

AN UNEXPECTED ALLY:
THE INFLUENCE OF ALCOHOL ON THE COURSE OF
MILITARY CAMPAIGNS IN RUS' IN THE ELEVENTH –
TWELFTH CENTURIES

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NAGIRNYI, Vitaliy. An unexpected ally: the influence of alcohol on the course of military campaigns in Rus' in the eleventh – twelfth centuries. *Historický časopis*, 2023, 71, 4, pp. 709-721, Bratislava.

Alcohol played an important role in the life of medieval Rus'. This is especially evident in the example of the influence of alcoholic beverages on the course of military campaigns in the lands of Rus' in the 11th and 12th centuries. The first known example of such influence took place during the Battle of Lyubech between the armies of the Prince of Kyiv Sviatopolk and the Prince of Novgorod Yaroslav in the autumn of 1016. It is clear from the sources that one of the reasons for Sviatopolk's defeat was a feast organized by him on the eve of the battle, which lasted all night. This was taken advantage of by his opponents, who secretly crossed the Dnieper, attacked Sviatopolk's troops at dawn and defeated them. The next mention of alcohol in connection with the campaigns of the princes of Rus' dates back to 1111. In that year, a great campaign of Russian troops against the Cumans (Polovtsi) took place. When the Russian troops reached the Cuman town of Sharukan, the inhabitants did not resist and preferred to reward the attackers with rich gifts, including wine. These were the gifts that saved Sharukan from destruction by the Russian troops. The next messages about the influence of alcohol on the course of campaigns in Rus' can be found in Russian annals describing the events of 1151–1152. All these events were part of the great war for Kyiv, fought by various coalitions of Russian princes. In the spring of 1151, alcohol was the reason why the Prince of Bilhorod Boris Yurievich failed to defend his city and had to flee to Kyiv. This, in turn, put his father, the Prince of Kyiv Yuri Vladimirovich, in a difficult position and forced him to retreat before the troops of Izyaslav Mstislavovich and leave the capital of Rus' without a fight. At the end of the spring of the same year, alcohol was the reason for the great defeat of the Hungarian troops in the Battle of Sapogyn. The Prince of Halych Volodymyr Volodarevich took advantage of the drunkenness of the Hungarians to deal them a sudden blow and completely defeat the Hungarian troops. It is not excluded that alcohol also played some role in the campaigns of the Hungarian and Kyivan troops against the Prince of Halych Volodymyr Volodarevich in 1152 and in the campaign of the Prince of Novgorod-Seversky Igor Svyatoslavovich

against the Cumans in 1185.

Key words: Medieval Rus'. Alcoholic beverages. Military campaigns. The battle of Lyubech. The battle of Sapogyn.

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.31577/histcaso.2023.71.4.8>

Alcohol played an important role in the life of medieval Europe and often directly influenced the development and course of historical events. Medieval Rus' was no exception in this respect. This is particularly evident in the example of the influence of alcoholic beverages on the course of military campaigns in Rus' in the 11th and 12th centuries.

The first known example of such an influence dates back to 1016, when an internal war was raging in Rus'. It broke out between the sons of the Prince of Kyiv Vladimir Svyatoslavovich in 1015 and lasted until 1026.¹ One of the episodes of this war was the Battle of Lyubech,² which took place in the late autumn or early winter of 1016. According to the Russian annals, the main struggle was between two brothers – the Prince of Kyiv Sviatopolk and the Prince of Novgorod Yaroslav. At the end of summer or the beginning of autumn 1016, the armies of Sviatopolk and Yaroslav faced each other on both banks of the Dnieper near the town of Lyubech. As the forces were approximately equal, neither of the princes dared to cross the Dnieper and attack the enemy. It is known from the chronicle that such a situation lasted long enough – the opponents faced each other for 3 months, until the onset of frost, that is, until late autumn – early winter.³ It is not known how long such a state of affairs would have lasted if one of the commanders⁴ of Sviatopolk had not deliberately begun to

