



N.N. POKROVSKY



TRAVELER

in Search of Rare Books

To the anniversary of the birth of Academician Nikolai Pokrovsky



Books from the collection of early printed books and manuscripts of the Institute of History SB RAS

Nikolai N. POKROVSKY (1930–2013), Full Member of the Russian Academy of Sciences; Adviser to the Russian Academy of Sciences; Head of the Archaeography and Source Studies Sector, Institute of History, Siberian Branch, Russian Academy of Sciences (Novosibirsk); Chairman of the Siberian Branch of the Archaeographic Commission, Russian Academy of Sciences. Founder of the research school of Siberian archaeographers and source scholars. Awarded with the Demidov Prize (1995), the Order of Honor, the Order of Friendship, the Order of St. Macarius of the 3rd Degree, and the Order of St. Sergius of Radonezh of the 3rd Degree

The year 2025 marks the 95th anniversary of the birth of the prominent historian and archaeographer Nikolai Pokrovsky (1930–2013). He made many striking discoveries in various fields of historical knowledge. His name is attached to the so-called “archaeographic discovery of Siberia” – the dozens of archaeological expeditions led by Pokrovsky and his students made it possible to create one of Russia’s largest collections of ancient Russian manuscripts and early printed books and, thus, reveal the previously unknown world of the written culture of the Old Believer peasants living in a vast territory from the Urals to the Far East. We present to your attention a story of the fascinating “travels in search of rare books,” told by Pokrovsky himself on the occasion of his 80th birthday, which we supplemented by fragments from his book based on materials from his expeditions and archival researches

Key words: archaeography, source studies, textology, history of Old Belief



At the beginning of 1965, Tikhomirov and I showed the collection to academicians Mikhail A. Lavrentiev and Alexander L. Yanshin, the leaders of the Siberian Branch of the Academy of Sciences. This is when we agreed on the conditions for handing over the collection to the State Public Scientific and Technical Library in Novosibirsk, on launching archaeographic expeditions by the Siberian Branch, and on me moving to Akademgorodok.

In the summer and autumn of 1965, I transported Tikhomirov's books to Novosibirsk, and the following year, my wife Z. V. Borodina and I set off on our first Siberian expedition. Our students and I, together with our colleagues E. K. Romodanovskaya, E. I. Dergacheva-Skop, and V. N. Alekseev, conducted dozens of expeditions from the Subpolar Yenisei region to the southern borders of Kyrgyzia and from the Trans-Urals region to the Far East.

The first journey

Difficulties awaited us at every step of the way. After all, we were heading not simply to villages inhabited by the Old Believers but to their most secluded settlements, i.e., the sketes. The people who lived there did not welcome strangers; they were reluctant to talk to us; they could refuse to give us water, and if they did give it, they could break the vessel from which we drank, as if it had been filthy.

We were helped immensely in this matter by V. I. Malyshev, our foremost archaeographer and the creator of the Pushkin House's book depository. He advised us on how to behave with the Old Believers, how to approach them, how to ask questions, how to bid farewells, etc. An important argument that convinced them it was worth talking to us was our good knowledge of the history of the Old Believers,

Nikolai N. Pokrovsky was born on June 20, 1930 in Rostov-on-Don. Pokrovsky's great-grandfather was a church minister; his grandfather was the head of the legal department of the North Caucasian Railway Administration. His father, Nikolai Ilyich Pokrovsky, was a famous historian, the first dean of the History and Philology Department of Rostov State University. His ancestors on the side of his mother, Dr. Tatyana Andreevna Prasolova, a neurologist, were Kursk peasants. Her father Andrei wandered half of Russia in search of spiritual truth, visited Yasnaya Polyana, and eventually settled in Rostov-on-Don.

A family of extraordinary people and a rich library in several languages laid the solid moral foundation that helped Nikolai Pokrovsky to withstand all the trials of the "iron" 20th century and to preserve unchanged the main trait of his character, i.e., an insatiable desire for knowledge. The studies at Moscow University, followed by postgraduate studies and employment at the Department of Source Studies of Moscow State University, accustomed Pokrovsky to the best traditions of the Moscow historical school. His teachers were renowned scholars, such as academicians M. N. Tikhomirov and B. A. Rybakov, professors N. L. Rubinstein and P. A. Zayonchkovsky. The young researcher took part in preparing a reference book entitled *History of Soviet Society in the Memories of Contemporaries. 1917–1957*. However, his name was absent in the resulting publication because in 1957, Pokrovsky was arrested by the KGB for participating in an underground group of historians (the famous Krasnopevtsev Case) and sentenced to six years in prison. This way the young historian paid for his illusions about the radical nature of Khrushchev's "thaw."

