

Inés García de la Puente

Beyond the Sea: On the Use of *za more* in the *Primary Chronicle*

The expression *za more* appears repeatedly in the *Primary Chronicle* — nine times, to be exact. It consists of the preposition *za*, whose meaning can be rendered into English as “beyond” or “the other side of”, and *more*, a neuter substantive that means “sea”, declined in the accusative singular. Usually interpreted as “beyond the sea”, “(to) the other side of the sea” or, by metonymy, “overseas”, the phrase translates serendipitously well into modern languages. Be it in 12th-century East Slavonic or in modern English translation, the expression seems to carry both direct and figurative meanings that seamlessly fit into the different contexts in which it appears. The brief study that follows uses close text-analysis to reassess the adequacy of those interpretations. Its aim is not to refute them, but to invite the reader to further reflect on the meaning and the implications that the use of *za more* carries in the *Primary Chronicle*.

The number of instances of the syntagm *za more* in the *Primary Chronicle* increases from nine to eleven if we include a related expression in the total count, a compound of *za more*: *изъ замориа* or *заморья*). This syntagm consists of *заморие* preceded by yet another preposition, *изъ*. In it, *za more* becomes lexicalized into a single unit: the noun *заморие*. It is declined in the genitive because it is grammatically ruled by the preposition *изъ*. *Заморие* has its own entry in Old East Slavonic dictionaries like Sreznevskii’s *Materialy* and the *Slovar’ drevnerusskogo iazyka XI–XVII vekov*, where it is defined as “transmarina” and as “lands or countries beyond the sea” respectively. In the oldest of the Rus’ian chronicles besides the *Primary Chronicle*, the *Novgorod First Chronicle of the Older Redaction*, *изъ замориа* appears twice¹. In 1130, *заморье* refers to beyond

1 See Boris M. Kloss’s summary of the redactions of the chronicle in his foreword to the 2000 reprint of the *First Novgorod Chronicle* in: “Predislovie k izdaniiu 2000 g.,” *Novgorodskaiia Pervaia Letopis’ starshogo i mladshogo izvodov* (Moscow, 2000) (*Polnoe sobranie russkikh letopisei* t. 3), V–VIII, and Aleksei A. Gippius, “K istorii slozheniia teksta Novgorodskoi Pervoi Letopisi,” *Novgorodskii istoricheskii sbornik* 6/16 (1997), 3–71. There is a wealth of bibliography and of different opinions on the relationship between the *Novgorod First Chronicle*, the *Primary Chronicle*, and pre-existing chronicle compendia like the *Primary Compilation* that have not survived to the present and whose contents can, thus, only be inferred; as examples of scholarly disagreement, see, among others, Donald

the sea in Gotland (и-замориа съ Готъ), from where seven, possibly merchant, boats were coming when they sank. Under the year 1134, we read that some Novgorodians were slaughtered “beyond the sea in Denmark” (за моремъ въ Дони)². The adjective derived from *заморе*, *заморьские*, is listed in these dictionaries too. Besides in the chronicles, it is attested in at least one birchbark letter: document no. 1009, dated to the mid-12th century³. In it, senders Luka and Ivan tell Snovid (probably their father) that they did not buy any Greek goods, and ask him to look for “overseas goods” (товаръ [...] заморьскаго). Unsurprisingly, in all these northern sources the sea referred to is the Baltic, which is occasionally called the “Varangian Sea” in the *Primary Chronicle*; in the context of Novgorod at the time, “beyond the (Baltic) sea” could mean anywhere in Scandinavia or Western Europe, as the Baltic was the common route for goods from continental Europe to enter Novgorod and *vice versa*⁴.

