THE IMPERIAL PURPLE
OF THE GALICIAN-VOLYNYAN PRINCES

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Abstract
Together with the untypical for the Rurikides “Byzantine” names of the Galich princes the political and cultural inheritance of Roman Mstislavich displayed in some attributes and symbols of the imperial power. First of all it is the double-headed eagle known from the descriptions of the monumental sculptures and the information about the territorial symbols of Galich and Volynian Rus’. Depicting the appearance of Daniel the chronicler witnesses the unusual case of bearing “Greek olovir”. This special term meant “real” or “imperial” purple.

Keywords: Prince Daniil Galitsky, Greek olovir, imperial purple, regalia of the imperial power.

Царский пурпур Даниила Галицкого

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Авторское резюме
Наряду с нетипичными для Рюриковичей “византийскими” именами галицко-волынских князей с политическим и культурным наследием Евфросинии Галицкой, византийской царевны, ставшей женой князя Романа Мстиславича, связано появление некоторых атрибутов и символов императорской власти. Прежде всего, изображений двуглавого орла, известных по описаниям монументальных скульптур и сведениями о территориальных символах Галицко-Волынской Руси. В летописи также
зафиксирован необычный случай ношения князем Даниилом Галицким церемониальных одежд из "греческого оловира". Этим специальным термином обозначается понятие "чистый" или "императорский" пурпур.

Ключевые слова: князь Даниил Галицкий, греческий оловир, императорский пурпур, регалии императорской власти.

Under the year 6760 (1252), the Ipatiev (Galician-Volynian) Chronicle describes the appearance of the Galician-Volynian prince when he met the German envoys, who had arrived to hold talks with the Hungarian King Bela IV, whose ally Daniel was at that time. "Daniel himself rode beside the king according to the Russian tradition. His horse was worthy of admiration, his saddle was of burnt gold, and his arrows and sword were decorated with gold. Other remarkable items included his fur coat (kozhukh) made of Greek olovir and trimmed with broad leather gold lace, and his green leather boots that were embroidered with gold"1.

The significance of this account remains largely underestimated by researchers despite frequent References s to it. The commentary to the latest edition of the Galician-Volynian Chronicle only emphasizes the fact that the chronicler provides a highly detailed description of the prince's attire: "[It] seems to be the most detailed description of a prince's official apparel in Old Rus' literature"2.

Indeed, in imitation of N.M. Karamzin and S.M. Solov'ev, historians have interpreted the cited chronicle passage to be solely an illustration of the traditional ceremonial dress of Old Rus' princes. Solov'ev, for example, interpreted the chronicler's information as follows. "Daniel was attired according to the Russian tradition: the saddle on his horse was made of burnt gold, his arrows and sword were decorated with gold and different sophisticated details, the kozhukh was made of Greek olovir and trimmed with flat gold lace, his boots were made of green morocco (hza) and decorated with gold"3. N.I. Kostomarov understood the meaning of the chronicler's words in a similar manner. "Danilo himself rode beside the king, dressed in the Russian manner: his saddle was trimmed with pure gold..."4 and so on. The authors of numerous works on the history of Old Rus' reached the same conclusion, namely, that the description of Daniel's splendid attire was intended to glorify the image of the prince of Rus' created by the chronicler4.

Nevertheless, the References in the above account to the "Russian tradition" that Daniel followed does not seem to refer to the prince's dress. These words, in our opinion, most likely refer to how the prince of Rus' behaved towards the king of Hungary, more precisely, what place he occupied in relation to the king when the latter met the German envoys. The chronicler makes it clear that, following the Russian tradition, Daniel
rode near the king of Hungary ("rode near the king according to the Russian tradition"), while the soldiers who accompanied the Galician-Volynian prince, among whom there were horsemen dressed in bright Tatar armor, rode separately.

As for Daniel's attire and the harness of his horse, according to the chronicle they appeared to be very unusual. Judging from the chronicler's description, the only traditional item of Daniel's attire was perhaps his outer garment — *kozhukh* — which was, apparently, a fur-lined coat. Such garments were found in the wardrobes of Moscow grand dukes and tsars in the XIV–XVII centuries. For example, *kozhukhs* decorated with stripes, lace and necklaces (alams) with pearls, are mentioned in the will of Ivan Kalita and in the "Book of royal ceremonies" (*Kniga tsarskikh vykhodov*) of Alexei Mikhailovich in References to the year 7156 (from September 1, 1647 to August 30, 1648). Other details of the prince's attire, and above all the Greek "olovir" from which the prince's *kozhukh* was made, have no parallel in the sources.