- 1 On the struggle of Vladimir's sons for the Kyivan throne see: POPPE. Spuścizna po Włodzimierzu Wielkiem. Walka o tron kijowski 1015–1019. In *Kwartalnik Historyczny*, 1995, vol. 102, no. 3-4, p. 3-22; ГОЛОВКО. З історії міжкнязівської війни 1015–1019 рр. на Русі. In *Україна в Центрально-Східній Європі: Студії з історії XI–XVIII століть*, 2000, no. 1, p. 38-49; МИХЕЕВ. “Святополкъ съде в Киевъ по отци”: усобица 1015–1019 годов в древнерусских и скандинавских источниках. Москва 2009. The alternative version of the events is described in: ИЛЬИН. *Летописная статья 6523 года и ее источник (опыт анализа)*. Москва 1957.
- 2 Lyubech is a medieval Russian town on the left bank of the Dnieper in the Chernihiv land. Nowadays, it is a town in Chernihiv Oblast, Ukraine. СТРИЖАК, ed. *Етимологічний словник літописних географічних назв Південної Русі*. Київ 1985, p. 86.
- 3 Лаврентьевская летопись. In *Полное Собрание Русских Летописей*. Vol. 1. Ленинград 1926, p. 141-142; Ипатьевская летопись. In *Полное Собрание Русских Летописей*. Vol. 2. Санкт-Петербург 1908, p. 129; *Новгородская первая летопись старшего и младшего изводов*. Ed. and introduction by А. Н. Насонов. Москва; Ленинград 1950, p. 175.
- 4 The *Novgorodian edition of the Primary Chronicle* contains the nickname of this voivode – *Volchiy Hvost* (Волчий Хвост). *Новгородская первая летопись*, p. 175. Such a historical person indeed existed and is known from other fragments of the *Chronicle*. See: Лаврентьевская

provoke the Novgorodians to fight. According to the *Primary Chronicle*, he rode along the Dnieper on horseback and insulted the Novgorodians who formed the bulk of Yaroslav's forces as carpenters rather than warriors. The *Hypatian* and *Laurentian* editions of the *Primary Chronicle* report that the Novgorodians did not tolerate such a mockery and forced Yaroslav to take action.⁵ The *Novgorod edition* of the chronicle presents this event somewhat different. It tells that it was Yaroslav who took advantage of a favourable moment to lead his troops into an attack.⁶ According to the further description of events, Yaroslav's troops crossed the Dnieper at dawn of the next day, attacked Sviatopolk's forces and inflicted a complete defeat on them.⁷ This victory was of great importance for Yaroslav and enabled him not only to defeat his main rival but also to ascend the throne of Kyiv.

It is known from the annals that one of the reasons for Sviatopolk's defeat was the division of his forces. The main part of the princely squad was located between two lakes. On the one hand, these lakes served as a good defence against possible flank attacks by Yaroslav. On the other hand, they deprived Sviatopolk's troops of the possibility to manoeuvre. Moreover, the cavalry of the Pechenegs, who were Sviatopolk's allies in this battle, were positioned on the other side of one of the lakes and therefore could not help the Prince of Kyiv in time. But the decisive factor leading to Sviatopolk's defeat was that the troops of the Prince of Novgorod managed to secretly cross the Dnieper and catch their enemies. This was the main reason for their victory.

How could Yaroslav's troops cross such a large river as the Dnieper unnoticed and suddenly attack Sviatopolk's forces? The answer to this question is given by the *Hypatian* and *Laurentian* editions of the *Primary Chronicle*. They directly point out that after the incident on the banks of the Dnieper with the participation of the voivode of Sviatopolk, the prince showed complete carelessness and arranged a feast for his retinue that lasted all night: "Стополкъ стояше межи двѣма взерома . и всю ночь пиль бѣ с дружиною своєю."⁸ The *Hypatian*

летопись, р. 84; Ипатьевская летопись, р. 71; *Новгородская первая летопись*, р. 131, 530. However, it is difficult to say whether *Volchii Hvost* actually took part in the Battle of Lubech, as other editions of the *Chronicle* say nothing about him.

