

THE “SEVEN SLEEPERS”: MATERIALS FROM NORTH-EAST RUS’

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Summary

The history of the Grand Principality of Vladimir fits into a period between the 12th and 14th centuries. Materials related to the plot of the Seven Sleepers date back to this time. The Seven Sleepers are presented in iconographic compositions on the Suzdal hystera-amulet, in the reliefs of the western facade of the Saint George Cathedral at Yuriev-Polski and on the stone carved icon from Vladimir. The authors of these works are unknown. The Suzdal hystera-amulet and the stone icon arrived ready-made in Vladimir region. Among the builders and stone cutters of Saint George’s Cathedral, there were also local artisans. All these artifacts are united not only with the plot composition, but also by the fact that they are part of the material, intellectual and visual culture of North-Eastern Rus’ during the Middle Ages.

Key Words: *Seven Sleepers, North-Eastern Rus’, Grand Principality of Vladimir, Suzdal hystera-amulet, Saint George’s Cathedral of Yuriev-Polski, stone carved panagia icon, visual culture, religious culture*

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Introduction

The plot of the Seven Sleepers occupies a particular place in the culture of medieval Rus'. The story of seven young people, who hid in a cave to protect their faith and slept there for over 300 years, was well known and revered in Rus' during the Middle Ages. This plot is presented in the heritage of medieval Rus': church literature, book miniatures, icon painting, temple fresco and monumental relief composition, works of applied art (carved stone and metal icons).

The earliest description of a cave in Mount Ohlon (Celion, Peony) in Russian pilgrimage literature is the text of the southern Russian cleric Abbot Daniel (Daniel the Pilgrim), who traveled to the Holy Land in 1104-1106. He was not the first traveler to leave Russia, but his travels were the first, which there are written records of. In the chapter dedicated to the city of Ephesus, Daniel wrote:

*"There is a cave nearby where lie the bodies of seven youths who slept for three hundred and sixty years: under King Decius they fell asleep, and under King Theodosius they appeared. In the same cave, three hundred holy fathers lie; here Saint Alexander lies, and the coffin of Magdalene Mary, and her head; and the holy Apostle Timothy, a disciple of the holy Apostle Paul, lies in an old tomb. And in the old church there is an icon of the Holy Mother of God, with the help of which the saints defeated Nestorius the heretic."*¹

It is noteworthy that Daniel talks about the cave as something well known. He does not retell the plot, but gives a description of the shrine. In other words, Daniel assumes that any reader (or listener) knows the story of the Seven Sleepers and understands the importance of this plot in a religious and ecclesiastical sense. The materials of this publication confirm this thesis.

The list of medieval Rus' monuments associated with the plot of the Seven Sleepers is quite large². In this publication, I present materials from the

¹ Zhitiye i khozhdeniye igumena Daniila iz russkoy zemli [The Life and Walking of Hegumen Daniel from the Russian Land], in "Pamyatniki literatury Drevney Rusi: XII vek", M.: Khudozhestvennaya literatura, 1980, S.24-115.

² The most representative materials of this group: a miniature (12th-13th centuries) of the Khludov Psalter (9th century), a fresco in the Church of the Annunciation on Myachino near Novgorod (1189), a relief composition on the western facade of St. George's Cathedral in the city of Yuryev-Polski (13th century), stone double-sided icon "Our Lady of Tenderness and the Seven Youths of

Vladimirian Rus' or Grand Principality of Vladimir - a North-East Slavic medieval state, centered in Vladimir.

North-Eastern Rus' is a historical region uniting a group of Russian principalities between the Volga and Klyazma rivers in the 9th-15th centuries. Finno-Ugric tribes lived here at the end of the 1st millennium AD. In the 9th-10th centuries, the Slavs came here and the active development of these territories began: numerous rural settlements and cities appeared. The main urban centers of these lands were: Rostov (first mention in the chronicle - 862), Suzdal (first mention in the chronicle - 1024), Vladimir (first mention in the chronicle - 1108), Moscow (first mentioned in the chronicle in 1147), Yuriev-Polski (first mention in the chronicle - 1152), Pereslavl-Zalesski (first mention in the chronicle - 1152), Dmitrov (first mention in the chronicle - 1154). The rulers of this territory were members of the Rurik dynasty - the sons of the Prince of Kyiv. In 987-1010 at Rostov the first prince was Yaroslav the Wise. His son Yuri Dolgorukiy (Yuri the Long Arm) in 1125 transferred the capital of his possessions from Rostov to Suzdal. In 1149-1151 and 1155-1157. Yuri was the Great Prince of Kyiv. In 1155, his eldest son Andrei became Prince of Vladimir. After the death of his father in 1157, Andrei inherited the title of the Great Prince, but remained at Vladimir. After the death of Andrei, the throne of the Grand Prince of Rus' passed successively to his younger brothers - Mikhail and Vsevolod. The last of them (Vsevolod III, Vsevolod the Big Nest) was the Prince of Kyiv and Pereyaslavl before the reign at Vladimir. During the reign of the sons of Yuri Dolgorukiy (Andrey and Vsevolod), the princes of Vladimir controlled Kyiv and Novgorod. This is how the Great Principality of Vladimir arose. In the XII-XIV centuries, the Grand Principality of Vladimir became the core of the Russian state. In 1214,