The Pokrovsky family shortly before the revolution. *In the center is the great-grandfather Fr. Feodor. From left to right are his children Ilya Feodorovich (Pokrovsky's grandfather), Maria Feodorovna, Vasily Feodorovich, Anna Ivanovna (grandmother), and Nikolai Ilyich (father).* Rostov-on-Don, 1917

Nikolai N. Pokrovsky. Rostov-on-Don. 1950 (*top left*)

Pokrovsky was able to get back to work only in 1963. He worked for two years at the Vladimir–Suzdal Museum, and in 1965, he moved to the Novosibirsk Akademgorodok, where he immediately took up a large project, i.e., the search for monuments of ancient Russian literature in Siberia.

In his professional field, Pokrovsky always worked as a true archaeographer, engaged not only in the search, description, and publication of written evidence of the past but also in the careful study of the finds: source analysis, textual analysis, and historical research.

When Soviet historiography literature was only beginning to state that historical research had to be centered on man, Pokrovsky had been – for several decades – satiating his works with the striking, vivid characters and fates of people he encountered on the pages of ancient manuscripts: peasants, merchants, officials, and military governors. These people bizarrely combined in their ideological baggage both official Orthodoxy and the Old Belief, both paganism and Christianity



On an expedition along the Uba River (Rudny Altai). Next to Pokrovsky is Mother Melanya. 1970

Drying the books from Father Pallady's collection. In the spring, the stream overflowed; the gorge became damp, and so did the books. Nikolai Pokrovsky managed to persuade the owner of the collection to take advantage of their presence and carry out the drying of his entire library



Singing book with hooked notation. A music manuscript of the 19th century. Brought from the Amur region in the 1980s. Collection of early printed books and manuscripts of the Institute of History SB RAS

PEASANT WRITERS

especially the 17th century, which they themselves had known little about by that time.

We also had a valuable gift that opened many doors for us – a large piece of good church incense. By that time, the Old Believers had not used real incense at services for a long time, only ersatz. Later, I found in an abandoned barn several boxes of incense, confiscated by the Soviet authorities, so our stock was replenished.

However, incense alone was not enough to persuade the Old Believers to give up their books. Frequently, the books had to be exchanged, although archaeographers do not like to talk about this. For this occasion, we put together a special exchange stock of books that were not of particular interest to science but were important to the Old Believers. Often we simply purchased the books. In villages (not in the sketes, of course), they were often held in possession by people who were far from faith and were happy to give them away for any price. Today things are different – one could ask ten times the real value of the book.

What struck me most about that expedition? Of course, the ways of the Old Believers' monastic life, but most of all – the brilliant collection of books discovered in the very first skete. Father Pallady, the owner of the skete, had been collecting them for years. I will never forget the picturesque manner in which he pulled back the curtain, revealing one shelf over another, all filled with books of the pre-Nikonian period, i.e., before the mid-17th century!

A couple of years after Father Pallady's death, his books – as is customary among the Old Believers – were given away to those who came to the funeral repast. Thus, the unique books spread throughout the world of the Siberian Old Believers. We, too, managed to obtain two of the books, which are now stored at the State Public Scientific and Technical Library in Novosibirsk.

We were sitting in a small forest clearing near the book copying workshop. The room was tightly packed with open manuscripts of all sizes, from the huge Explanatory Psalter, weighing more than one and a half dozen kilos, to a tiny calendar. I managed to persuade the master of the skete, Father Pallady, to arrange for his library to be dried. The wind blew gently through the pages of the books; the conversation moved leisurely from one topic to another. Having looked at a singing book with hooked notation (*kryuki*), the old man remembered how he had been learning to sing “*po kryukam*” before the Russian–Japanese War. Back then, he even staged a suicide so that his relatives would not look for him and he could get a few free years for his studies.

We talked about how often books had perished and kept on perishing as traces of fire or mold could be clearly seen on many books around us. Father Pallady retold the famous story by Ivan Peresvetov about how the “Turkish sultan Mahmud” tried to burn Greek books. We recalled the burning of ancient books during the reign of Tsarevna Sophia and the tsarinas of the 18th century. I asked the old man what he knew about the struggle of the Old Believer peasants of the Urals and Siberia against the synodal destroyers of old books, for the freedom of their beliefs; against the inquisitors and missionaries. It turned out that Father Pallady's knowledge was much broader than what was known to science – he called the names of the leaders of the 18th century peasant protest, whom we had no idea about. Where did this awareness come from? A book with two copper clasps appeared in his hands, a volume lovingly bound by Pallady himself. The book consisted solely of works on the history of the Ural–Siberian Old Believer peasants of the 18th and partly 19th centuries yet not a single one of these works was known to science!

(Adapted from *Travels in Search of Rare Books* by N. N. Pokrovsky, Ch. 2)

As I said, the Old Believers knew little of their history of the 17th century. As for the following centuries, the people of that same skete told us about events and personalities we ourselves had had no idea about. Soon, we discovered a small collected volume, bound in deer skin, which consisted entirely of unknown-to-science literary works created by Old Believer peasants of the Urals.

Subsequently, we found many such collected volumes. These finds became the first and foremost reason why academicians Panchenko and Likhachev called our expeditions “the archaeographic discovery of Siberia.”

Acquitted 400 years after

Another important result of our first expedition was the useful connections we made. Thanks to them, the following year we went to a new region of Southwest Siberia, the one that remained unexplored by archaeographers.

