silver, and to the twelve silver columns and to the four [columns] of the icon-case, and to the iconostasis structure,<sup>35</sup> and to the twelve crosses above the altar which were like trees bigger than a man, and to the tree-like cones between them, and to the altar partitions between the columns: all of these were made of silver. They stripped the beautiful altar table of its precious stones and large pearls, and nobody knows what happened to the altar table itself. They took forty large chalices which were in front of the altar as well as the thuribles and candelabras, all of which were made of silver – so many that we cannot count them – and they took the priceless vessels used on feast-days; they took the copy of the Gospels used in services, the venerable crosses and the priceless icons. Under the altar table they found a treasure which had been accumulated over the years: forty casks of pure gold; and in the choirs and on the walls and in the sacristy there was an unknown but very large amount of gold and silver and priceless vessels as well.

Everything that I have been relating applies only to St. Sophia. The Church of the Holy Mother of God in Blachernae, where the Holy Spirit used to descend every Friday, was also looted, and the same is true for other churches beyond number. As concerns the Hodegetria,<sup>36</sup> the holy and miraculous icon of the Most Pure (Mother of God), which used to be taken about the city in procession: this image was preserved by God and the Holy Mother of God through the agency of good people, and so it exists today and is our hope. The other churches and monasteries and holy shrines both inside and outside of the city were all looted — we can neither count their number nor describe their beauty. Monks and nuns and priests were robbed and some of them were killed. The Byzantines and the Varangians who remained in the city were driven out. There were reburials, and packets of gold which the patriarch and abbots and abbesses were carrying were confiscated.<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>33</sup> "*Varangians*" refers to the Varangian Guard, an elite unit of the Byzantine army which served as personal bodyguards for the Byzantine emperors. Varangians/Vikings from Rus' were the earliest members of these units, but by 1204 the members were mostly Danes and Anglo-Saxons.

<sup>34</sup> Archbishop Antony of Novgorod, who had visited Constantinople shortly before the arrival of the Crusaders, provides a hint to the location of the horse market when he describes the location of the Church of the Virgin (in Chalkoprateia): "the Church of the Holy Mother of God is on the left side of the Embolos in the direction of the horse market." (Rakova 2013, pp. 117-214 has the text and provides a translation.) The Embolos (Old Russian Амбoль, Greek ἔμβολος) may be the Makros Embolos, a portico promenade which intersected the Mese, the main thoroughfare of Constantinople, at a point several hundred meters to the west of the Forum of Constantine.

<sup>35</sup> "*the iconostasis structure*" is commonly known as the templon (Greek τέμπλον).

<sup>36</sup> The Hodegetria icon was reputed to have been painted by St. Luke and it was a major cult item in Constantinople.

<sup>37</sup> "*There were reburials, and the packages containing gold which the patriarch and abbots and abbesses were carrying were confiscated.*" This statement is unique to the Tver Chronicle. The reference to the reburials may refer to human remains from the graves opened and plundered by the Crusaders.

Here are the names of their commanders:<sup>38,39</sup>

1. Markos of Rome;
2. Kondo Flarent, from the city of Rome, Verona;
3. The blind doge.

A different source describes these commanders as follows:

1. Marcos from Rome, in the town of Verona, where the evil pagan Dietrich once lived;<sup>40</sup>
2. Kondof o Flandr;<sup>41</sup>
3. The blind doge, from the Island of (San) Marco, Venice.<sup>42</sup>

Byzantine Emperor Manuel<sup>43</sup> had blinded this doge because many of his advisors had begged him, saying "If you allow this doge to go free, he will do great harm to your empire." The emperor did not wish to kill him, so he ordered that his eyes be blinded with glass; his eyes appeared to be unharmed, but he was totally blind. This doge was the one who had planned many attacks on the city and who was obeyed by all, and his ships, from which the attack on the city was launched, were very large.

The Franks stayed at Constantinople from December to April, when they took the city. On May 9, 6712 AM (1204 AD) they and their bishops crowned as emperor the Count of Flanders, a Latin Christian, as their emperor and divided territory<sup>44</sup> amongst themselves: the emperor received the city, Markos received the judiciary,<sup>45</sup> and the Doge had control over the tithes.<sup>46</sup>

Thus did the empire of the God-protected Constantinople and of Byzantium perish because of a feud amongst its leaders, and now it is ruled by the Franks.<sup>47</sup>

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<sup>38</sup> The Tale concludes with a passage (indented here in the translation) which may have been written by someone other than the original author of the text. Snezhana Rakova, the author of a study on Slavic Orthodox reactions to the Fourth Crusade, refers to this passage as an "appendix," an "addendum." (Rakova 2013, p. 29) It differs from the remainder of the text in style, focus, and in the number of inaccuracies which are present. Most of the "facts" provided in the "addendum" are inaccurate or simply incorrect. The Tver Chronicle offers two versions of the beginning of the addendum. The second version is most similar to the text found in the N1stC and all other chronicles.

<sup>39</sup> Names of personages in the first part of the Tale are accurately recorded, but in the addendum the writer fails to provide a single correct name, confusing ranks and titles with names.

<sup>40</sup> "*Marcos from Rome, in the town of Verona, where the evil pagan Dietrich once lived*" Marcos is not a name, but rather a title: Marquis Boniface I of Montferrat (~1150-1207) of the Piedmont region Northern Italy. Verona is about 200 km east of Montferrat, nowhere near Rome. Verona was once a residence of Dietrich von Bern (Verona), a legendary reflection of Theodoric the Great (454-526), the king of the Ostrogoths, an Arian Christian.

<sup>41</sup> *Kondo Flarent, Kondof o Flandr*. The Count of Flanders, a leader of the Fourth Crusade, was Count Baldwin IX of Flanders (1172-1205).

<sup>42</sup> *The blind doge, from the Island of (San) Marco, Venice*. This blind doge is Enrico Dandolo (1107?-1205), doge of Venice from 1192 until his death. The name for "Venice," as given in the text, is "Venedik," which corresponds to the Germanic name for the city (cf. modern High German, "Venedig").

<sup>43</sup> "*Emperor Manuel had blinded ...*" The story of the blinding of Dandolo by Emperor Manuel I Komnenos (1118-1180) is fiction, likely created after the fall of the Constantinople to explain Dandolo's perceived vehemence towards the city. His blindness actually appears to be the result of a severe blow to the head. No other contemporary source has this story. (Madden 1993, pp. 179-184; Queller & Madden 1997, pp. 9-10; Phillips 2004, p. 58.)

<sup>44</sup> "divided territory" The Old Russian word used here is *vlast'*, which can mean "power" or "territory." The reference here appears to apply to the *Partitio terrarum imperii Romaniae*, a treaty signed by the crusaders after the sack of the city, establishing the Latin Empire and partitioning the territory of Byzantium.

<sup>45</sup> According to the Tale, Boniface of Montferrat received either the "judiciary" or the "Golden Horn" (homonyms in Old Russian).

<sup>46</sup> The Doge of Venice received a "tithe." The Old Russian word used here and translated as "tithe" is *desyatina*, meaning a "tenth," the Greek word for which is *dekaton* (δέκατον). The term "dekaton" was specifically used in Byzantium to refer to duties to be paid on the movement of goods and merchandise, which at one time was 10% of its value. (Oikonomides 2002, p.1050). It was quickly implemented in the Venetian section of Constantinople after the city's conquest (see Jacoby 2008 pp. 34-35).

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