Ephesus"/"Nicholas the Wonderworker with the Life" (14th century), a cast encolpium icon from the collections of the State Historical Museum (XVI century), an icon sample from the collections of the State Historical Museum (late 17th century). See: Vagner G.K., *Legenda o semi spyashchih efesskih otrokakh i ee otrazhenie vo vladimiro-suzdal'skom iskusstve* [The Legend of the Seven Sleeping Ephesian Youths and Its Reflection in the Vladimir-Suzdal Art], in "Vizantijskij vremennik", Tom 23, M.: Izd-vo AN SSSR, 1963, S. 85–104; Tsarevskaya T. Yu. *Freski tserkvi Blagoveshcheniya na Myachine («v Arkazhakh»)* [The frescoes of the Church of the Annunciation on Lake Myachino ("in Arkazhi")]. Novgorod; St. Petersburg: Dmitry Bulanin, 1999, S. 57-61; Milutenko N.I., *Suzdal'skij i peremyshl'skij zmeeviki – molitva i zaklinanie* [Gorgoneia from Suzdal and Przemysl: The Prayer and the Spell], in "Slovesnost' i istoriya", No. 1, 2021, SPb: Izd-vo "Pushkinskij" Dom", 2021, S. 30–61; Macarius (Veretennikov), archimandrite. [The Holy Seven Youths of Ephesus], in "Theological Bulletin", No. 3 (42), 2021, M.: Moskovskaya dukhovnaya akademiya6 2021, S. 189-201.

under the Great Prince Yuri (son of Vsevolod), the diocese of Vladimir was established. Since 1299, the residence of the Metropolitan of All Rus' was at Vladimir. The most famous of the princes of Vladimir is Alexander Nevsky - a commander and saint of the Russian Orthodox Church. From the end of the 14th century, the center of political life of Rus' moved to Moscow.

The iconographic composition "Seven Sleepers" is presented with materials from Suzdal, Yuriev-Polski and Vladimir. The artifacts date back to the period of the 12th-14th centuries and are described in chronological order.

Suzdal hystera-amulet ("Suzdal'skii zmeevik")

"Suzdal'skii zmeevik" is a double-convex medallion with a diameter of 5.9 cm and a thickness of 0.7 cm, carved of heliotrope (blood jasper). The medallion was kept for a long time in the Sacristy of the Cathedral of the Nativity of the Theotokos in Suzdal. G.D. Filimonov published the medallion in 1876³. The medallion was transferred to the collection of the State Historical Museum (SHM, Moscow, Russia) in 1890. Currently, the amulet is exposed in the window of hall №10 at the main building of the museum. In the Electronic Catalog of Museum Objects SHM, the amulet is presented in the "Precious Metals" collection and has the inventory number OK 15560/19726/10811416⁴.

On both sides of the medallion, there are images and inscriptions in Old Russian, made using the intaglio technique (carved in depth). On one side, there are images of Seven Youths of Ephesus with their names. The youths are depicted sitting or reclining: Maximian is in the center, others are in a circle. There is a basket or a bag with a pilgrim's staff threaded through its handles near each figure. Along the rim of this side, there is a two-line Russian prayer inscription: an appeal to Christ, with a mention of the Seven Sleepers about the granting of life-giving sleep to certain George and Christina and the extinguishing of the "fiery power", which could include various diseases. On the other side there is a gorgoneion - an image of an anthropomorphic head with six serpentine bodies emanating

3 Filimonov Yu.D., Zmeevik suzdal'skogo Rozhdestvenskogo sobora [Zmeevik from the Suzdal Nativity Cathedral], in "Vestnik obshchestva drevnerusskogo iskusstva pri Moskovskom Publichnom muzee", № 1-12 (1874-1876), Otd. IVth Smes', M.: Universitetskaya tipografiya, 1876, S. 73-75.

4 Zmeevik. Nachalo XIII veka [Zmeevik. Beginning of the XIII century.] in "Gosudarstvennyj istoricheskij muzej. Elektronnyj katalog". Retrieved from <https://catalog.shm.ru/entity/OBJECT/1703850?query=змеевик&index=9>

from it with the heads of dragons, turned to the left. Six eight-pointed stars are located between the serpentine bodies. Along the rim of this side, there is a two-line Russian prayer inscription: an appeal to Christ for mercy on certain Mary and Christina.

The medallion became the subject of attention of many researchers. The most significant works were carried out by M.N. Speransky⁵, A.S. Orlov⁶, A.N. Ryndina⁷, M.V. Shchepkina⁸, V.N. Zalesskaya⁹, T.V. Nikolaeva and A.V. Chernetsov¹⁰, A. A. Gippius i A. A. Zaliznyak¹¹, Yu.Yu. Shevchenko¹², N.I. Milyutenko¹³. "Suzdal'skii zmeevik" is known outside of Russia and is considered within the framework of the hystera-amulet typology of Byzantine and medieval Russian traditions¹⁴.

In 2019-2023, I completed a complex study program of the amulet on the topic "Suzdal'skii hystera-amulet in the context of the history of medicine." The project plan included the characterization of the medallion as an instrument of magic-medical practices in three stages: 1 – iconological analysis of the images on both sides of the medallion; 2 - identifying the relationship between images and prayer inscriptions; 3 – definition

5 Speranskij M.N., O zmeevike s sem'yu otrokami [About the Zmeevik with Seven Youths], in "Arheologicheskie izvestiya i zametki, izdavaemye imp. Moskovskim arheologicheskim obshchestvom", Tom I, № 2, M.: tip. A.I. Mamontova, 1893, S.49-60.

6 Orlov A.S., Amulety-«zmeeviki» Istoricheskogo muzeya ["Zmeevik"-amulets of the Historical Museum Collection], in "Otchet gosudarstvennogo istoricheskogo muzeya za 1916-1926 gg. Prilozhenie V", M.: GIM, 1926, 55 s.