It is the unusual appearance of Daniel's attire that confused the German envoys who arrived for talks with the Hungarian king ("the Germans, seeing [it] were greatly surprised"). Obviously the prince's extravagant clothing was a serious breach of diplomatic etiquette at the official talks. This, presumably, explains the confusion of the Hungarian king concerning Daniel's apparel and his request that Daniel change it to attire more suitable for the occasion and consistent with the "Russian tradition".

The second References to the "Russian tradition" in the relatively short chronicle report is in fact to Daniel's clothes. Bela delicately hinted to him that for receiving envoys he should have come dressed according to the "Russian tradition of his fathers". The Galician-Volynian prince accepted the reproach of the Hungarian king and agreed immediately to fulfill his wish. He changed his clothes apparently even before the end of the reception with the envoys. As the chronicler puts it, "The king told him (Daniel. - A.M.): I would give thousands of silver [coins], if you came [according] to the Russian manner of your fathers. [Daniel] asked him (King Bela. - A.M.) to let him come to his camp because it was extremely hot that day. He (Bela. - A. M.) took his (Daniel's. — A.M.) hand and led him to his tent, undressed him and gave Daniel his own clothes. Thus he did him honor".

Historians have had difficulty in explaining the above account of the Galician-Volynian Chronicle and greatly obscured its meaning by their incorrect interpretations. S.M. Solov'ev believed that during the negotiations Bela for some reason wished to change his own clothes and asked Daniel to help him: "When the king asked him if he could
go to the camp, Daniel invited him to his tent"8. Equally inadequately, historians interpret the words that the Hungarian king addressed to the prince of Rus’. According to N.I. Kostomarov, Bela was astonished when the glorious Daniel appeared before him and exclaimed: "Your arrival according to the tradition of the Russian princes is dearer to me than thousands of silver [coins]"9. I.P. Kripyakevich interpreted what the king said to Daniel in the same manner: "A thousand silver [coins] are less important to me than the fact that you have come according to the manner of your ancestors"10. The same interpretation is shared by certain present day authors who assume that Bela "praised" Daniel for his commitment to the Russian custom, and then went to change into other clothes11.

In fact, Bela’s words addressed to Daniel expressed his disapproval of the prince’s appearance, which the king saw as a breach of not only diplomatic etiquette but also of the "the Russian custom". True, Bela expressed his disapproval in a very polite manner: "I would yield up thousands of silver [coins], the king said, as long as you come [according] to the Russian tradition of your fathers". Hearing this Daniel immediately, under the pretext of strong heat, asked permission to go to the royal camp to change his clothes.

True Purple (ὀλόβηρον, holoverus) in Byzantium and Rus’

What disturbed the Hungarian king and the German envoys in the appearance of the Galician-Volynian prince? What in his clothes, in contemporary parlance, did not correspond to diplomatic protocol and to the "Russian tradition"? No doubt, it was the royal attributes with which Daniel adorned himself, and the most important among them apparently was the luxurious "kozhukh" made of "Greek olovir".

The word "olovir" was used very rarely. It is mentioned only in the Galician-Volynian Chronicle and as far as we know, is not found in other Old Rus’ texts. In keeping with I.I. Sreznevskiy's definition, it is usually translated as "silk fabric, embroidered with gold"12. This translation, however, can not be considered sufficiently accurate. In our view, it does not reflect the most important component of "olovir" as a kind of Greek purple.

The Old Rus’ term "olovir" is apparently derived from the Middle Greek ὀλόβηρον13. The form ὀλόβηρον (ὀλό-βηρος) found in Byzantine literary texts has the meaning of ‘true purple’, in the form of holoverus ‘true purple’. This expression is also known in medieval Latin texts14. The Greco-Latin term olovir (ὀλόβηρον) or golover (holoverus) is formed by combining two roots derived from the Greek ὀλος ‘whole’ and the Latin verus ‘true’. Therefore, the definition for Old Rus’ "olovir" proposed in the
Dictionary of the Russian language of the 11–17th centuries should be considered more correct: "Olovir is a precious fabric (compare Greek ὀλόβηρον "made of pure purple")"\(^{15}\).