5 Ипатьевская летопись, р. 129; Лаврентьевская летопись, р. 141. The same description of the events can be found in the *Radziwill Chronicle*. Радзивилловская летопись. In *Полное Собрание Русских Летописей*. Vol. 38. Eds. М. Д. Приселков and others. Ленинград 1989, р. 62.

6 *Новгородская первая летопись*, р. 175.

7 Ипатьевская летопись, р. 129; Лаврентьевская летопись, р. 141; *Новгородская первая летопись*, р. 175; Радзивилловская летопись, р. 62.

8 Лаврентьевская летопись, р. 141; Радзивилловская летопись, р. 62.

editions even emphasises that the prince and his entourage were very drunk: “оупивьса с дружиною своею”.⁹ Taking into account such messages of the chronicler, one cannot doubt that it was Sviatopolk’s carelessness and too much alcohol that led to the defeat of the Prince of Kyiv.

The Novgorod edition of the chronicle presents the events in a slightly different way. Despite the fact that it says nothing about the feast arranged by Sviatopolk, the Chronicle also pays great attention to alcohol, although in a different context. According to the Novgorod chronicler, Yaroslav had an ally in Sviatopolk’s entourage. On the eve of the battle, the Prince of Novgorod sent his soldier to him with the words “что ты тому велишь творити; меду мало варено,¹⁰ а дружины много”,¹¹ and the soldier replied: “да аще меду мало, а дружинѣ много, да к вечеру дати”.¹² The exchange of such words can be understood as a hidden question by the Prince of Kyiv about the possible time of the attack and an overt indication by his supporter in Sviatopolk’s entourage that such a time would come in the evening or at night.

Despite certain differences in the description of the Battle of Lyubech in Russian annals, each of them mentions alcohol as one of the reasons for Sviatopolk’s defeat. Contemporary historians also do not question the possibility that Sviatopolk organised a feast for his squad that lasted all night and eventually led to the prince’s defeat and Yaroslav’s victory.¹³

Another interesting mention of alcohol can be found in connection with a military campaign of the Russian princes in 1111. At the beginning of that year, an assembly of the Russian princes was held near Lake Dolob in the Kyivan land. It was decided to organise a large campaign against the Cumans (Polovtsians) there. The campaign itself began in the late winter of 1111, and almost all the Southern Russian princes took part in it. The allies had passed about 500 km through the steppe to the Siverskyi Donets River and approached the Cuman town of Sharukan in the second half of March.¹⁴ According to the

9 Ипатьевская летопись, р. 129.

10 By words “меду мало варено” one should understand a honey drink.

11 *Новгородская первая летопись*, р. 175. Yaroslav’s words can testify that the prince decided to attack Svyatopolk as his troops were running out of supplies, including drinks.

12 Ibidem. The answer of Yaroslav’s supporter meant that they should have attacked on the coming night.

13 See, for example: МИХЕЕВ, “Святополкъ съде в Киевѣ по отци”, р. 38-39; АРИСТОВ. Любецька битва 1016 р. в ранньому літописанні (до дискусії навколо ідеї О. О. Шахматова). In *Український історичний журнал*, 2013, no 1, р. 159.

14 Sharukan is a Cuman settlement located near the Siverskyi Donets River in the territory of modern Kharkiv Oblast in Ukraine. Its exact location is not known. See: БУБЕНОК. Шарукань, Сугров, Балин – поселення городского типа на половецко-русском

Primary Chronicle, the Russian troops were preparing to start a battle against the Cumans and assault the town: “ѡболичишасѧ во бронѣ . и полки израдиша . и поидоша ко градѣ Шаруканю”.¹⁵ But the nomads did not resist. Moreover, when the Russian troops reached the town, the inhabitants met them with rich gifts, including wine: “выидоша из города . и поклонишасѧ княземъ Рускымъ . и вынесоша рыбы и вино”.¹⁶ Obviously, the refusal of resistance and the rich gifts of the Cumans saved Sharukan and the Russian princes did not burn it down, but limited themselves to imposing some tribute on the settlement. Additional evidence for this assumption is the fact that, unlike Sharukan, other Cuman settlements, such as Sugrov¹⁷ which was situated nearby, were conquered and burnt down by the Russian troops.¹⁸