Изъ замориа appears twice in the *Primary Chronicle*. Since *iz* indicates origin, the expression now means “from beyond the sea”, as we saw in the examples from the Novgorod texts. That is, whereas *за море* expresses direction, *изъ замориа* expresses origin. I will start with the second example because it needs little comment: inserted under the year 980, the syntagm denotes the origins of Rogvolod of Polatsk, Rogneda’s father. He had come from beyond the sea and settled in — and probably also founded — Polatsk, a town in what eventually became part of the territory of Rus’. The first instance of *изъ замориа* requires more explanation because it appears in the prequel to the legend of the “Calling of the Varangians”. I call the 859 entry a “prequel” because it sets the stage for the actual legend, inserted under 862, which is the next filled-in entry after 859 (860 and 861 are empty). Indeed, the 859 entry explains that the Varangians from beyond the sea received tribute from certain tribes — Chuds, (Il’men) Slavs, Merians and all Krivichians — and the Khazars received tribute from other tribes: Polians, Severians and Viatichians. Here *изъ замориа* is an attribute, that is, a syntagm that directly qualifies the Varangians (Имаху дань Варазии, из заморья, under 859)⁵.

Ostrowski, “The Načal’nyj Svod theory and the Povest’ vremennyx let,” *Russian Linguistics* 31 (2007), 269–308; and Alexey A. Gippius, “Reconstructing the original of the Povest’ vremennyx let: a contribution to the debate,” *Russian Linguistics* 38 (2014), 341–366.

- 2 Quotes from the *Novgorod First Chronicle* are taken from the already cited *Novgorodskaja Pervaia Letopis’ starshego i mladshego izvodov* (Moscow, 2000).
- 3 I only spot-checked some of the birchbark documents posted on gramoty.ru; it is likely that there are more examples. Detailed information about document no. 1009, its text and its translation into modern Russian are available at <http://gramoty.ru/birchbark/document/show/novgorod/1009/> (accessed July 15, 2021).
- 4 Andrei A. Zalizniak interpreted the goods from beyond the sea as goods from the West that arrived in Novgorod via the Baltic Sea (“Вторая лекция академика А. А. Зализняка о грамотах из раскопок 2010 г., 6 октября,” lesson summarized online at <https://mitrius.livejournal.com/802324.html>, accessed July 10, 2021). Similarly, Jos Schaecken notes that goods from beyond the sea are those from north-western Europe. See his “Comments on Birchbark Documents Found in the Twenty-First Century,” *Russian Linguistics* 41 (2017), 123–149, especially 141.
- 5 All quotations from the *Primary Chronicle* are based on *The e-PVL*, an online edition of the alpha text reconstructed by Donald Ostrowski and available at David Birnbaum’s <http://pvl.obdurodon.org/>.

Something that stands out is that, whereas the text specifies the provenance of the Varangians, it does not do the same with the Khazars. Why?

One might hypothesize that the text provides the origin of the Varangians because at the time when the events are set (the ninth century, according to the chronology of the *Primary Chronicle*) the Varangians were relatively obscure, whereas Khazaria was a well-known empire. However, one could also postulate that “from beyond the sea” complements the Varangians as an epithet rather than a piece of factual information, because their origin might, after all, have been well-known, at least to the 12th-century chronicler. In other words, one could argue either that *изъ замориа* provides significant information about the origin of the Varangians, or that *изъ замориа* adorns the Varangians as a sobriquet. In this example, concluding that *изъ замориа* is an explicative syntagm or an epithet is in the eye of the beholder. However, this is the only instance in the whole *Chronicle* where *изъ замориа* is syntactically an attribute of the Varangians. *За море* never appears as an attribute to the Varangians. This is important to note because it has been suggested that *за море* is just a formula and, as such, it does not convey any significant information.

This idea was brought up by Elena A. Mel’nikova in the context of a series of studies around the legend of the “Calling of the Varangians”, in which her focus is to reveal the historical truth hidden behind the legend. Based on archaeological evidence, she concludes that the Rus’ whom the local tribes invited were already settled on the continental side of the Baltic, that is, the side of the Baltic that was to become part of Rus’ territory. Consequently, she states, the fact that the Varangians are described as coming from “beyond the sea” is a commonplace, the result of a formulaic way of writing⁶. Since my understanding of “formula” is a “stock expression” or a “fixed epithet”, I cannot fully agree with this statement⁷. The pairing of the Varangians with “beyond the sea” is, indeed, recurrent in the *Primary Chronicle*, yet I do not think that that turns the expression into a formula.