Byzantine sources clearly demonstrate that the term "olovir" (golover) referred to a special "royal" color of silk, which greatly increased its value. The fabric colored in this manner can not be equated with ordinary silk. According to Procopius of Caesarea (Secret History. XXV. 21), Peter Varsima who, in the middle of the 6th century was Count of the Sacred Largesses, established open trade in various kinds of silks in violation of all the rules. He sold "one ounce of silk of any color for at least six solids and royal color silk, which is usually referred to as golover, for more than twenty-four solids"\(^{16}\).

Daniel Romanovich's "kozhukh" made of "true" or "pure" purple, was a remarkable garment and one might say even exceptional. For centuries purple garments of top quality in Byzantium had been the exclusive privilege of emperors. Their production required a very complex and expensive technology that had been developed in ancient times and employed at least up to the 13th century. Purple was produced from marine shell-fish (murex), which were found in the Tyre region, as well as in the coastal waters of the Peloponnesus and the adjacent islands. For coloring one item of clothes it was necessary to process up to twelve thousand shells\(^{17}\).

The Edict on Prices lists twelve kinds of purple fabrics whose prices ranged from ten (for red fur) to one hundred and fifty thousand denarii (for purple silk). From the time of Justinian purple of the highest quality could not be sold and was used only for the emperor. In markets only different types of imitations and low-quality types of purple were available. After the 7th century the production of purple was centralized in Constantinople and the provincial centers of purple production were closed\(^{18}\).

Wearing purple clothes was also severely restricted by the laws of the Empire. From the reign of the Emperor Tiberius subjects were allowed to wear clothes with a purple rim of no more than two fingers in width. Leo VI authorized the sale of odd scraps of purple, but this leniency did not last for long\(^ {19}\). As a special favor, emperors would grant their relatives the right to wear purple. For example, Isaac II allowed his uncle on his mother's side, Theodor Kastamonita, to use purple bridle decorations and a purple saddlecloth and to sign documents in purple ink\(^ {20}\).

Consequently, it is difficult to believe that "the kozhukh of Greek olovir" could have been bought by Daniel Romanovich from a visiting trader who arrived with his merchandise in Galich or Vladimir-Volynsky. And yet, this explanation of the appearance of clothing made of "olovir" in the
Galician-Volynian prince’s wardrobe prevails in contemporary literature. Present day authors are certain that the princes of Rus’ bought such precious fabrics in Byzantium. Their view is supported by documents which state that "ships laden with Greek olovir" came to trade at the docks of Galich and Vladimir.

From the 10th century onward it was prohibited to sell to foreigners and to export clothes of royal purple, "olovir", as well as any other fabric dyed in purple. According to the Book of the Eparch (the official set of statutes of Constantinople craft and commercial corporations codified in the 10th century of which the Eparch, that is the mayor, was in charge), the production of purple fabric was under the strictest control of the state. Any attempts at its unauthorized production and distribution were punishable by the most stringent measures including the death penalty.

According to the treatise written by Constantine Porphyrogenitus, royal purple clothing had a sacred meaning. Consequently, allowing someone to wear such apparel meant sharing a part of one’s sovereignty with him. The Emperor strongly warned his successor against awarding the royal purple to rulers and peoples of other countries, including the Khazars, Hungarians and Ros, who sought to be granted this favor from the basileus. Their requests had to be rejected under any, even the most improbable circumstances.

Thus, large-scale trade in "olovir" between Byzantium and Galicia-Volyn was altogether unlikely if we acknowledge (as commentators of the Galician-Volynian Chronicle usually do), that the word "olovir" referred to silk embedded with gold and dyed in purple.

It is known that the Byzantine Empire began producing its own silk during the middle of the 6th century but most of this silk was banned from being sold overseas. Only a very small quantity was exported to Muslim countries. Venetian and some other privileged Italian merchants were allowed to sell low-quality Byzantine silk at the market in Pavia. High quality silk fabrics were used by the emperors (in addition to personal use) as official diplomatic gifts, as payment for ransom, or as payoffs to avoid war. These were probably the most likely ways that silk reached lands outside the Empire.