In the above-mentioned chronicle describing the Russian campaign against the Cumans, there is another important point that attracts the reader’s attention. The chronicler points out that the inhabitants of Sharukan gave wine (“вино”) to the Russian princes. It is not clear whether the Russian author meant wine or some other, local, alcoholic drink. Taking into consideration that the chronicler himself hardly took part in the campaign and described the events on the basis of other people’s words, he simply could not go into detail and limit his message to the word wine (“вино”) as a term for any local drink with which the Russian princes were treated by the Cumans. But if the message is really about wine, a number of important questions arise. How and from where could wine appear in Sharukan? Was it imported from Byzantium or from other countries? In what quantities did the nomads import wine and what did they use it for? The answers to all these questions are still to be given by researchers.

Next messages about the influence of alcohol on the course of military action in Rus’ can be found in Russian sources describing the events of 1151–1152. All these events were a part of the great war for Kyiv, which by this time had already been fighting by two coalitions of Russian princes. The first coalition consisted of the Prince of Pereyaslav and Vladimir Izyaslav Mstislavovich and the Prince of Smolensk Rostislav Mstislavovich, as well as their sons and the

пограничье. In *Восточная Европа в древности и средневековье. XXXI Чтения памяти члена-корреспондента АН СССР В. Т. Папуто: Ранние этапы урбанизации*. Москва 2019, p. 29-30.

15 Ипатьевская летопись, p. 266.

16 Ibidem.

17 Sugrov is a Cuman settlement located near Sharukan on the Siverskyi Donets River in the territory of modern Kharkiv Oblast in Ukraine. Its exact location is not known. See: БУБЕНЮК, Шарукань, Сугров, Балин, p. 30.

18 Ипатьевская летопись, p. 266. For more detail on this campaign, see: ПЛЕТНЕВА. *Половцы*. Москва 1990, p. 60.

Prince of Dorohobuzh Vladimir Andreevich. The second coalition included the Prince of Vladimir-Suzdal Yuri Vladimirovich, the Prince of Halych Volodymyr Volodarovych and the Olgovichs, who ruled in the land of Chernihiv. The war for Kyiv continued with varying success, and neither side managed to achieve a decisive victory. In the spring of 1151, the prince Izyaslav Mstislavovich took the initiative. Enlisting the help of the Hungarian king Geysa II, he organised a great campaign to Kyiv. Vladimir Mstislavovich, the younger brother of Izyaslav, was sent in vanguard of the Volhynian and the Hungarian troops. His task was to capture Bilhorod which lied on their way to Kyiv.¹⁹ Izyaslav allocated considerable forces to Vladimir as he expected active resistance of the Prince of Bilhorod Boris Yurievich, who was the son of the Prince of Kyiv Yuriy Vladimirovich. But when Vladimir approached Bilhorod, it turned out that the city was absolutely not ready for defence. The city gates were open, the drawbridge was not raised, and the prince himself, instead of preparing his troops for the battle, was feasting with his entourage and the local clergy: “пьяшеть в Бѣлгородѣ . на сѣньници . съ дружиною своєю и с попы Бѣлогородскѣми”.²⁰ This carelessness cost both Boris and his father, Yuri, a lot. Boris himself barely managed to escape from the city and would have been captured by his enemies if he had not been saved by a local *mytnik*,²¹ who managed to raise the bridge over the River Irpen` and thus prevent Boris from being persecuted: “даче бы не мытникъ . оустерегль и моста не переметаль . то яли быша”.²² But although the prince himself was saved, Bilhorod, which was perfectly fortified and more than once withstood long sieges,²³ turned out to be an easy prey for the Volhynian troops. The quick capture of Bilhorod, in turn, led to the fact that Yuri Vladimirovich did not have enough time to organise the

19 Bilhorod is one of the most important towns of the Kyivan land in the 11th – the first half of the 13th centuries. Nowadays, this is the village of Bilohorodka, Buchanskiy district, Kyiv Oblast in Ukraine. СТРИЖАК, ed. *Етимологічний словник*, p. 27-28.