There we found a collected volume dating back to the 1590s, which once belonged to the local Old Believers. During the years of repressions, they were evicted from that place, and their rich book collection was burned. But a local peasant woman managed to save a few books.

One of the literary monuments from that volume, the one related to the church reforms implemented by the famous Metropolitan Macarius, we published this year in Italy. However, the most interesting document was a copy of court records from the trial of the Russian philosopher and theologian Maximus the Greek.

He arrived in Moscow from Athos in 1518, when Vasily the Third needed a translator of Greek books. Maximus the Greek quickly learned the Russian language and began translating theological texts; however, being a vigorous and passionate person, he soon found himself drawn into the intrigues of the Moscow Kremlin. He was accused of spying for Turkey, of plotting against the sovereign's health, of heresy, etc. Generally speaking, it was a set of accusations, which had changed little even in the 20th century.

The trial itself is well known, but the account of it ended with what we call today the indictment. Historians knew nothing of how Maximus the Greek defended himself, i. e., what arguments he presented, etc. But then we finally came across a full text of the minutes of the court proceedings and several other documents related to the trial.

All the evidence we found clearly spoke in favor of the famous theologian. The church had long been planning to canonize him, but the two sentences of excommunication from communion, which were not removed from him, stood in the way. Our discovery allowed Maximus the Greek to be acquitted – 400 years after the trial. And in 1988, he was canonized at the Local Council of the Russian Orthodox Church dedicated to the Millennium of the Baptism of Russia.

MAXIMUS THE GREEK

During the years of collectivization, the villages of this Altai valley saw a violent and bloody breakdown of social relations. An immensely rich collection of early printed books and manuscripts, which had been assembled by peasants from the times of Catherine the Great, was doomed. The books spent the winter in a roofless barn; several lower volumes sank down beneath the snow, so they were left unnoticed when the unique library was taken away for barbaric burning. In the spring, a local peasant woman found the books and took them home. Now, four decades later, one of the manuscripts she saved lay in front of me. The winter spent under the snow left its mark – many of the sheets stuck together into a solid block; not a single watermark was visible. True, the book did open in two or three places, and in one of them I found a date – 1591, the time of creation of one of the writings. This was *The Life of the Holy Blessed Prince Alexander Nevsky*, a well-known monument of Old Russian literature.

At one of the rest stops, after a short drying of the book in the shade, several sheets came almost unstuck from one another, and I noticed a text line, which at once defined the critical nature of the find: “and Metropolitan Daniel asked Maximus Svyatogorets...” This was the famous Dispute of Metropolitan Daniel with Maximus the Greek, also known as the *Trial Record* of Maximus the Greek. The monument was known by a single copy from the mid-17th century, which contained many contradictions and omissions and broke off after the accusatory speech of the metropolitan. The arguments of the prosecution had long been known to historians, but we knew very little about Maximus' defense. Many researchers, both here and abroad, could only guess what the second half of the source was about. This is why I became so excited when I ascertained that we had acquired a collected volume with a manuscript of Maximus the Greek's *Trial Record*. It was obvious, at first glance, that the manuscript was much older than the known one. But as much as we rejoiced over the find, we worried about whether it was more complete. We became aware of the approximate size of the part we were interested in as soon as the upper edges of the stuck-together sheets began to separate from one another. The beautiful cursive writing of the literary monument covered more than twice as many sheets as the known part of the *Trial Record* could have!

(Adapted from *Travels in Search of Rare Books* by N. N. Pokrovsky, Ch. 4)



Collected volume dating to the 1590s, which was found in a deplorable state by the second archaeographic expedition organized by the SB RAS. A few books that were miraculously saved by a peasant woman are all that remains of the Old Believers' immensely rich collection, which was destroyed during collectivization.

The volume is opened on a unique historical document, i. e., the *Trial Record* of Maximus the Greek. Underneath lies a page from *The Life of Alexander Nevsky* with a headpiece and ligature. Storage of the Department of Rare Books and Manuscripts, State Public Scientific and Technical Library SB RAS

Everything we do during our expeditions is called *field archaeography*. However, the work is not limited to searching for books. We have a formula: identify, study, and publish. The latter element requires careful preparation. We spend a lot of time working in the 17th-19th century archives (most of which were taken to Moscow and St. Petersburg) in order to clarify the fate of the people mentioned in a given book.

Thus, the volume from Father Pallady's collection – our first expedition find – mentioned literary works of writers completely unknown to science: Miron Galanin; a serf named Maxim; Rodion Nabatov, a clerk from the Demidov and Osokin factories. We managed to obtain a lot of interesting details about each of them.



INDICOPLEUSTES IN THE ALTAI

The anchoresses and peasants living along the Uba River in the Altai still reverence a book well known to early medieval readers. This book – *The Christian Topography* by the Syrian monk Cosmas Indicopleustes – is a kind of encyclopedia of geographical and cosmological knowledge of the ancient world. Written in the mid-6th century, it was translated into Russian at the turn of the 11th and 12th centuries.