Nevertheless, one can not deny the obvious fact that foreign-made silk fabrics were very common in Old Rus’. This is confirmed by numerous archeological finds and by written sources. There is even reason to believe that silk imported from the East was at times re-exported from Rus’ to Western Europe — Poland, the Czechs, Southern Germany, and Scandinavia.

However, the majority of silk fabric fragments dating back to the Old Rus’ period found by archaeologists can not be identified with the "Greek
"Olovir" mentioned in the Galician-Volynian Chronicle. M.V. Fechner rightly points out that expensive varieties of Byzantine fabrics like ofudja, Greek "olovir", and aksamit, depicted on the frescoes of the Kievan Cathedral of St Sofia and the Church of St. Savior on the Nereditsa, as well as in the miniature of the Izbornik of 1073 with a group portrait of Svyatoslav Yaroslavich's family, can not be associated with the mass of silk products that entered the foreign market. Byzantine fabrics of the highest quality came to Western and Eastern Europe mainly as official gifts brought by envoys, as spoils of war, or in the form of trade tariffs.

We have even less reason to identify fragments of silk fabrics preserved from the Old Rus' period as "Greek olovir" based on the traces of their initial color. The original color of most of these fabrics, recovered during restoration, is a different shade of red. The color red in general was a favorite color for clothes worn by the citizens of Old Rus'. According to A. V. Artsikhovsky, more than three-quarters of the fragments of clothing worn by the inhabitants of Novgorod which were found by archaeologists were red in color—vermilion and carmine.

Such, for example, were the fabrics from the famous Michael's treasure found in 1903 in Kiev. In the Monastery of St. Michael the archeologists found a buried vessel filled with gold and silver objects of female clothing. These included fragments of silk fabrics which were the remnants of a ceremonial dress. A special study has shown that the original color of the fabrics was red of different shades ranging from bright pink to cherry-brown. Madder and safflower, the dyes used for these fabrics, were ordinary vegetable dyestuffs widely used in the Mediterranean, Iran and Central Asia. They did not give fabrics deep and intense color and, most importantly, were not durable.

Among the fabrics of Michael's treasure the most important findings were several fragments of double-loop smooth silk with complex binding technique, which can be classified as top quality Byzantine silk. It is possible to identify traces of more expensive dyes only on these small fragments (mostly in the form of strips of fabric) used to decorate the costume. According to A. K. Elkina, to paint these pieces of silk chervets (or kermes) — one of the precious ancient dyes extracted from insects such as the "Armenian cochineal" (Porphyrophora hamelii) along with moraine could be applied; chervets on aluminum mordant dyed silk in crimson or dark cherry color.

Chervets (also called carmine), a cheaper counterpart of purple, was known in Western Europe from antiquity. It was produced in the Mediterranean countries (mainly in Italy, Spain, and southern France). In the 14–15th centuries, as purple production decreased and its price rose, carmine production expanded and the technology of its application improved. However, the difference between true purple
and its substitutes was obvious. Noblemen and prelates of the Roman Catholic Church still preferred to wear true purple. It was only after the capture of Constantinople by the Turks, when the production of purple stopped completely, that Pope Paul II ordered carmine to be used for making "Cardinal purple" (1464)\textsuperscript{32}.

\textbf{The Attributes and Symbols of Royal Power of the Galician-Volynian Princes: Byzantine Borrowings and Parallels}

It is difficult to say with certainty whether the apparel in which Daniel Romanovich presented himself before the German envoys at the reception held by the Hungarian king was made of "true" or "pure" purple, "olovir", in the true sense of the word. Be that as it may, it is clear that it is this impression that his clothes made on the participants who attended the royal reception. This is proved by the reaction of the German envoys who, presumably, represented the Emperor of the Holy Roman Empire, Frederick II (1220–1250), or "King" as the chronicler calls him. "The Germans, seeing [it] (Daniel's clothes. — A.M.) were greatly surprised"\textsuperscript{33}. The German envoys evidently saw an encroachment on the prerogatives of their own sovereign in the Galician-Volynian prince's imperial attire.