The digital version is largely based on Donald Ostrowski, comp. and ed., David J. Birnbaum, assoc. ed., and Horace G. Lunt, senior cons. *The Povest' vremennykh let: An interlinear collation and paradosis* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2003).

6 Elena A. Mel’nikova argues that Riurik and his men had already moved out of Scandinavia and settled in the north-western area of future Rus’ (the Ladoga-II’men and upper Volga region), or that they were born there to Scandinavians who had settled in the area earlier on. In either case, rather than coming from overseas, Riurik and his men may have already been neighbours to the tribes that “invited” them. See Elena A. Mel’nikova, “Riad v Skazanii o prizvanii variagov i ego evropeiskie i skandinavskie paralleli”, 249–251 and fn. 4; and “Riurik, Sineus i Truvor v drevnerusskoi istoriograficheskoi traditsii”, 204. Both articles are included in Elena A. Mel’nikova’s collected works *Drevniaia Rus’ i Skandinaviia: Izbrannye Trudy*, ed. G. V. Glazyrina and T. N. Dzhakson (Moscow, 2011), 249–256 and 201–216 respectively.

7 For a definition in a reference work, see “Epic formula”, *Encyclopedia Britannica*, 14 Mar. 2002, <https://www.britannica.com/art/epic-formula> (accessed July 11, 2021). For a scholarly discussion of the ambiguity of the term see Yuri Kleiner, “The Formula: Morphology and Syntax,” *John Miles Foley’s World of Oralities: Text, Tradition, and Contemporary Oral Theory*, ed. Mark C. Amodio (Leeds, 2020), 107–122.

According to the *Chronicle* narrative, the Rus' came from beyond the sea: as I will try to show, the Varangians are associated with *за море* because that association was perceived as factual rather than clichéd within the narrative. While I don't deny a formulaic flavour to the expression "beyond the sea", I think that its use in the *Chronicle* points towards a denotative, geographical space, rather than being a mere adornment to the name "Varangians".

Let us, then, start analyzing *за море*. Of the nine instances where it appears in the *Chronicle*, a considerable proportion — five — are clustered around the princes Igor, Volodimir Sviatoslavich and Yaroslav Volodimirovich. It is also significant, as I will explain, that of the nine, four appear in the entries for the years 862 and 1024, which correspond to the passages of the "Calling of the Varangians" and to the Battle of Listven. In order to make my exposition clearer, I will address the legend of the "Calling" and the Battle of Listven at the end, after having covered the five other instances that are spread throughout the *Chronicle*.

The first time that *за море* appears is when Igor sends beyond the sea for Varangians in order to recruit warriors to attack Constantinople (посъла по Варагы за море, s.a. 941, col. 45). The second is when Volodimir, who is in Novgorod, flies beyond the sea to run away from Yaropolk, who has just killed their brother Oleg in Vrch (Слышавъ же се Володимиръ въ Новѣгородѣ, тако Ирѡпѣлкѣ уби Ольга, убоиавъ са, бѣжа за море, s.a. 977, col. 75). One generation later, a similar situation occurs: Yaroslav, who is in Novgorod, fears that his father, that same Volodimir who had fled from his brother some decades earlier, will attack him; instead of running away, Yaroslav brings in Varangians from beyond the sea to defend himself (Ирославу сущю Новѣгородѣ [...] посъла за море, приведе Варагы, бои са отца своего, s.a. 1015, col. 75). The next instance is when Yaroslav retreats to Novgorod after his half-brother Sviatopolk and Boleslaw, the King of Poland, have defeated him at a battle in Volyn, on the Western Bug; from Novgorod, Yaroslav wants to run away beyond the sea. However, Yaroslav's *посадникъ*, Kostiatin, efficiently dissuades him from crossing the sea (he has Yaroslav's boats chopped up!) and, instead, collects money from the Novgorodians to hire Varangians, with whom Yaroslav will defeat Sviatopolk (Ирославу же прибѣгъшю къ Новугороду, хоташе бѣжати за море, и посадникъ Костатин [...] приведоша Варагы, и вдаша имъ скоть, и съвѣкупи Ирѡславъ вои многы, s.a. 1018, col. 143). So far, *за море* has only appeared linked to events in the north of Rus'. The last case, however, is related to the opposite end of the map: Constantinople. Indeed, in 1079, Khazars capture Oleg Svyatoslavich of Tmutarakan' and exile him "beyond the sea to Constantinople" (Ольга емише Козаре поточиша за море Цѣсарюграду, s.a. 1079, col. 204).