7 Ryndina A.V., Suzdal'skij zmeevik [The Suzdal Zmeevik], in "Drevnerusskoe iskusstvo: hudozhestvennaya kul'tura domongol'skoj Rusi", M., 1972, S. 217-234.

8 Shchepkina M.V., O proiskhozhdenii Uspenskogo sbornika [On the Origin of the Assumption Codex], in "Drevnerusskoe iskusstvo: Rukopisnaya kniga", M.: Nauka, 1972, S. 74–80.

9 Zalesskaya V.N., K voprosu ob atribucii suzdal'skogo zmeevika: V svyazi so stat'ej A. V. Ryndinoj «Suzdal'skij zmeevik» [On the Issue of Attribution of the Suzdal zmeevik: In Connection with the Article by A.V. Ryndina "Suzdal'skij zmeevik"], in "Vizantijskij vremennik", Tom XXXVI, M.: Nauka, 1974, S. 184–188.

10 Nikolaeva T.V., Chernetsov A.V., Drevnerusskie amulety-zmeeviki [The Old Russian Zmeevik-Amulets], M.: Nauka, 1991, S. 82–83.

11 Gippius A.A., Zaliznyak A.A., O nadpisyah na Suzdal'skom zmeevike [About the Inscriptions on the Suzdal Zmeevik], in "Balto-slavyanskije issledovaniya –1997", M.: INDRIK, 1998, S. 540–562.

12 Shevchenko Yu.Yu., Bogoroditsa Spileotissa na drevnih hristianskih filakteriyah s izobrazheniyami serpentarid [Our Lady Spileotissa on Old Russian Christian Phylacteries with Images of Serpentarides], in "RusArh – elektronnaya nauchnaya biblioteka po istorii drevnerusskoj arhitektury". Retrieved from <http://rusarch.ru/shevchenko4.htm>

13 Milutenko N.I., Suzdal'skij i peremysl'skij zmeeviki – molitva i zaklanianie [Gorgoneia from Suzdal and Przemysl: The Prayer and the Spell], in "Slovesnost' i istoriya", № 1, 2021, SPb: Izd-vo «Pushkinskij Dom», 2021, S. 30–61.

14 Spier J., Medieval Byzantine Magical Amulets and Their Tradition, in "Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes", Vol. 56, London: The Warburg Institute University of London, 1993, Pp. 25–62; Björklund H., Protecting Against Child-Killing Demons: Uterus Amulets in the Late Antique and Byzantine Magical World, Helsinki: Faculty of Arts at the University of Helsinki, 2017, 82 p.

the relationship between images, inscriptions, material and shape of the amulet. The results of the work are presented in some publications¹⁵.

The question of dating and attribution of this artifact is debatable. Some researchers believe that the medallion belonged to Maria Shvarnovna (1158 - 1205/1206) - the wife of the Grand Prince of Vladimir Vsevolod the Big Nest (1154–1212)¹⁶. Others correlate the gem with Princess Christina Ingesdotter of Sweden (?-1122), who was the first wife of Mstislav I (1076-1132) – the Prince of Novgorod and Kyiv¹⁷. The third option is to identify the owner of the medallion, Maria, as the wife or widow of Moislav, a member of the princely family of the mid-12th century¹⁸. Keeping in mind the variability of attribution of the medallion, the following theses seem quite consistent: 1) the inscriptions were made between the mid-12th and early 13th centuries; 2) the inscriptions correlated with the images.

The "Suzdal'skii zmeevik" belongs to a group of artifacts defined as Byzantine Hystera amulets and Old Russian zmeevik-amulets¹⁹. These medallions appeared in Byzantium, came to Rus' at the end of the Early

15 Biserova A.V., Lapshin A.G., «Suzdal'skij zmeevik» v kontekste istorii mediciny [Suzdal Hystera-amulet in the Context of History of Medicine], in "Suzdal'skij sbornik – 2018: Materialy XI Vserossijskoj nauchno-prakticheskoy konferencii (26.10.2018)", Vladimir: OOO "Tranzit-IKS", 2019, S.14–20; Biserova A.V., Lapshin A.G., Molel'nye nadpisi «Suzdal'skogo zmeevika» i medicinskie praktiki Srednevekov'ya [Prayer Inscriptions of the Hystera-amulet and Medical Practices of the Middle Ages], in "Kul'turnyj sloj. Sbornik nauchnyh statej", Vyp. 6, Nizhnij Novgorod: NGU, 2020, S.38–45; Lapshin A.G., «Suzdal'skij zmeevik» v kontekste istorii mediciny-2: syuzhet o semi otrokah efesskih [Suzdal Hystera-amulet " in the Context of History of Medicine -2: The Story of Seven Sleepers of Ephesus], in "Suzdal'skij sbornik - 2019: Sbornik nauchnyh statej", Vladimir: OOO "Tranzit-IKS", 2020, S. 139–146; Lapshin A.G., Verbal'naya formula «Suzdal'skogoazyky» [Verbal Formula of the Suzdal Hystera-amulet], in "Vestnik VIGU. Seriya: social'nye i gumanitarnye nauki", №25, Vladimir: VIGU, 2020, S. 16-24; Lapshin A.G., "Suzdal'skij zmeevik" i magicheskie praktiki mediciny Srednevekov'ya [Suzdal Hystera-amulet and Magical Practices of Medieval Medicine], in "Materialy XXIV Mezhhregional'noj kraevedcheskoj konferencii (19.04.2019)", Vladimir: VONB, 2020, S. 30–37; Lapshin A.G., K voprosu o naznachanii «Suzdal'skogo zmeevika» [About Destination of the Suzdal Hystera-amulet], in "Arheologiya Vladimiro-Suzdal'skoj zemli. Materialy nauchnogo seminar", Vyp. 10, M.: IA RAN, 2020, S. 146–152; Lapshin A.G., «Suzdal'skij zmeevik» i gemma iz Peremyshlya [Suzdal Hystera-amulet and the Gem from Przemyśl], in "Materialy XXVI Mezhdunarodnoj kraevedcheskoj konferencii (16.04. 2021)", Vladimir–Saratov: Amirit, 2022, S. 29–33; Lapshin A.G., «Suzdal'skij zmeevik» i ego poddelka [Suzdal Hystera-amulet and its imitation], in "Suzdal'skij sbornik - 2021: Sbornik nauchnyh statej", Vladimir: OOO "Tranzit-IKS", 2022, S. 98–106; Lapshin A.G., O poddelke «Suzdal'skogo zmeevika» [About Imitation of Suzdal Hystera-amulet], in "Arheologiya Vladimiro-Suzdal'skoj zemli. Materialy nauchnogo seminar", Vyp. 12, M.: IA RAN, 2022, S. 131-139; Lapshin A.G., «Suzdal'skij zmeevik» –3: medal'on iz geliotropa [Suzdal Hystera-amulet in the Context of History of Medicine –3: the Gem Made of Heliotrope], in "Suzdal'skij sbornik - 2022: Sbornik nauchnyh statej", Vladimir: OOO "Tranzit-IKS", 2022. – S. 17–25.