In his book, Cosmas not only expounded the views on the geocentric structure of the Universe, which dated back to Ptolemy, and retold many pages of the Bible but also wrote about his own travels, which reached as far as India. The beautifully illustrated stories about the island of Venice, the natives of India, and the various fabulous animals, such as the unicorn, boar elephant, and water horse, enjoyed a special love of the readers.

The manuscript that Mother Afanasiya gave me as a farewell gift could be easily dated to the beginning of the 19th century by the blue paper, but the handwriting and numerous illustrations showed that its creator had very carefully copied the 16th century manuscript. Owing to the abundance and quality of the drawings, this book became, perhaps, our most striking find from the Uba River.

(Adapted from *Travels in Search of Rare Books* by N. N. Pokrovsky, Ch. 9)



“Unicorn” and “water horse”, Adam and Eve, and the story of building the Tower of Babel. *Christian Topography* by Cosmas Indicopleustes. Manuscript of the early 19th century. Found in a skete on the Uba River in Rudny Altai. Collection of early printed books and manuscripts of the Institute of History SB RAS

On this page from the Tomsk manuscript of the Book of Degrees (1560s), you can see the corrections made by Metropolitan Afanasy, who added a story about the romantic acquaintance of the future Grand Prince Vasily the First with the Lithuanian princess Sophia Vitovtovna. Tomsk Museum of Local History



DEGREES OF ROYALTY

In 1977, while working at the storage room of the Tomsk Museum of Local History, Nikolai Pokrovsky discovered what soon became known as the oldest handwritten copy of the *Book of Royal Degrees*, a literary monument created during the reign of Ivan the Terrible and representing the first attempt at a summarized narration of Russian history. The watermarks on the paper indicated the possibility of dating the manuscript to 1550–1560; the last events described in the book dated back to 1560–1563.

The Tomsk copy turned out to be contemporaneous with the previously known Chudov copy. In 2001, A. V. Sirenov, a researcher from St. Petersburg, added another copy attributed to that time, i. e., the Volkov copy. A comparison of the three manuscripts revealed matches in handwriting, paper, and corrections made in the margins. It looked as if all the three manuscripts were simultaneously lying on a table in the scriptorium of the Kremlin’s Chudov Monastery.

A unique textological situation arose, which called for a new look at the history of creating the famous literary monument.

Three more copies (dating to the late 16th – early 17th centuries) were added to the existing three ones, and a group of researchers, led by Pokrovsky, began to study and compare the copies.

Specialists from St. Petersburg State University, the State Historical Museum, and the Institute of History, Siberian Branch, Russian Academy of Sciences, took painstaking efforts to examine all the notes, corrections, and differences between the copies, which are so important for recreating the author’s intent and understanding its further development.

The years 2007–2009 saw the publication of a complete three-volume edition of the text of the monument. This work gives researchers access to the very origins of creating the *Book of Royal Degrees*, which had a substantial influence on Russian historical studies in the Modern Age



URAL KERZHAKS

The release of Elder Ephraim has been the subject of particular care for Rodion Nabatov, who pays special attention to organizing a network of hideouts where Ephraim could conceal after his escape. He sends hundreds of rubles to different places in Western Siberia and the Urals. The preparation takes about three months. Finally, everything is ready. Replacement horses are waiting for Ephraim on several possible routes. The first sleigh will be parked right under the walls of the Tobolsk Kremlin. The riskiest part remains, which is to prepare everything inside these walls. Here Rodion must see everything with his own eyes and consider everything himself. He sneaks into the Kremlin, inside the prison, where he tells Ephraim all the details and the date of his escape.

On December 19 at 11 o'clock at night, Elder Ephraim is led through the prison yard back to his cell. "For some reason" he is not wearing his leg shackles, only the hand ones, and is escorted by a single guard only. They stop at the Kremlin wall, next to a narrow loophole, which is usually boarded up with shutters. But now they are gone. Later, the guard, who will be brought under most brutal tortures, will claim that he knew nothing about the escape. He only turned away "to pass water" and suddenly noticed that Ephraim disappeared. The sixty-year-old elder in hand shackles threw himself through the loophole, rolled down a 50-meter snow-covered hill on which the Tobolsk Kremlin stood, and got into a sleigh that was waiting for him below. No matter how hard the military detachments sent out into all directions were trying to find the elder, they were unable to do so.

(Adapted from *Travels in Search of Rare Books* by N. N. Pokrovsky, Ch. 3)

Nikolai Pokrovsky and Alexander Solzhenitsyn. Dom Uchyonykh ('House of Scientists'), Novosibirsk. 1994

For example, Rodion Nabatov turned out to be not just a clerk but an ore finder. His name is associated with the discovery of silver ores in Altai and the construction of ore smelters in the Urals and Altai. He was also a secret Old Believer and carried out several brilliant operations to rescue Old Believer leaders, in particular, the famous Elder Ephraim. Nabatov himself was eventually arrested. According to some sources, he ended his days in captivity; according to other sources, he was handed over to his first master in the Trinity Lavra of St. Sergius.