Regardless, as the chronicler portrays him, Daniel Romanovich indeed did look like a king. In his magnificent clothes he looked if not like a Byzantine Emperor, then at least like the Persian king Darius or Chafiya, whose depictions were well-known in Rus' from translated literature\textsuperscript{34}. A comparison of Daniel's clothes with the attire of the Laz-Persian king Chafiya, granted to him by the Byzantine Emperor Justinian and described in detail in the seventeenth chapter of John Malala's chronicles in accordance with the Greek chronicle (Ellinskyi Letopisets), was cited by A.S. Orlov\textsuperscript{35}. This comparison, however, was not favorable to Chafiya, whose attire lacked purple or "bagr", as it is called in the Russian translation. There we are told that the Persian king wore "a wide gold stripe instead of purple" ("in place of bagr a gold stripe was sewn on")\textsuperscript{36}.

It is important to note that Daniel Romanovich took on a royal demeanor even before 1253 when he accepted the royal crown from Pope Innocent IV. The Hungarian king's reception described in the chronicle referring to 6760 (1252), must have taken place a few years earlier, either at the end of 1248 or early 1249\textsuperscript{38}. Consequently, the privilege of wearing purple was obtained by Daniel without the pope's dispensation and probably long before 1253. Moreover, receiving the royal crown would hardly have given the Galician-Volynian prince the right to use royal regalia that would equal those of the Byzantine basileus and his family.

The Greek "olovir" which Daniel Romanovich paraded, could not have been granted to him by any of the European monarchs or Roman
prelates of that time. In medieval Europe precious Byzantine fabrics were extremely rare and were treated with special care – they were seen as objects of exceptional value, comparable to Christian relics. According to Western sources, in the 10–12th centuries deeply revered Christian relics which were stored in shrines were wrapped in Byzantine silk.

We can see an equally reverent attitude displayed to precious Byzantine fabrics in Galician-Volynian Rus'. The eulogy to the Volynian prince Vladimir Vasylkovich (Roman Mstislavich's grandson and Daniel Romanovich's nephew) in the Galician-Volynian Chronicle (in its part referring to 1288) specifically mentions his role in the construction and decoration of churches. Among other things it states that the prince granted a "Gospel Aprakos, framed with olovir" to the Church of St. George in the city of Lyuboml.

Using "olovir" as a frame for the Gospel suggests that this fabric is consistent with the precious varieties of Byzantine silk well-known in Europe. Consequently, we may assume that Daniel Galitsky's "kozhukh" mentioned above was, indeed, real royal attire, made of "true" ("pure") purple.

The Galician-Volynian prince could have obtained his apparel only by inheriting it from his parents. Precious Byzantine fabrics undoubtedly were part of the dowry given to the Byzantine Princess Euphrosiniya, the second wife of Roman Mstislavich. After her death the dowry was handed down to her children and grandchildren. This, apparently, was the source of the unusual generosity, even for the most devout of the princes of Rus'; Euphrosiniya's grandson Vladimir Vasylkovych, who repeatedly donated gold embroidered canvases and aksamit for decorating Volyn shrines.

Galician-Volhynian princes, the direct descendants of Roman Mstislavich and Princess Euphrosiniya, used the attributes of their royal lineage not only while living, but also after their deaths. The Galician-Volynian Chronicle reports that Vladimir Vasylkovych who died on December 10, 1288 was prepared for his burial "dressed in aksamit with lace, as was appropriate for a tsar." Along with the royal attributes of clothing, the chronicle associates the Galician-Volynian princes with other symbols of royal status. In describing the actions of the princes Daniel and Roman, especially their military deeds, the chronicler repeatedly compares his personages with eagles or links the image of the royal bird with them in some other way.

In praising Roman Mstislavich's deeds the chronicler compares the glorious prince-warrior with a fierce lion and an eagle, who wages war against all the Polovtsian land ("и прехожаше землю ихъ, яко и орель") at the entrance to Kholm, the new capital city of Daniel
Romanovich, a stone monument topped with a statue of an eagle was erected\textsuperscript{45}.