In all these instances, *за море* provides geographical information relevant to the setting and the action described in the *Chronicle*. The expression literally means beyond the sea: it is a foreign land separated from Rus' by a sea. In most cases, the sea in question is the Baltic; in one case, it is the Black Sea. The Baltic

is the sea implied when the action happens in the northern territories of Rus'; the Black Sea is referred to when Oleg Sviatoslavich is sent from Rus' to Constantinople. In the northern setting, it is worth noting that Novgorod is the base from where princes flee to “beyond the sea”, or from where they obtain military reinforcements. The only instance when Novgorod is not mentioned is in 941, when Igor' recruits Varangians from “beyond the sea”, presumably from Kyiv, where, we suppose, he returned to after his defeat against the Byzantines.

The entries of 862 and 1024 contain the passages of the “Calling of the Varangians” and of the Battle of Listven respectively. I will analyze them separately from the rest of the *Chronicle* because each of these passages forms its own closed, literary narrative. Let us start with 862.

The entry of 862 is well known because it includes the “Calling of the Varangians”⁸. Here the syntagm *за море* appears for the first time. According to the legend, after having expelled the Varangians “to the other side of the sea” earlier on, the local inhabitants of the area that will later become northern Rus' “went beyond the sea, to the Varangians” (ИЗЪГНАША ВАРАГЫ ЗА МОРЕ, and ИДОША ЗА МОРЕ КЪ ВАРАГОМЪ, both under 862). “Beyond the sea” refers to the territory where the Varangians are sent by the local tribes, and where the latter go to invite the former. The syntagm complements the verbs (*изъгнаша* and *идоша*) rather than the noun “Varangians”. That *за море* is associated with the Varangians is undeniable — it appears in conjunction with them in the two sentences. However, rather than being formulaically attached to the Varangians, it provides information about their geographical location, as we would expect from the local complement of a verb.

The Battle of Listven is narrated under the year 1024. Yaroslav, who is in Novgorod preparing to go against his brother Mstislav, sends beyond the sea for Varangians; Yakun comes with them to fight Mstislav (Ирославъ, приде Новугороду, и посъла Ирославъ за море по Варагы. И приде Икунъ съ Варагы, col. 148), and the armies meet in Listven, a few kilometres to the west of Chernihiv. The narrative about this battle puts a strong focus on tactical and descriptive aspects of the encounter: Mstislav placed his Severiane warriors in the front and his *дружина* on the flanks; the Severiane clashed with Yaroslav's Varangians, who were presumably better trained as warriors; after Yaroslav and