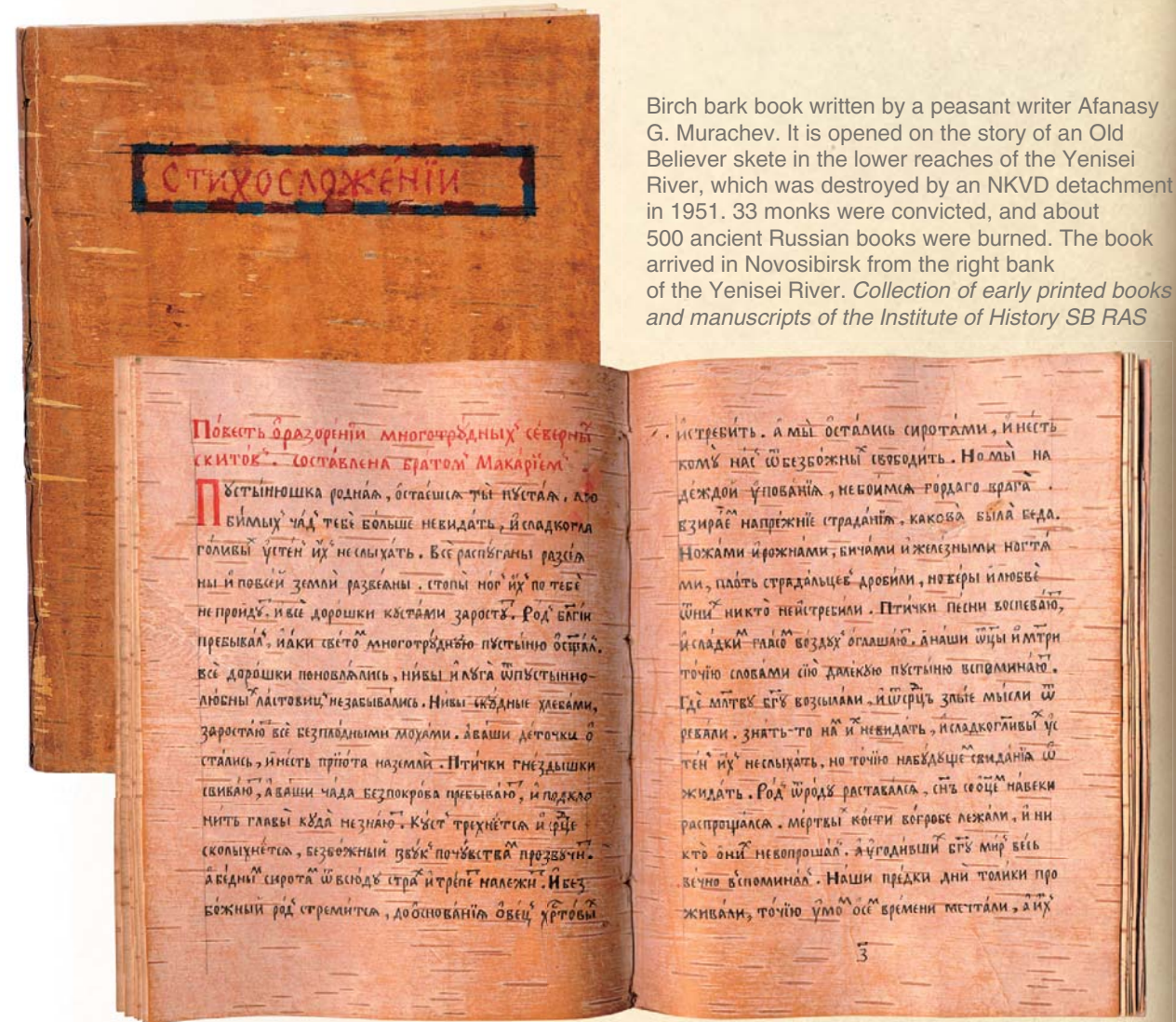
This is one of the examples, of which there were many. One mention in a book leads to a long painstaking search through archives and libraries in order to reveal the fates of previously unknown people.

Written on birch bark

Talented Old Believer writers existed not only in the 18th century. In 1988, I had a chance to meet with Afanasy G. Murachev, the author of several polemical works, including on the destruction of the modern civilization of high science. He actively participated in the creation of the three-volume *Genealogy* of the Ural-Siberian Old-Believer Accord and wrote a vivid autobiography.

Many of the writer's works focus on one of the most tragic episodes in his life – the destruction of the main skete of the Old Believers on the Lower Yenisei in 1951 by the NKVD punitive detachment, followed by the arrest and death of the hermits and the burning of a unique collection of more than five hundred ancient Russian books. This story was described quite accurately by Alexander Solzhenitsyn in *The Gulag Archipelago*. Moreover, there are several testimonies left by the victims themselves. But the most detailed and touching account of those events emerged from Murachev's pen.