20 Ипатьевская летопись, p. 415. On the timing of these events, see: БЕРЕЖКОВ. *Хронология русского летописания*. Москва 1963, p. 151. Because of the brevity of the annalistic message it is impossible to determine what drinks Boris and his guests drank.

21 *Mytnik* was a position in a princely court, a man who dealt with trade matters, was responsible for tax collection and monitored the condition of important road facilities such as bridges. See: NAGIRNYI. *Urzednicy ziemi kijowskiej od drugiej polowy XI do pierwszej polowy XIII wieku. Studium prozopograficzne*. Kraków 2021, p. 75.

22 Ипатьевская летопись, p. 415.

23 The unsuccessful sieges of Bilhorod by the troops of Yuri Vladimirovich in 1151 or by Izyaslav Davidovich in 1158 and in 1161 can be the examples. Ипатьевская летопись, p. 433, 500-502, 516-518; Лаврентьевская летопись, p. 332. See also: КОТЫШЕВ. Белгород киевский в XI–XII вв. In *Вестник Санкт-Петербургского государственного университета. Серия 2: история, языковедение, литературоведение*, 1998, no 3 (16), p. 26-27.

defence of Kyiv and had to leave the city. Izyaslav Mstislavovich and his allies easily entered the capital of Rus'.²⁴

The context of the chronicle message leaves no doubt that the rapid capture of Bilhorod and the subsequent occupation of Kyiv was unexpected both for Izyaslav Mstislavovich and for his enemies – Yuri Vladimirovich and his allies. Izyaslav celebrated his bloodless victory by organising a great feast in Kyiv. His Hungarian allies were invited to it too. The latter even organised a jousting tournament, which made a strong impression on the local population.²⁵ The ally of Yuri Vladimirovich, the Prince of Halych Volodymyr Volodarevich, in his turn was so surprised and disappointed by Boris' and Yuri's mistakes and their irresponsibility in the organisation of the defence of Bilhorod and Kyiv²⁶ that he refused to further participate in the campaign and recalled his troops back to the Galician land: “уже тако кнѣжите съ своимъ ѿѣмъ а правите сами”.²⁷ But who knows how everything would have worked out and how successful this campaign of Izyaslav would have been, if Boris Yurievich had not preferred alcohol to his direct duties and properly prepared Bilhorod for the defence.

At the very end of the spring of the same year another important event in which alcohol played a key role took place. After the above-mentioned capture of Kyiv by Izyaslav Mstislavovich and the expulsion of Yuri Vladimirovich from the capital of Rus', the latter did not give up his claims to the Kyivan throne. In April 1151, at the head of a large army he tried to regain Kyiv. Volodymyr Volodarevich went to help him from the Galician land. Izyaslav Mstislavovich, in turn, appealed to the Hungarian king Geysa II for help and moved to meet Yuri. Both armies met in May of 1151 on the plain of Perepetovo, located at the Ruth River near the town of Vasyliv in the Kyivan land. Trying to prevent the unification of Yuri with the Prince of Halych Volodymyr Volodarevich, Izyaslav Mstislavovich attacked Yuri's troops and already at the beginning of the battle managed to seize the initiative. This brought him victory and led to another defeat of Yuri Vladimirovich.²⁸

Soon after the defeat of Yuri Vladimirovich in the Battle of the Rut River, the important events took place in the Galician land. At the end of May the Hungarian troops, which were led by Mstislav Izyaslavovich to help his father, crossed the Carpathians and invaded the Galician land. Having received

24 Ипатьевская летопись, р. 415-416.