8 This narrative has received a huge amount of scholarly (and not-so-scholarly) attention because it was considered a key source of information to reconstruct the origins of Rus', and because, consequently, it sparked the Normanist controversy. One of the latest monograph-length discussions about the origins of Rus', including a skeptical approach to the legend of the “Calling,” can be found in Aleksei Tolochko, *Ocherki nachal'noi Rusi* (Kiev, Sankt-Peterburg, 2015), especially on pages 17–20 and 92–98. Elena A. Mel'nikova and Vladimir Ya. Petrukhin have published extensively both on the historical and literary background of the legend, sometimes independently, sometimes in collaboration; see, for example, the already cited E.A. Mel'nikova, “Riurik, Sineus i Truvor v drevnerusskoi istoriograficheskoi traditsii,” 201–216; as well as Mel'nikova and V. Ya. Petrukhin, ““Riad' legendy o prizvanii variagov v kontekste rannesrednevekovoi diplomatii,” *Drevniaia Rus' i Skandinavia: Izbrannye Trudy*, ed. G. V. Glazyrina and T. N. Dzhakson (Moscow, 2011), 190–200.

Yakun fled, Mstislav was satisfied that many Severiane lay dead on the ground, as well as Yaroslav and Yakun's Varangians, while he had not lost any members of his *дружина*. The weather conditions before the battle are described in detail: night came and there were "darkness, lightning, thunder and rain" (и бывъши ноци, бысть тьма, громъ и мълниа и дъждь). This sets up a stage of doom. Once the battle begins, we read an epic-like description of a fierce battle where weapons glitter in the flashes of the lightning (такъ посвѣташе мълниа, блисташа са оружие, и бѣ гроза велика и съча сильна и страшна). The description of the storm wraps the battle in a fateful atmosphere; at the end, Yaroslav and Yakun lose and have to flee.

Yakun himself is another element of wonder. He is described as blind (бѣ Якунь слѣпъ, col. 148, 8), and he wears a cloak woven of gold. The cloak is mentioned twice: first, when Yakun is described, and second, when upon losing the battle against Mstislav, Yakun "fled out of his golden cloak" (Якунь ту отъбѣже луды златыѣ, col. 148). Blindness, a golden cloak, an intriguing "fleeing out of" that cloak, all of it wrapped in a fierce battle that shines with lightning effects, create an apocalyptic atmosphere where the natural mixes with the mysterious and, perhaps, the supernatural. It may not be a coincidence that the battle is preceded in the 1024 entry by a passage about magicians. Although the magicians' craft is despised by Yaroslav, they bring an element of the supernatural to the entry.

The chronicler probably knew little about Yakun, whom modern scholars have identified with the historical Hákon Eiríksson⁹. Although all *Primary Chronicle* witness manuscripts describe him as "blind" (слѣпъ), Yakun was probably "handsome" (съ лѣпъ), as Hákon/Yakun came from a family whose male line was known for their attractiveness¹⁰. Yakun's fleeing out of his golden cloak parallels a motif that appears in various sagas, and that has been interpreted as a trick to save his life (and, in this case, probably Yaroslav's also) in a battle that he loses¹¹.

9 See Omeljan Pritsak, *The Origin of Rus'. Vol. 1: Old Scandinavian Sources other than the Sagas* (Cambridge, MA, 1981), 404–414.

10 The first to advance that the original reading was *съ лѣпъ* ("handsome") was H. P. Lambin, "O slepote Yakuna i ego zlatotkannoi lude: kritiko-filologicheskoe issledovanie," *Zhurnal ministerstva narodnogo prosveshcheniia* 108 (1858), 33–58 (*apud* Mikheev, "Variazhskie kniaz'ia...," 27, see full reference in the following note).