16 Nikolaeva T.V., Chernetsov A.V., Drevnerusskie amulety-zmeeviki...; Filimonov Yu.D., Zmeevik...; Shchepkina M.V., O proiskhozhdenii...

17 Zaleskaya V.N. K voprosu ob atribucii...; Ryndina A.V. Suzdal'skij zmeevik.

18 Gippius A. A., Zaliznyak A. A. O nadpisyah...; Milyutenko N.I. Suzdal'skij i peremyshl'skij zmeeviki...

19 Nikolaeva T. V., Chernetsov A. V. Drevnerusskie amulety-zmeeviki...; Spier J. Medieval Byzantine Magical Amulets...; Björklund H. Protecting Against Child-Killing Demons...

Middle Ages together with Christian Greek-speaking scholarship, were adapted into the old Russian culture and had been used for a long time - until the XIX century. All Russian medallions are made of metal or stone, with images on both sides: on one side - a Christian image, on the other - an image of a creature with the head/body of a woman from which 6 to 14 serpentine or dragon-like creatures emanate. Some of these zmeevik-amulets carried on prayer or spell inscriptions in Greek and/or Russian. Sometimes the prayer inscriptions mentioned the names of the owners - men and women. The shape of the medallions varied: round, oval; less often – octagonal, icon case; very rarely – quadrangular. During the Middle Ages, objects from this group were used as apotropaic artifacts.

The “Suzdal'skii zmeevik” occupies a special place among these materials. This is a high quality gemstone intaglio. This combination of images, inscriptions, material and shape is unique. The image of the Seven Sleepers correlates with their mention in the prayer inscription. Appeals to the Seven Youths of Ephesus in the treatment of diseases are recorded in healing prayers of the Middle Ages in the Greek, Slavic, Latin and Old English traditions²⁰. These text-prayers had to be personal, that is, include the name of the patient. The mention of the Seven Sleepers in these text-prayers correlates with the Christian theological meaning of the plot: the Lord, through the awakening of the youths after a long sleep, revealed to the Church the secret of the resurrection of the dead. The youths are depicted as sitting or reclining - in positions that are uncomfortable for sleeping. Perhaps such poses are iconographic attempts to convey the moment of awakening from sleep - a continuation of “way”. Near each youth are depicted a staff and a bag - markers of a pilgrim. This corresponds to one of the self-designations of a Christian - “Follower of the Way.”

Medieval medicine was “sympathetic,” meaning it treated like with like. There are two parts of this medicine - “material” and “immaterial”. The first (“material”) involved treatment with substances and objects similar (in color, shape or composition) to parts of the body, physiological fluids or the cause of the patient’s suffering. The second (“immaterial”) turned to prayer, rituals and spells. They followed a “comprehensive approach” often, using both material objects and verbal incantations. In the logic of medieval sympathetic medicine, an appeal to the plot of the Seven

20 Lapshin A.G. «Suzdal'skij zmeevik» v kontekste istorii mediciny-2...; Lapshin A.G. Verbal'naya formula...; Lapshin A.G. K voprosu o naznachanii...; Milyutenko N.I. Suzdal'skij i peremysl'skij zmeeviki...

Sleepers implies healthy sleep, restoring physical strength and mental balance. Waking up from such a dream is, in a sense, "resurrection." This completely coincides with the theological significance of the plot about Seven Youths of Ephesus, which was interpreted in folk Christianity in the context of everyday life²¹.

Calming and restorative sleep counters agitation, fussiness, restlessness, delirium and frenzy. The medical indication of the last are aggressiveness and incoherent speech of a patient in an unconscious state. The causes of mental disorders can be mental illness, extreme conditions (for example, hypoxia in the mountains or under water), as well as pathological conditions of the body (for example, intoxication). Often illnesses are accompanied with increase in body temperature.

