

## Chronicle of Novgorod

*The Chronicle of Novgorod, which spans the period from 1016-1471, is a valuable source of information on Russia during the Mongol era. Because Mongol forces did not occupy or devastate Novgorod, its documents and archives survived. The Chronicle reveals Russian attitudes toward the Mongols, which were almost entirely negative and can best be characterized by the phrase "Tartar yoke." The text portrays the Mongols as destructive invaders from the East and lashes out particularly at the Tartars for damage inflicted on cities and sacred sites.*

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The same year, for our sins, unknown tribes came, whom no one exactly knows, who they are, nor whence they came out, nor what their language is, nor of what race they are, nor what their faith is; but they call them Tartars...they are those of whom Bishop Mefodi of Patmos bore witness, that they came out from the Etrian desert which is between East and North. For thus Mefodi says, that, at the end of time, those are to appear whom Gideon scattered, and they shall subdue the whole land from the East to the [Euphrates] and from the Tigris to the Pontus sea except Ethiopia. God alone knows who they are and whence they came out. Very wise men know them exactly, who understand books; but we do not know who they are, but have written of them here for the sake of the memory of the Russian *Knyazes* [Princes] and of the misfortune which came to them. For we have heard that they have captured many countries, slaughtered a quantity of godless...peoples, and scattered others, who all died, killed thus by the wrath of God...

And they began to organize their forces, each his own province, and they went, having collected the whole Russian Land against the Tartars, and were on

Then the Tartars having learned that the Russian [Princes] were coming against them sent envoys to the Russian [Princes]: "Behold, we hear that you are coming against us, having listened to the Polovets men; but we have not occupied your land, nor your towns, nor your villages, nor is it against you we have come. But we have come sent by God against our serfs, and our horse-herds, the pagan Polovets men, and do you take to peace with us. If they escape you, drive them off thence, and take to yourselves their goods. For we have heard that to you also they have done much harm; and it is for that reason also we are fighting them." But the Russian [Princes] did not listen to this, but killed all the envoys and themselves went against them...And the Tartars sent to them envoys a second time, saying thus: "Since you have listened to the Polovets men, and have killed our envoys, and are coming against us, come then, but we have not touched you, let God judge all."

And the Tartars turned back from the river and we know not whence they came, nor where they hid themselves again; God knows whence he fetched them against us for our sins.

And when the lawless ones had already come near and set up battering rams, and took the town and fired it on Friday, the [Prince] and [Princesses] and [Lords], seeing that the town was on fire

and that people were already perishing, some by fire others by the sword, took refuge in the *Church of the Holy Mother of God* and shut themselves in the Sacristy<sup>1</sup>. The pagans [Mongols] breaking down the doors, piled up wood and set fire to the sacred church; and slew all, thus they perished, giving up their souls to God. Others went in pursuit of [Prince] Yuri to Yaroslavl. And [Prince] Yuri sent out Dorozh [military leader] to scout with 3,000 men; and Dorozh came running, and said: “They have already surrounded us, [Prince].” And the [Prince] began to muster his forces about him, and behold, the Tartars came up suddenly, and the [Prince], without having been able to anything, fled. And it happened when he reached the river Sit they overtook him and there he ended his life. And God know how he died; for some say much about him...

**Source:** Rossabi, Morris. *The Mongols and Global History: A Norton Documents Reader*. New York: W.W. Norton, 2011. Print.

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<sup>1</sup> a room in a church where a priest prepares for a service, and where vestments and other things used in worship are kept.