11 Anna F. Litvina and Fedor B. Uspenskii compellingly make the case for this interpretation in Anna F. Litvina and Fedor B. Uspenskii, "Pochemu Variag Yakun 'otbezhe ludy zlatoe'? Stseny listvenskoi bytvy 1024 g." *Drevniaia Rus'. Voprosy medievistiki* 63 (2016), 27–40; and "Zolotaia luda variaga Yakuna," in their *Pokhvala shchedrosti, chasha iz cherepa, zolotaia luda... Kontury russko-variazhskogo kul'turnogo vzaimodei'viia* (Moskva, 2019), 151–175. Litvina and Uspenskii's work partially relies on other recent publications about Yakun, his blindness, and his cloak, like Igor' N. Danilevskii, *Povest' vremennykh let: germenevticheskie osnovy izuchenii letopisnykh tekstov* (Moskva, 2004), 175–176; Aleksei A. Gippius "Begstvo ot plashcha: Zametki o 'zolotoi lude' Yakuna 'Slepogo,'" *Terra Balkanica. Terra Slavica. K yubileiu T. V. Tsiv'ian*. Moscow 2007 (Balkanskii chteniia 9), 52–58; and Savva M. Mikheev, "Variazhskie kniaz'ia Yakun, Afrikan i Shimon: Literaturnye siuzhety, transformatsiia imen i istoricheskii kontekst," *Drevniaia Rus'. Voprosy medievistiki* 32 (2008/2), 27–32.

Yet this is what we know today. To the chronicler, Yakun was a blind Varangian prince wrapped in mystery who took part in a battle at Yaroslav's side¹².

The syntagm *za more* appears twice in 1024: first when Yaroslav sends from Novgorod for Varangians beyond the sea, and at the closing when, after losing the battle, Yaroslav and Yakun part ways: the former goes back to Novgorod, the latter to beyond the sea. Are these two instances of *za more* any different from the others? Despite the ominous atmosphere of the battle, and the overall legendary atmosphere of the passage, the function of the syntagm is not any different in 1024 than in the other passages: *za more* is where the Varangians come from, a territory down-to-earthly located beyond Novgorod and the Baltic.

In the 862 and 1024 entries, two passages wrapped in a halo of legend, *za more* is a complement of the verb. It denotes the territory the Varangians go to and come from. That is, *za more* functions as a geographical reference.

What about *za more* beyond the *Primary Chronicle*? Although the goal of this brief essay is limited to assessing the meaning of *za more* intra-textually in the *Primary Chronicle*, it is illustrative to look, even briefly, at the expression in other contemporary literary works. Among original Old East Slavonic literary texts of the 11th–12th centuries, the expression seems to be attested only once¹³. It appears in the *Slovo of Daniel the Exile to Prince Yaroslav Volodimirovich*, written in the 12th century¹⁴. Towards the conclusion of the text, the following verse appears: “Азъ бо, княже, ни за море ходильъ, ни от философъ научихса”.

Going *za more* in the *Slovo* indicates going abroad to the Greek-Byzantine south, where “philosophers”, in Rus' worldview, came from. Going abroad to Byzantium is an experience that increases one's intellectual sophistication, the learned (Christian) knowledge of an individual — which, in this case, does not carry positive connotations¹⁵. Although the name of the sea is not given, from the point of view of the chronicler, the Byzantine Empire was on the other shore of

12 To the chroniclers, Yakun's blindness probably just added to his mystery, or perhaps even to the magical connotations of his character. Modern editors' tendency to correct “blind” to “handsome” seems to be the result of forcing upon a medieval text both historical details available only to us and modern preconceptions of what traits a prince should, or should not, possess. For example, in Germanic materials, Odin's one-eye blindness adds to his powers. See Jaan Puhvel, *Comparative Mythology* (Baltimore and London, 1987), 193–198.

13 In the absence of a corpus of 11th–12th century East Slavonic expressions, I cannot state with absolute certainty that *za more* appears only once. Of the works I searched, *za more* only appeared in one, yet it is possible that I missed other cases.