25 Ibidem, р. 416.

26 Ibidem.

27 Ibidem, р. 417; ВОЙТОВИЧ. *Галич у політичному житті Європи XI–XIV століть*. Львів 2014, р. 156.

28 Ипатьевская летопись, р. 433-439.

the news of Yuri's defeat and the attack of the Hungarian troops, Volodymyr Volodarevich stopped his campaign to Kyiv and quickly marched back to his possessions. At the same time, the Hungarian troops camped near Sapogyn²⁹ located on banks of the River Horyn. According to the Kyivan chronicler, during this stop near Sapogyn, the envoys from the Prince of Dorohobuzh Vladimir Andreyevich arrived to Mstislav and the Hungarians and brought them rich treats, including many alcoholic drinks: “выслалъ ему башеть Володимерь Андрѣвиѣ питье из Дорогобужа много и Оугромъ”.³⁰ They also brought the news that the Prince of Halych had interrupted his campaign against Kyiv and was going to meet Mstislav and the Hungarians.³¹ According to the context of the chronicle, Mstislav told this important news to his allies in the midst of the feast when the Hungarian commanders had already been drunk: “потомъ повѣда ему Володимерь . идеѣ ти Володимерь Галичьскіи Мьстиславу же пьючи со Оугры . и повѣда имъ . идеѣ Володимерь Галичьскіи по наѣ”.³² Obviously, this can explain the fact that the Hungarians did not take the news seriously. Being confident in their victory, they continued the feast at which they were boasting that they would easily defeat Volodymyr's troops: “Оугре же пьани величавуса рекуще вже на ны придеѣ а мы са с нимъ бьемъ.”³³

Further development of the events indicates that the Galician prince knew well what was going on in the Hungarian camp. Taking advantage of his opponents' carelessness, he attacked the drunk Hungarians under the cover of night. It is interesting that Volodymyr Volodarevich attacked not Mstislav Izyaslavovich's squad, but the Hungarian troops. This further supports the fact that the prince knew that the Hungarians were not able to resist. The chronicler directly points

29 Sapogyn is a medieval Russian town on the Horyn River on the border of the Galician and Volhynian lands. Nowadays, it is the village Sapogyn in Rivne district of Rivne Oblast in Ukraine. СТРИЖАК, ed. *Етимологічний словник*, p. 129-130.

30 Ипатьевская летопись, p. 442. The annalistic report does not indicate what kind of drinks Vladimir Andreevich sent to Mstislav and the Hungarians. One can assume that these were drinks made of honey which were widespread in Rus' at that time. On the popularity of honey drinks at the courts of Russian princes see: Ibidem, p. 334; MADEJ. Co pito na ruskich dworach książęcych w X – XII wieku? In NAGIRNYI, ed. *Rurikids in dynastic relations: politics, customs, culture, religion (10th – 16th c.). Publication after 4th International Conference, Mogilno, 14th – 16th November, 2013*. Krakow 2014, p. 139-140.

31 The Ukrainian researcher Leontiy Voytovych admitted that the Prince of Dorohobuzh Vladimir Andreyevich could have acted in alliance with the Galician prince Volodymyr Volodarevich and deliberately got the Hungarians drunk. See: ВОЙТОВИЧ, *Галич у політичному житті Європи*, p. 156. However, the author of this article thinks that such an assumption has no sufficient evidence in the sources.

32 Ипатьевская летопись, p. 442.

33 Ibidem, p. 442.

out that the Hungarian soldiers were so drunk that Mstislav not only failed to prepare them for the battle, but he could not even wake up the Hungarians: “Мѣстиславъ же съ дружиною всѣдъ на кони . и нача будити Оугры . Оугре же лежахуть пьяни яко мртви и быѣ противу свѣту . и оудари на нихъ Володимеръ Галичьскыи.”³⁴ By dawn everything had been over – the Hungarians were completely defeated. Almost all of them were killed by the Galicians, and only a small part of the Hungarians were taken prisoners: “и мало ихъ изоимаша вси избиша”.³⁵ Only Mstislav managed to escape. With part of his squad he fled to Lutsk. The complete defeat of the drunken Hungarians at Sapogyn made such a strong impression in Kyiv that Izyaslav Mstislavovich commented on it with a proverb that was well known in Rus’: “не идеѣ мѣсто (со) къ головѣ . но голова к мѣсту”.³⁶ This meant that only responsible and experienced people, who would not have allowed such situations to occur, should be appointed to important government posts.