An even more remarkable scene is described by the Galician-Volynian Chronicle when it reports the battle at Yaroslavl that took place in 1245. It determined in favor of Daniel Romanovich the outcome of the struggle for the Galician throne that had lasted for decades. Before the battle the soldiers witnessed an astonishing sign. A flock of eagles suddenly appeared above Daniel’s regiment soaring in the sky screaming and covering the prince and his host with their outstretched wings ("орлом же клекьшущимъ и плавающимъ криломъ своими и воспрометающимся на воздоусе"). The eagles dispersed the cloud of crows that had gathered over the battlefield anticipating abundant prey\textsuperscript{46}.

An eagle soaring in the sky with its outspread wings that casts its shadow over a king is a vivid prophetic image described in Byzantine literature. For example, John Skylitzes in his "History of the Byzantine Emperors" mentions the prediction associated with Emperor Basil I (867–886), which forecast his great future. The infant Basil while lying in his cradle was covered by the shadow of a wing of an eagle soaring in the sky. This scene is depicted in the illustrated Madrid manuscript of the "History" written by Skylitzes (12–13\textsuperscript{th} centuries)\textsuperscript{47}.

An eagle is one of the most important attributes and symbols of sovereignty. This idea became firmly entrenched in the traditional cultures and mythologies of many peoples from ancient times. In the social mind of medieval Europe and ancient Rus’ the idea of the eagle as the symbol of a king’s or a tsar’s authority was extremely widespread\textsuperscript{48}. Not surprisingly, it was also reflected and developed in the works of Old Rus’ literature\textsuperscript{49}.

In mythology the eagle appears as an instrument of God’s will pointing out to an earthly ruler the location for his new capital. According to an ancient legend (which is well-known from the account of Nestor Iskander, the Russian author of the second half of the 15\textsuperscript{th} century, who was captured by the Turks and converted to Islam), when Emperor Constantine the Great was searching for a place to found his new capital, his choice was confirmed by the appearance of an eagle, which descended from heaven and attacked a snake. In this way Constantinople was founded and became the second Rome\textsuperscript{50}.

This legend is also reflected in the monuments of early Byzantine art. The colorful mosaic depicting an eagle with a snake on the floor of the emperor’s Grand Palace in Constantinople dates back to the second half of the 6\textsuperscript{th} century\textsuperscript{51}.

Perhaps the monument with a statue of an eagle erected by Daniel Romanovich at the entrance to his new capital - the city of Kholm - was
a continuation of the Byzantine *mythologema* of an eagle announcing God’s will to a king what place to choose for his new capital⁵².

**COMMENT**


8. «Рече емоу король: "Не взялъ быхъ тысяще серебра за то, оже еси пришель обычаємь Роускимь отцовъ своихъ". И просися оу него въ стaanъ, зане знои бе великъ дне того. Онъ же я и за роукоу, и веде его въ полатоу свою, и самъ соволочашеть его, и облачаешь и во порты свое. И такоу честь творяшеть емоу» (Polnoe sobranie russkih letopisej, t. II, col. 814-815).


11. «Менше варта мені й тисяча срібла, ніж те, що ти приїхав руським звичаєм своїх батьків» (Krip’jakevich. Galic’ko-Volins’ke knjazivstvo, p. 180.)


24. To eparchikon biblion, ch. VIII, Nr. 1.
32. Elkina. Issledovanie krasitelej, pp. 70.
34. "Немцем же зрящимъ, много дивящимся". PSRL, t. II., col. 814.
37. Ibid.
39. See, e.g.: Bonner, Rollason, Stancliffe. St. Cuthbert, pp. 346. See also:
40. PSRL, t. II, col. 926.
41. See: Maiorov. Doch' vizantijskogo imperatora, pp. 76-106.
42. PSRL, t. II, col. 926.
43. "...овушиа и оксамитомъ со кроужевомъ, якоже достоить царямь" (Ibid, col. 918).
44. Ibid, col. 716.
45. Ibid, col. 845.
46. Ibid, col. 802.
50. Povest’ o vzjatii Car’grada turkami, pp. 28-29.
51. Lazarev. Istorija, vol. II, pp. 30-31. Tabl. 7; Jobst Erdal Gurtner. Istanbul. Fig. 9, 12.
52. PSRL, t. II, col. 845.

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