Once archaeographers learned that Afanasy Murachev knew the ancient technique of preparing birch bark for writing with ink, they asked him to write down on it a text about those turbulent events. Historical sources from the 17th century onwards contain several references to the use of birch bark in Siberia due to the shortage and high cost of paper. Moreover, Siberians wrote on it not only



Birch bark book written by a peasant writer Afanasy G. Murachev. It is opened on the story of an Old Believer skete in the lower reaches of the Yenisei River, which was destroyed by an NKVD detachment in 1951. 33 monks were convicted, and about 500 ancient Russian books were burned. The book arrived in Novosibirsk from the right bank of the Yenisei River. Collection of early printed books and manuscripts of the Institute of History SB RAS

business notes and prayers, as was the case in Veliky Novgorod, but also the extensive texts of Siberian chronicles. Unfortunately, the birch bark books have not reached us; only recently, we learned about short texts written on birch bark in the 20th century in a Tomsk skete.

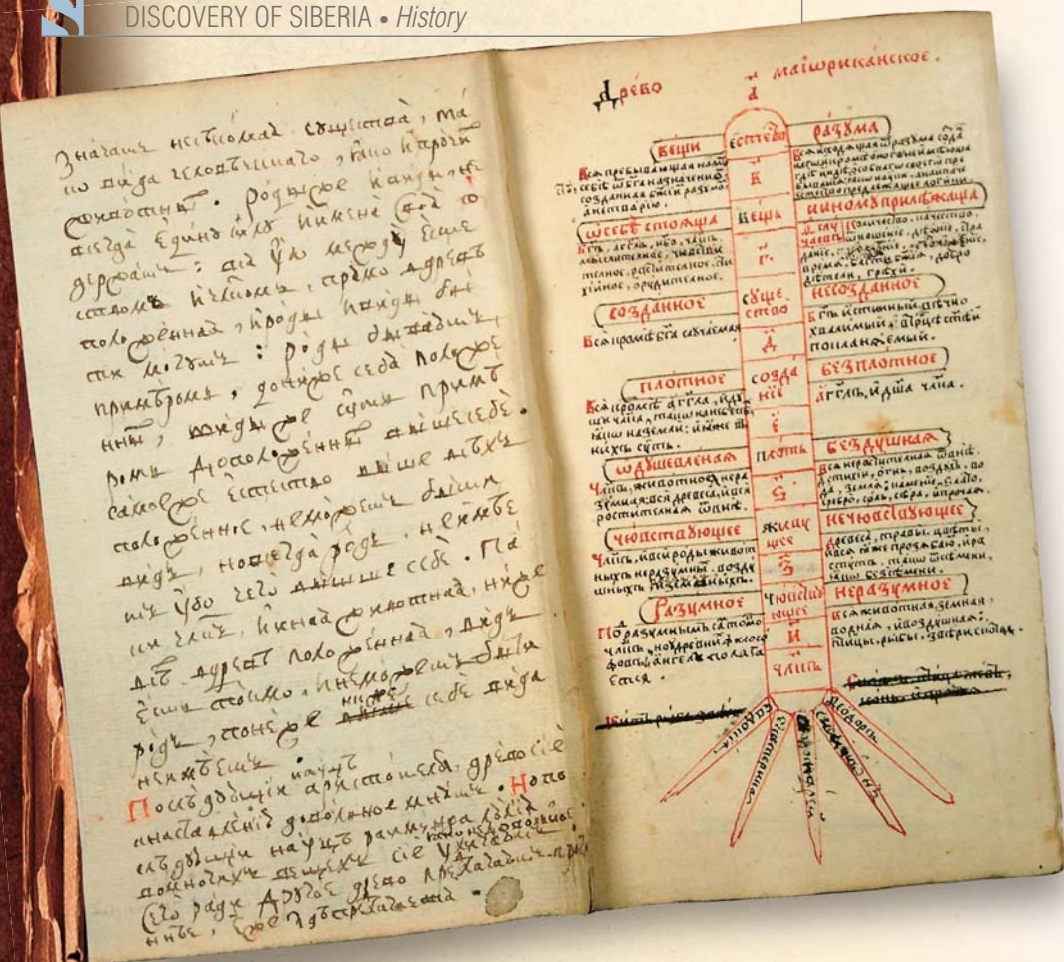
So, at the end of 1991, a book arrived in Akademgorodok from the Yenisei taiga. The book consisted of 18 sheets of finely crafted birch bark. In addition to four poetry stories about the events of 1951 written by Afanasy himself and the monks Vitaly and Makary, it contained several more texts, including spiritual moral verses, poetry messages to nuns, and an acrostic about the importance of reading books.

Taiga Xerox

During the Soviet era, the powers destroyed a colossal number of cultural monuments, including ancient books. For many years, we had been literally trotting on the ashes of burned book collections. Now we have a new source of trouble, i.e., private book dealers. True, there remains hope that someday what they have purchased will somehow reappear, perhaps, not in the well-known state collections (where the prices are prohibitive for our libraries) but in private ones belonging to true lovers and connoisseurs of ancient Russian books.