14 A reference entry on Daniel the Exile's works, with a reproduction of the text of the *Slovo* can be found in L. V. Sokolova (ed., trans. and comm.) “Slovo Danila Zatochnika,” *Biblioteka Literaturny Drevnei Rusi*, t. 4, ed. D. S. Likhachev et al. (St. Petersburg, 1997). I accessed the digital version on July 15, 2021 at <http://lib.pushkinskijdom.ru/Default.aspx?tabid=4942>

15 An interpretation of the understanding of philosophy in Rus' with a focus on this passage of the *Slovo* can be found in Kh. Trendafilov, “Filosofy v pravoslavnom slavianskom mire (IX–XV vv.),” *Fakty i znaki: Issledovaniia po semiotike istorii* 4, ed. B. A. Uspenskii and F. B. Uspenskii (Moscow, 2020), 58–86 (especially 65–66).

the Black Sea. The expression is, thus, not metaphorical but literal. Here, as in the 1079 entry of the *Primary Chronicle*, *za mope* refers to beyond the Black Sea. This corroborates the argument that the sea in *za mope* was not always the Baltic and that, therefore, the syntagm had a denotative connotation.

Incidentally, for what it is worth, the 15th-century merchant Afanasii Nikitin wrote his famous *Khozhdenie za tri moria*, a travel diary about his journey “beyond three seas”¹⁶. In comparing 12th to 15th century language, we may have to allow for some diachronic change, yet by the same token, this text informs about a time comparatively close to the *Primary Chronicle*. These three seas are the Caspian Sea, the Indian Ocean and the Black Sea, and they provide another example of the denotative function of an expression almost identical with the chronistic *za mope*.

Usually interpreted as “beyond the sea”, “(to) the other side of the sea” or, by metonymy, “overseas”, the syntagm *za mope* in the *Primary Chronicle* is as obvious as it is ambiguous. It is obvious because the meaning of each of its constituents, the preposition *za* and the noun *mope*, is unequivocal. It is ambiguous because *mope* refers to different seas, and because, despite accompanying the Varangians in what sometimes looks like a stable pairing of noun and epithet, *za mope* functions an explicative syntagm with clear referential value. Moreover, *za mope* hints at the chroniclers’ perception of the geography of Rus’.

One of the main finds of this analysis is that *za mope* tends to appear not only in conjunction with the Varangians, but also with Novgorod. Indeed, Novgorod appears in five of the seven cases where the expression *za mope* is used in association with the city and region. As I noted above, although the expression *za mope* appears nine times, two of them are part of the legend of the “Calling”, only towards the end of which is Novgorod founded. That means that the association of Novgorod and *za mope* is nearly as prevalent as the pairing of Varangians and *za mope*. Although statistics are a questionable approach to the study of a medieval chronicle, especially when the pool of data is so limited, numbers combined with textual analysis provide some useful information to rely on. They support the argument that *za mope* denotes a territory beyond Novgorod; it is not just a formulaic complement to the Varangians. That overseas territory farther than Novgorod is where Varangians come from. It is also a safe space for princes persecuted from the Kyivan south, and a source of warriors to fight those persecutors. Unsurprisingly, the prince who is most often linked to “beyond the

16 See M. D. Kagan-Tarkovskaia and Ya. S. Lur’ e, (eds. and comm.) “Khozhdenie za tri moria Afanasiia Nikitina,” *Biblioteka Literatury Drevnei Rusi*, t. 7, ed. D. S. Likhachev et al. (St. Petersburg, 1999). I accessed the digital version on August 2, 2021 at <http://lib.pushkinskijdom.ru/Default.aspx?tabid=4883>.

sea” is also the prince most often linked to Novgorod: Yaroslav Volodimirovich. The long-time Prince of Novgorod uses that town as the jumping board from which to attempt to flee “beyond the sea”, to recruit Varangians and to enlist Yakun to his help.

In the *Primary Chronicle* the sea signified beyond the *mope* is often the Baltic, as in the Novgorod texts; in one instance, however, the sea referred to is the Black Sea. The Rus’ of the Kyivan chroniclers is, thus, a long territory fitted between two seas: the Baltic to the north, Scandinavia-bound; and the Black Sea to the south, Byzantium-bound. In this way, *za mope* helps us understand how the chroniclers mapped the land inhabited by princes whose feats, legendary or real, they described.