The defeat at Sapogyn was very painful for both Izyaslav Mstislavovich and Geysa II. Both rulers wanted revenge.³⁷ Next year they gathered large forces and organised a new campaign to the Galician land. To prevent a recurrence of the situation of the previous year, in 1152 Geysa II and Izyaslav Mstislavovich personally led the Hungarian and Russian troops. The allies met near Peremyshl and despite the active resistance of Volodymyr Volodarevich, managed to inflict a significant defeat on him in the Battle of the San River. The prince lost the main part of his troops and had to flee to Peremyshl.³⁸ Because of the great losses the city had no one to defend and it should have become an easy prey for Geysa II and Izyaslav. But here, as one can assume on the basis of the context of the chronicle, the alcohol factor influenced the development of events one more time. The chronicler says that the Hungarian and Russian troops did not capture Peremyshl because they rushed to rob the Volodymyr Volodarevich’s residence and court, which were located in the meadow in front of the city. He also notes that there were a lot of various goods in the Volodymyr’s residence: “уже баше дворъ . кнѣзь внѣ города . на лузѣ надъ рѣкою надъ Саномъ . и ту бѣ товаръ

34 Ibidem, p. 442. The later chronicles also tell that the Hungarians were drunk: Московский летописный свод конца XV в. In *Полное Собрание Русских Летописей*, vol. 25. Москва; Ленинград 1949, p. 54; Летопись по Воскресенскому списку. In *Полное Собрание Русских Летописей*, vol. 7. Санкт-Петербург 1856, p. 55; Густынская летопись. Прибавление къ Ипатѣвской летописи. In *Полное Собрание Русских Летописей*, vol. 2. Санкт-Петербург 1843, p. 301.

35 Ипатѣвская летопись, p. 442.

36 Ibidem, p. 442.

37 Ibidem, p. 442, 444-445.

38 Ibidem, p. 446-449; Лаврентѣвская летопись, p. 336-337.

в немъ многъ . и тамо наринушаѿ вси воѿ”.³⁹ One can assume that there were also considerable stocks of alcoholic beverages there.⁴⁰ It is likely that it was their consumption that prevented the soldiers of Geysa II and Izyaslav from further pursuit of Volodymyr Volodarevich and from storming Peremyshl.⁴¹ This eventually saved the Prince of Halych, who managed to corrupt the Hungarian king’s entourage, including the archbishop of Esztergom, to make peace and keep all his possessions.⁴²

In conclusion, it is worth mentioning another event from the second half of the twelfth century in which alcoholic beverages could also play a significant role. It is about the notorious campaign of the Prince of Novgorod-Seversky Igor Svyatoslavovich against the Cumans in 1185. It was described in great detail both in Russian chronicles and in the *Tale of Igor’s Campaign*.⁴³ From these sources it is known that Igor Svyatoslavovich organised his campaign independently from the Prince of Kyiv Svyatoslav Vsevolodovich and other Russian princes. Only his sons, his brother Vsevolod Svyatoslavovich of Trubech, and Svyatoslav Olgovich of Rylysk, as well as the Prince of Chernihiv Yaroslav Vsevolodovich, who sent an auxiliary detachment, helped the Prince of Novgorod-Seversky. It should be emphasised that the sources do not mention alcohol directly while describing this campaign. But one interesting fragment from the *Laurentian Codex* attracts the reader’s attention. The chronicler says that at the beginning of

39 Ипатьевская летопись, р. 449.

40 This conclusion is based on the chronicler’s report dated back to 1146. It tells that 500 barrels of drinking honey and 80 barrels of wine were stored in the residence of the Prince of Kyiv Igor Olgovich. Ibidem, p. 334. As an supporting argument, one can also cite the presence of significant stocks of alcohol in the residence of the Prince of Vladimir-Suzdal Andrei Yurievich in Bogolyubovo in 1175. Ibidem, p. 586. It is quite logical to assume that there were considerable stocks of alcoholic beverages in Volodymyr Volodarevich’s residence too.