A person's subjective sensations at elevated temperatures include increased chills and trembling in the muscles. These markers of the disease in the Middle Ages were called "fever". Many healing prayers and magic-medical recipes of Medieval Europe, mentioning the Seven Youths of Ephesus, are aimed at counteracting fever. They named the fever as "fiery force" in the prayer on "Suzdal'skii zmeevik". Taking into account the level of development of medical knowledge in the Middle Ages, symptoms, including malaise, weakness, sleep disorders and high temperature, could relate to a wide range of diseases - from various infections and poisonings to nervous disorders.

The images and inscriptions on the other side of the medallion from Suzdal, its shape, the material of which it is made, and the carving technique (intaglio) also find explanations in the traditions of the healing practices of Europe and the Middle East of the late Classical and Middle Ages. But this has an indirect connection with the plot of Seven Sleepers and it is out of topic-limits of this publication.

21 Kirillin V. M. Simvolika chisel v literature DrevneyRusi (XI-XVI veka) [Symbolism of Numbers in the Literature of Medieval Rus' (XI-XVI centuries)]. St. Petersburg: Aletya, 2000; Bonser W. The Seven Sleepers of Ephesus in Anglo-Saxon and Later Recipes., in "Folklore", Vol. 56, №2 (1945), Abingdon: Taylor & Francis, Pp. 254-256; Lapshin A.G., «Suzdal'skij zmeevik» v kontekste istorii mediciny-2: syuzhet o semi otrokah efesskih [Suzdal Hystera-amulet " in the Context of History of Medicine -2: The Story of Seven Sleepers of Ephesus], in "Suzdal'skij sbornik - 2019: Sbornik nauchnyh statej", Vladimir: OOO "Tranzit-IKS", 2020, S. 139–146; Lapshin A.G., Verbal'naya formula «Suzdal'skogo yazyka» [Verbal Formula of the Suzdal Hystera-amulet], in "Vestnik VIGU. Seriya: social'nye i gumanitarnye nauki", №25, Vladimir: VIGU, 2020, S. 16-24; Milutenko N.I., Suzdal'skij i peremysl'skij zmeeviki – molitva i zaklinanie [Gorgoneia from Suzdal and Przemysl: The Prayer and the Spell], in "Slovesnost' i istoriya", No. 1, 2021, SPb: Izd-vo "Pushkinskij" Dom", 2021, S. 30–61.

Thus, “Suzdal'skii zmeevik” represents healing practices not at the level of primitive magic and superstition, but as synthesis of the text tradition and complex technologies. This is not an object of personal piety, but a individual medical multitool used in the case of illness of one of three named persons. The amulet from Suzdal, Church Slavonic text-prayers and European (latin, old english) recipes with the mention of Seven Sleepers belong to a single magic-medical tradition. The Eastern Christian and Western Christian versions of the story of the Seven Youths of Ephesus are different in details. However, this is not of fundamental importance in the context of the topic under consideration. The reproduction of the plot of the Seven Youths of Ephesus in different cultures brought some variability of the names of the youths. For all traditions, the importance of the plot about the Ephesian events remained unchanged in the context of understanding sleep as the state of a person on the border (or abroad) of reality and as evidence of the possibility of rebirth or continuation of life after death. This explains the popularity of this plot for the treatment of sleep disorders. "Suzdal'skii zmeevik" perfectly illustrates this.

Reliefs of Saint George's Cathedral in Yuriev-Polski

In 1152, Prince Yuri Dolgorukiy founded a city on the left bank of the Koloksha River. They named city after the founder - Yuriev-Polski (Yuri's city in the fields). The ramparts and public buildings were erected in accordance with the order of the prince. Among these buildings was a Christian church, consecrated in honor of Saint George (George of Lydda), the patron saint of Prince Yuri. In 1212, Yuriev became the center of a small estate belonging to the son of Vsevolod III – Svyatoslav. In 1234, Svyatoslav, the grandson of Yuri Dolgorukiy, built a new Saint George's Cathedral here on the site of a "dilapidated" church built by his grandfather. The new cathedral was a four-pillar, three-aisle, three-apse temple, constructed of white stone of average quality. The vaults were made of porous tuff-like limestone, the walls were covered with cobblestones and lime mortar. The exterior of the cathedral was richly decorated with carvings and was famous for its beauty even centuries later. Unfortunately, the cathedral collapsed in the middle of the 15th century. It was "assembled again" by the Moscow architect V.D. Ermolin in 1471, probably with great changes. Later, it underwent repeated alterations, and only in Soviet times the extensions (bell tower, sacristy, warm side-chapel) disfiguring this beautiful building were demolished.

Initially the building was very slender and picturesque. The facades were divided with pilasters into three parts along the vertical and by arcature (columnar belt) horizontally, as was characteristic of the white-stone architecture of the late 12th-early 13th century. Judging by the design of the northern wall, surviving from the 13th century, the whole surface of the facades of the temple and all the architectural details were entirely covered with carving, which distinguished the Saint George's Cathedral. The combination of a carpet pattern with high relief figures of saints, human faces, animals and monsters was very difficult technically. First, at the construction site, on individual stones relief images were hewn out. Then they were introduced into the wall masonry. And only on the already finished wall carving of the carpet pattern was made, which braided all high reliefs and architectural details. This work required perfect precision from the carvers and was possible only on the basis of a preliminary detailed project for the placement of carved stones. The calculation shows that two artels (a cooperative association of artisans living and working together) worked on the carved decoration of the temple: one (at least 12 masters) cut high relief figures, another (up to 20 people) performed floral ornament. At the same time, the individual manner of the Vladimir-Suzdal masters is visible behind the unity of decoration.