Most of the books that our sector acquires today are the result of old connections, maintained over the years. But times are changing, and so is field archaeography. For example, the inhabitants of what was once a highly secluded Yeniseian skete learned they had relatives in the USA and Canada. No wonder, during the years of persecution, the Old Believers spread all over the Old and New Worlds.

The skete inhabitants established contact with their relatives and started a correspondence. Fellow believers from overseas became frequent guests at the skete. A helicopter began to land on the forest meadow; a power generator appeared at the skete, then a Xerox



Andrei Denisov, one of the founders of the 18th-century Old Believer movement, a talented writer, preacher, and theologian, shortened and inventively reworked the *Tree of Science* by Ramon Llull to create a practical guide on the art of oratory. Some of his followers supplemented copies of the *Tree of Science* with incantational texts. The photo shows a spread of Llull's *Tree of Science* in an edition by Denisov (a draft autograph). Russian National Library (St. Petersburg)

Sometimes expeditions delivered icons they found lying around in *raikom's* ('district committee') sheds or in the attics of the Old Believers' godless descendants. On the left is the Savior (in a metal frame and icon case, 19th century); on the right is the Lord Almighty (in a metal frame, 19th century); in the foreground is Saint Nicholas (a three-wing triptych, copper casting, 19th century). Collection of early printed books and manuscripts of the Institute of History SB RAS



MAGIC BOOKS

In one of Kerzhak settlements, which had been famous for its sorcerers since time immemorial, I heard that about thirty years before, they had had a handwritten copy of a book once well-known in Russia – *Ars Magna*, or *Tree of Science*, by the 13th-century Aragonese philosopher Ramon Llull. A former poet, who became a stern ascetic and preacher, tried to create a "tree of science," i. e., a single system that would explain logically all the dogmas of Christian ideology and the truths of positive sciences. Llull's numerous students and followers, who were rewriting their teacher's works, added a lot of details, especially in the field of astrology and magic; thus, Llull became posthumously a major authority precisely in that area, which was in many respects alien to him.

My search for Llull's book during expeditions yielded no results, but I found a great deal of evidence to convince me that magical texts, or incantations, were an important component of peasant book culture in Siberia. Despite strict prohibitions on everything associated with magic or sorcery, even the sternest elders quoted from memory some pieces from these books. For a long time, I had been searching for "volkhit books" (i. e., magic books) in archives and asking Old Believers living in remote forest and mountain settlements about these books, and in the end, I had a stroke of luck. The Central State Archive of Ancient Acts in Moscow had preserved the file of the case of a physician's apprentice Molodavkin. It was a small file: about fifty sheets written in the standard 18th-century clerical cursive and a small envelope with an open wax seal. The latter contained what I was looking for – a genuine *volkhit* book.

Ivan Molodavkin, an apprentice of the Izmailov Regiment's physician, borrowed the book from the peasant Matvei Ovchinnikov to rewrite the spell "so that women and girls would love him." The *volkhit* book contained a whole set of texts of love spells, ranging from those relatively neutral with respect to the church teachings to formulas of direct renunciation of Christ and transition under the dominion of Satan. Filled with vivid images and poetic comparisons, they made a strong impression on the reader.

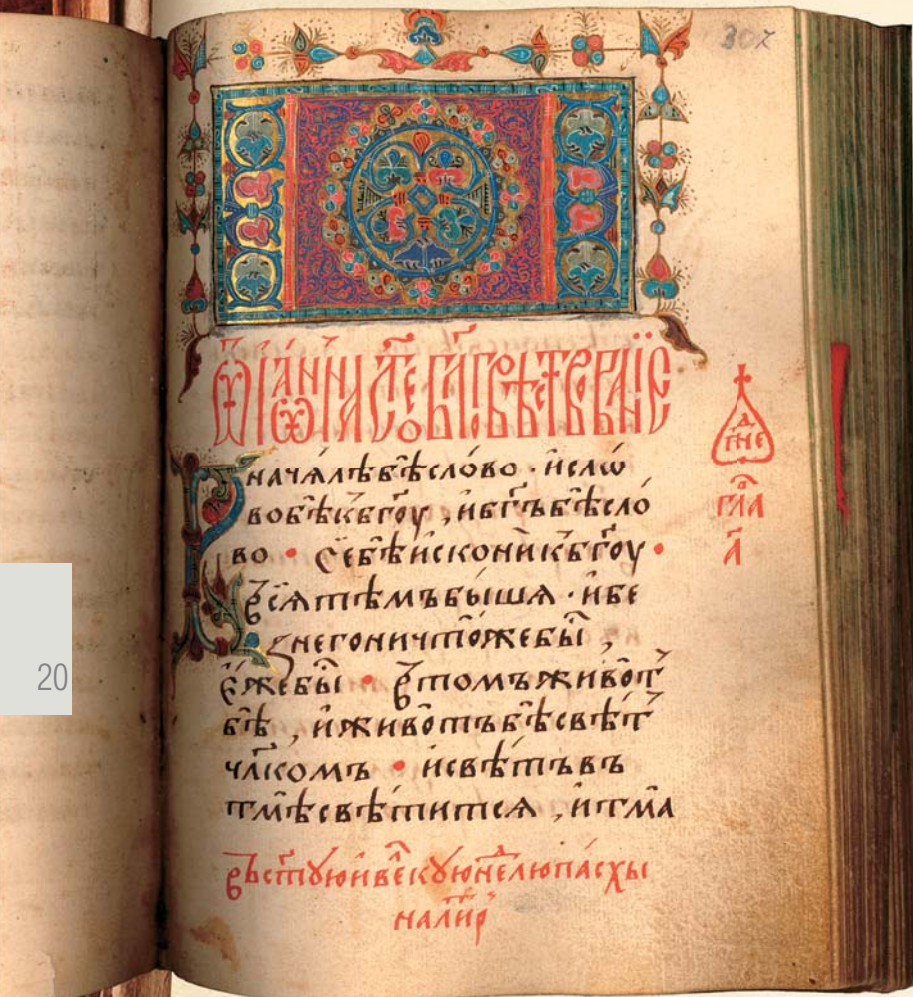
(Adapted from *Travels in Search of Rare Books* by N. N. Pokrovsky, Ch. 6)