41 A similar situation took place in the spring of 1230, when during the campaign to Halych the Daniel Romanovich’s troops captured the court of the boyar Sudislav, where they found a lot of supplies, including alcoholic beverages, and got drunk. As a result, Daniel failed to capture the city at once and had to start a long siege of Halych: “Даниль же взѧ дворѣ Соудиславль . ѧкоже вино и воша и корма . и копии . и стрѣль . пристраньно видити . потом же Даниль . видивъ люди своѧ . ѧко испилиса . не хотѣ стати въ города но иде на иноу страну Днѣстра.” Ипатьевская летопись, р. 758. See also: NAGIRNYJ. *Polityka zagraniczna księstw ziem halickiej i wołyńskiej w latach 1198(1199) – 1264*. Kraków 2011, р. 196-197.

42 See: ГРУШЕВСЬКИЙ. *Історія України-Руси*. vol. 2. Київ 1992, р. 430-431; КРИП’ЯКЕВИЧ. *Галицько-Волинське князівство*. Київ 1984, р. 75–76.

43 Ипатьевская летопись, р. 637-644; Лаврентьевская летопись, р. 397-39; Радзивилловская летопись, р. 151-152; АДРИАНОВА-ПЕРЕТЦ, ed. *Слово о полку Игореве*. Москва; Ленинград 1950, р. 9-32. See also: DIMNIK. *The dynasty of Chernigov, 1146–1246*. Cambridge 2003, р. 163-181.

the campaign the Russian troops were able to gain the victory over the Cuman troops and even assault their camp and take prisoners. After this success, the princes gave their troops a three-day rest, and the victory was celebrated with a feast: “Веселася”.⁴⁴ It cannot be excluded that the initial success turned the feasting Russian princes’ heads and they, like the Hungarians in 1151, began to boast that they would easily defeat their opponents: “а рекуще браѣта [...] мы в земли ихъ юсмъ . и самѣхъ избили а жены ихъ полонены . и дѣти оу насъ . а нонѣ поидемъ по нихъ за Донъ . и до конца избьемъ ихъ”.⁴⁵ It is quite possible that this factor did not allow Igor and his allies to assess the situation and the strength of the enemy. As a result, the Russian princes fell into the trap set by the Cumans and suffered a heavy defeat.

It is interesting to note that it was alcoholic beverages that helped Igor Svyatoslavovich escape from the Cuman captivity into which he had fallen after his defeat by the nomads. According to the author of the Kyivan chronicle, Igor could walk around the Cuman camp, but in order to prevent his escape, twenty noble Cumans were assigned to guard him.⁴⁶ Nevertheless, the prince was able to wait for the moment when his guards got drunk on kumis⁴⁷ and let their guard down: “Половци . напилиса бахоуть коумыза.”⁴⁸ Taking advantage of this moment, Igor managed to escape from captivity and return to Rus’ after eleven days of wandering.⁴⁹

To summarise, one should point out that the sources contain a lot of interesting data on the influence of alcohol on a course of military campaigns of the Russian princes. This is especially evident in the example of the defeat of the Prince of Kyiv Svyatopolk from the troops of the Prince of Novgorod Yaroslav Vladimirovich in the battle of Lyubech in the autumn of 1016, as well as in the example of the Russian campaign against the Cumans in 1111 or the campaigns of 1151, when alcohol had a direct influence on the capture of Bilhorod by the troops of Izyaslav Mstislavovich or on the defeat of the Hungarians at Sapogyn. It is possible that alcohol also played a role in the campaigns of Hungarian and Kyivan troops against the Prince of Halych Volodymyr Volodarevich in 1152 and

44 Лаврентьевская летопись, р. 397. Unlike the *Laurentian Codex*, the *Kyivan Chronicle* says nothing about a possible feast of the Russian princes after the first victory over the Cumans. See: Ипатьевская летопись, р. 640.

45 Лаврентьевская летопись, р. 397; DIMNIK, *The dynasty of Chernigov*, р. 169.

46 Ипатьевская летопись, р. 649-650.

47 Kumis is a low-alcohol drink made from the milk of a mare and spread among the nomads of Asia and the Northern Black Sea region.

48 Ипатьевская летопись, р. 651.

49 Ibidem.

during the campaign of the Prince of Novgorod-Seversky Igor Svyatoslavovich against the Cumans in 1185.

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