A distinctive feature of the exterior of Saint George's Cathedral in Yuriev-Polski is the presence of complex plot compositions: Deesis, Our Lady of the Orante, "Crucifixion", "Ascension", "Trinity", "Jonah in the belly of the whale", "Transfiguration", "Seven Sleepers" "Three Youths in Fiery Furnace", "Daniel in the Moat with Lions", "The Ascension of Alexander the Great". Probably all the compositions were located in the upper parts of the facades. It was these parts that were heavily damaged during the collapse of the building. In 1471 V.D. Ermolin was unable to restore the temple to its original form. That is why some compositions were fragmented. This also applies to the composition on the subject that interests us.

Only five stones of the composition "Seven Sleepers" have survived. These are elaborate stones of rectangular shape. Their sizes range from 40 to 56 cm. During the restoration work of 1471, they used these stones not as parts of the plot composition, but as building material: they were mounted separately in the walls of the southern, western and northern facades of the temple. Thus, the plot composition fell apart. Each of five stones represents a figure of young man sitting or reclining. There is a halo around the head

of each youth. Near of every figure there is a basket with a staff threaded through its handle. The youths are dressed in tunics with long sleeves (kabbadion) and in cloaks fastened at the chest with a fibula. The youths are turned to the right on two stones, to the left - on three. Particularly noteworthy is the high quality of the stone carving: details of the clothing and hairstyles of the youths are visible on the reliefs. Fragments of floral patterns are visible on four blocks.

The historiography of the reliefs and architecture of Saint George's Cathedral is varied and numerous. G.K. Vagner studied the reliefs of the Ephesian youths and published the results during 1960-1963²². He interpreted the stones as parts of a multi-figure composition, identified the plot of the composition and presented a graphic reconstruction of the composition based on an analysis of the features of the reliefs and the sizes of the stones.

The conclusions of G.K. Vagner boil down to the following.

- 1) The composition included seven stones with similar reliefs of youths, five of which have survived. Two stones were lost, probably in the collapse of the cathedral in the mid-15th century. Stones and images differ in size, but not much. Perhaps this is due to the peculiarities of the masonry or is an attempt by the stonemason to visualize the different ages of the youths.
- 2) The composition of the reliefs was centric (G.K. Vagner called it “circular”). There was a stone with the largest image at the center of the composition. Around it there were six stones with smaller images. The total area of the composition was calculated hypothetically (taking into account the dimensions of the surviving stones and the estimated sizes of the stones that were not preserved): $\approx 180 \times \approx 240 = \approx 43200$ square centimeters.
- 3) The centric character and poses of the youths bring the reliefs from Yuryev-Polski closer to the “Suzdal'skii zmeevik”.

22 Vagner G.K., O pervonachal'noj forme kompozicii «Sem' spyashchih otrokov» na fasade Georgievskogo sobora g. Yur'eva-Pol'skogo [About the Original Form of the Composition “Seven Sleeping Youths” on the Facade of St. George's Cathedral at Yuriev-Polski], in “Sovetskaya arheologiya” № 2 (1960), M.: Izd-vo AN SSSR, 1960, S. 263–270; Vagner G.K., Dva syuzheta fasadnoj plastiki Georgievskogo sobora 1230–1234 godov [Two Scenes of the Facade Plastics of St. George's Cathedral of 1230–1234], in “Kratkie soobshcheniya o dokladah i polevyh issledovaniyah Instituta arheologii”, Vyp. 87: Slavyano-russkie drevnosti, M.: Izd-vo AN SSSR, 1962, S. 92–99; Vagner G.K., Legenda o semi spyashchih efesskih otrokah i ee otrazhenie vo vladimiro-suzdal'skom iskusstve [The Legend of the Seven Sleeping Ephesian Youths and Its Reflection in the Vladimir-Suzdal Art], in “Vizantijskij vremennik”, Tom 23, M.: Izd-vo AN SSSR, 1963, S. 85–104.

- 4) The composition was located above the south window in the upper tier of the western facade.
- 5) Complex relief compositions were located above the windows in the upper parts of the northern, western and southern facades according to the scheme: at the center, there is a composition on a Gospel story, on the right and left - compositions on Old Testament and/or post-Gospel scenes. The compositions of the western facade were arranged in the following order: above the northern window - "Jonah in the belly of the whale", above the central window - "Transfiguration of the Lord", above the southern window - "Seven Sleepers". All three plots are evidence of transformation, overcoming death, and the infinity of existence of the righteous. The iconographic program of the western facade also included a Deesis composition located above the main portal of the temple.

The western facade is the main facade of any Christian church. The orientation of the cathedral to the cardinal points is a mandatory characteristic of Christian church architecture. Taking this into account, the peculiarity of the layout of the fortress within which the cathedral was located is noteworthy: the city was round in plan; there were two tower-gates and a main street connected the gates. Saint George's Cathedral was located in the southern part of the city, on the main street. This street was straight from the northern gate and approached the northern portal of the cathedral. Then the street turned southwest and went in a straight line through the southern gate of the city to the piers on the Koloksha River. Thus, the cathedral was an important factor for organizing of the city internal space. It was impossible not to see the cathedral. The reliefs of the cathedral served a didactic function: they represented a visualization of ideas, which were important to the residents of Yuriev-Polski and of the surrounding areas. Approaching the main facade of the cathedral, the believer saw what will happen (overcoming death, exit from darkness - reliefs "Jonah in the belly of the whale", "Transfiguration of the Lord", "Seven Sleepers") and how to achieve it (be firm in faith, follow the way of good people under the Deesis composition, including eleven figures above the portal). The reliefs were open to everyone. They were visible and were perceivable by representatives of social elite (nobility and priests) and commoners (peasants, artisans, merchants). This allows us to conclude: the plot of Seven Sleepers occupied an important place in the ideology of North-Eastern Rus' of the XIII century and was comprehensible at all levels of the social hierarchy.