Volkhit ('magic') book of a physician's apprentice Molodavkin. Russian State Archive of Ancient Acts, Moscow

photocopier... And now we can obtain some of the works, sometimes unique ones, in a very simple way – the Old Believers send us either a ready photocopy or the book itself with the obligation to return it after making a dozen copies. Thus, we acquired the Old Believer book polemics of the 21st century.

Let us recall that the Old Believer literary tradition began, among other things, with disputes about how to hold the fingers for the sign of the cross and blessing. Now in the New World, these disputes have reached such subtleties that Archpriest Avvakum himself would have never imagined. Just like in ancient times, representatives of different camps send each other accusatory messages, richly quoting Byzantine and Old Russian literature. We are now beginning to publish some of these highly fascinating texts.



The collection of early printed books and manuscripts of the Institute of History, Siberian Branch, Russian Academy of Sciences, amounts to about 2000 items. These include many famous monuments of Old Russian literature in handwritten copies dating to the 16th-20th centuries. These are texts of hagiographic, historical, and other genres (including the so-called “natural-scientific” texts), which have been traditionally valued by book connoisseurs of the Russian Middle Ages. The collection has a good representation of books created by Old Believers. Traditionally, these collected volumes included samples of patristical literature, interpretations of the Apocalypse, excerpts from hermits’ works, etc.

A substantial part of the collection has been introduced into scholarly discourse. The year 2011 saw the publication of *Description of Manuscripts from the Collection of the Institute of History, Siberian Branch, Russian Academy of Sciences*; the electronic version of the book can be found on the institute’s website. Texts from the collection are also published in the series *Archaeography and Source Studies of Siberia* and *History of Siberia. Primary Sources*

Three volumes written by the Makarovs, peasants from the Trans-Ural region. A collection of Byzantine and Old Russian texts and works of the Pomor and Ural–Siberian Old Believers. Delivered from the Tyumen region

Handwritten Gospel of the 1530s, one of the priceless monuments of the Ancient Russian book culture. The text of each of the four Gospels is preceded by colorful headpieces, often representing a neo-Byzantine ornament on leaf gold. The book belonged to Mother Izmaragda, an Altai peasant woman who lived in a skete in the upper reaches of the Yenisei River

Collection of early printed books and manuscripts of the Institute of History SB RAS

Why am I so interested in the Old Believers? Because these people painstakingly, often at the risk of their lives, preserved ancient manuscripts beginning from the mid-17th century, when the government banned many church books published before Nikon’s reform. A considerable part of the collections of Old Russian books in the libraries and repositories of both Moscow and St. Petersburg and the famous collections of Russian icons in the Tretyakov Gallery and the Russian Museum – all of these formerly belonged to the Old Believers.

They not only preserved but also continued the Christian literary tradition. The works they created reveal traits of people’s religious consciousness, which is rooted in the same Orthodox faith yet has its own distinctive features, like the people’s monarchism, frequently spoken of today.

We began working on these subjects earlier than many other researchers. This was possible because of the relative ideological freedom of the Novosibirsk Akademgorodok, protected Academician Lavrentiev, who was then the head of the Siberian Branch of the Academy of Sciences, and to whom personally I turned for help more than once. There were denunciations about me with demands of my dismissal from the university, but Academician Lavrentiev always defended me.

His efforts, as well as the support of our colleagues from Moscow and Leningrad, in particular Academicians D. S. Likhachev and S. O. Schmidt, allowed our archaeographic center to continue working. We carried out expeditions, published literary monuments, and conducted research. Fewer and fewer blank spots remained on the Old Believer map in Siberia...

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Nikolai Pokrovsky on holiday in Rostov-on-Don (on the right is a statue of a seller of *sbiten*, a famous ancient Russian drink). 2008

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