Carved stone icon from Vladimir

In the second half of the 12th century, the city of Vladimir expanded significantly: they build new churches and new fortifications, the area and density of urban development increased. The city now included three hills, separated with deep depressions, and represented three independent fortified areas, connected with bridges. Vladimir's plan at that time was a triangle stretched along the east-west line: Vetchany Gorod (eastern part), Pecherny Gorod (central part), Novy Gorod (western part). Vetchany Gorod was built in a short time and had a regular infrastructure. This happened during the reign of Andrei Bogolyubsky - when Vladimir became the residence of the Grand Prince. The main unit of this part city structure was the “city estate” (usad'ba) - a complex of residential and utility buildings. Archaeological materials from this part of medieval Vladimir allow us to identify the social status of the estates owners: representatives of the nobility and church hierarchy, highly skilled artisans.

In 2007, during archaeological excavations in the northwestern sector of the Vetchany Gorod, a double-sided stone-carved icon made of grayish-brown slate was discovered. The icon has a rectangular shape (5.2 x 4.1-4.3 x 0.9-1.2 cm). The icon has losses on both sides. On both sides of the icon, there are relief images: on one side - depictions of Saint Nicholas and the Seven Sleepers, on the other - an image of a saint, presumably John Chrysostom²³. There are lot of attrition (traces of wear) on the second side. That means that second side was the reverse one. Calculating the specifics of elaboration of both sides, we may conclude: the icon was originally one-sided. A large stylistically different image on the reverse side was cut out later. Therefore, it differs sharply from the image on the front side. Thus, we may exclude a simultaneous formation of images on both sides.

The centerpiece of the icon contains a waist-length depiction of Saint Nicholas the Miracle Worker wearing a bishop's omophorion, holding a closed book of Gospels in his left hand and blessing with his right. Seven Sleepers surrounded the central image. They are located in three tiers, separated by two crossbars up to 0.3 cm thick: three figures at the bottom, two figures on the sides of Nikola, and two at the top of the composition.

23 Kabaev D.A., Kamennaya ikonka iz raskopa 2007 goda v 22-m kvartale goroda Vladimira [The Stone Icon from Excavations in 2007 at the 22nd quarter of Vladimir city], in “Arheologiya Vladimiro-Suzdal'skoj zemli: materialy nauchnogo seminaru”, Vyp. 3, M.: IA RAN, 2011, S. 122–125; Putsko V.G., Srednevekovye kamennye ikonki vo Vladimire [Medieval Stone Icons from Vladimir], in “Arheologiya Vladimiro-Suzdal'skoj zemli: materialy nauchnogo seminaru”, Vyp. 5, M.: IA RAN, 2015, S. 199–208.

Two figures in the upper part of the icon are depicted reclining, the rest are seated (they prop their heads up with their hands and lean on low columns). The columns are decorated with a mesh that imitates twisting. The youths are dressed in himation. The folds of clothing are conveyed with straight, hard lines. All the youths turn to Nicholas. The features of their faces are shown schematically. There is a halo around the head of each Sleeper.

The archaeological context of the discovery of the icon contains materials from the 15th-16th centuries. But from the point of view of iconographic typology, the icon dates back to the beginning of the 14th century²⁴. There is no contradiction here: a stone icon was made at the beginning of the 14th century and have been used more than 200 years. This corresponds to the conclusion that the image of John Chrysostom on the reverse side appeared a considerable time after the creation of the icon. Traceology analysis data allows us to conclude that the ornament on the side surfaces of the icon was applied much later after the icon began to be used. Perhaps the icon had a precious metal frame, which has not survived. Thus, the history of the icon can be divided into two periods: the first one – when it was an icon with the image of Saint Nicholas and the Seven Sleepers, in a metal frame; during the second period it was an icon with images on both sides, with primitive ornament on the side surfaces and in a new frame.

Carved stone icon from Vladimir takes place in the typological series of stone Russian medieval icons. The tradition of these icons came to Rus' from Byzantium and was adopted by Russian masters. A separate group of Russian medieval stone-carved icons include icons with images of Seven Sleepers. There are fourteen icons of such kind in museum collections at Moscow, Sankt Petersburg, Novgorod, Svyatogorsk, and Vladimir²⁵. Seven icons are with images on both sides: on one side - a composition with Seven Sleepers, on the other side - the Resurrection of Christ, the

24 Putsko V.G. Srednevekovoye kamennye ikonki...

25 Ryndina..., S. 225-228; Nikolaeva T.V., Drevnerusskaya melkaya plastika iz kamnya XI-XVI w. [Medieval Russian Small Stone Plastics of the XI-XVI Centuries], M.: Nauka, 1983; Shamray A.V. Kamennaya ikonka s Tsarina gorodishcha [Stone icon from the Tsarina settlement], in "Materialy issledovaniy, restavratsii i ispol'zovaniya pamyatnikov istorii i kul'tury Slavyanogorskogo gosudarstvennogo istoriko-arkhitekturnogo zapovednika", Slavyanogorsk: SME, 1995, S. 67-70; Pyatnitsky Y., The Cult of "The Seven Sleepers of Ephesos" in "100 Jahre österreichische Forschungen in Ephesos. Akten des Symposions Wien 1995", Wien: Verlag der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 1999. S.361-366; Putsko V.G., Novgorodskiy kamennyye ikonki s vklyucheniym izobrazheniy semi spyashchikh otrokov efesskikh [Novgorod stone icons including images of the seven sleeping youths of Ephesus] in "Sofiya", № 2 (2008), Novgorod: Izdatel'stvo Novgorodskoy yeparkhii, 2008. S. 8–12.

Holy Sepulcher, the Mother of God Hodegetria, Saint Nicholas of Myra, Saint Demetrius of Thessalonica), John Chrysostom. The other seven icons have images on only one side.

On all icons, the side with the Seven Sleepers is always a centric composition: the Seven Sleepers are located around the central figure - Christ (two icons), Our Lady of Tenderness (two icons), Saint Nicholas (nine icons), two unidentified saints (one icon). Thirteen icons date from the XIV century, one from the beginning of the XV century. The sizes of the icons are small, ranging from 4,1-10,2 x 3,3-6,3 x 0,3-1,2 cm. The icons are covered different types of soft stone (limestone, slate and other) and made of using the technique of relief carving. Six icons have a silver frame with a ring pendant. Presumably, the other eight icons also had a metal frame with a ring suspension, which has not survived. All the icons are identified as products of Russian masters.

There is no generalizing study on this group of artifacts. However, we can make several conclusions in the context of the topic under consideration. The plot of the Seven Sleepers continued to occupy an important place in the religious consciousness and visual culture of Rus' in the 14th century. All of these icons are objects of personal piety: people worn them ostentatiously, over clothes. These icons can be classified as "panagia" - a small, richly decorated religious image worn by high-ranking clerics on a chain over clothes and near their chest. A combinatorial scheme of the image is important in the context of the iconography. The composition with Seven Sleepers is organized around one of the main Christian images - Christ, Virgin Mary, Saint Nicholas. There is no need to talk about the importance of the image of Christ. The veneration of the Mother of Jesus was of great importance in the Middle Ages in general and particularly in Rus': for example, all the churches built in North-Eastern Rus' by Andrei Bogolyubsky were consecrated in honor of the feasts of the Mother of Jesus. Let us add to this the above-mentioned detail from the description of Abbot Daniel: in the Ohlon cave (or near the cave) in the old church there was an icon of the Holy Mother of Jesus, with the help of which the saints defeated Nestorius the Heretic. The presence of Saint Nicholas in third place in this row is not casual. Nicholas of Myra is the most revered saint in Rus'. The Orthodox calendar contains three feasts of Saint Nicholas, each of which has its own hymnography: December 6 (19) - the day of death; May 9 (22) - the day of the arrival of the relics in the city of Bari;

July 29 (August 11) - Nativity of Nicholas. In the weekly cycle, Saint Nicholas is venerated on Thursday, together with the apostles. Thus, the composition of the considered icons is a direct evidence of the importance of Seven Sleepers in theological and mnemonic aspects for the culture of late Medieval Rus'.

Conclusion

The history of the Grand Principality of Vladimir fits into the chronological framework between the XII and XIV centuries. Materials related to the plot of Seven Sleepers date back to this time. Seven Sleepers are presented in iconographic compositions on the Suzdal hystera-amulet, in the reliefs of the western facade of the Saint George Cathedral at Yuriev-Polski and on the stone-carved icon from Vladimir. The authors of these works are unknown. The Suzdal hystera-amulet and the stone icon arrived at Vladimir region ready-made. Among the builders and stonecutters of Saint George's Cathedral, there were also local artisans. All these artifacts are united not only with their plot iconographical composition, but also with the fact that they are part of the material, intellectual and visual culture of North-Eastern Rus' of Medieval epoch.

"Suzdal'skii zmeevik" is an individualized instrument of magic-medical practices, the tradition of which dates back to the era of Antiquity. The imported amulet was adapted for the daily life of members of a noble family (possibly the family of the Great Prince). This was impossible without knowledge of the plot of Seven Sleepers and the perception of its Christian theological meaning (salvation through the faith). The mention of Seven Sleepers in the healing prayer on the gem confirms this thesis. Consequently, we can say with full confidence that the plot about Seven Sleepers was an important part of the elite culture of North-Eastern Rus' of the 12th-13th centuries, which was based on the traditions of the late classical Middle East and Byzantium. These traditions, codified in Greek and Latin texts, were adopted in different national cultures of the High Middle Ages Europe. An example of this are healing prayers and medical prescriptions mentioning Seven Sleepers in Church Slavonic language and Old English one. One of these prayer recipes is presented on the Suzdal hystera-amulet.

Materials of the 13th-14th centuries (the reliefs of Saint George's Cathedral and the stone-carved icon from Vladimir) at first glance also belong to elite culture. The construction of Saint George's Cathedral and its design were

agreed upon with the princely administration. The icon-panagia was chosen by cleric himself. The cleric was definitely educated in theology and knew the story of the Seven Sleepers. However, it is the social status of these people (who made decisions about this choice) that indicates the fame and popularity of the plot of the Seven Sleepers among the majority of Rus' population. There could be no random elements on the main facade of the temple in the princely city and in the vestments of the high-ranking cleric. A large number of people (nobles and commoners, laymen and clergy - people of different levels of theological knowledge and biblical education) had the opportunity to examine the main facade of the cathedral or see the bishop. Consequently, the plot presented in the reliefs of the facade and on the icon-panagia had to be understandable and perceived by a wide range of people who represented all levels of the social hierarchy. All this gives reason to conclude that the story of Seven Sleepers was widely known and occupied an important place in the religious life, ideology and visual culture of North-Eastern Rus' during the Middle Ages.