

**Vasyl DEBENKO**

**THE PECULIARITIES OF FORMATION AND  
POWER PREROGATIVES OF THE  
REPUBLICAN AUTHORITIES OF THE NOVGOROD  
LAND IN THE XII – THE FIRST HALF OF THE XIII ст.**

*In the article the author examines a range of issues related to the peculiarities of formation, establishing and ways of developing of the prerogatives of the republican authorities in Novgorod, both secular and church. The research attention is largely paid to the formation of the institution of posadnik, the functional duties of tysyatskies, as well as the role of the archbishop in the political life of the „Republic of Saint Sophia” during the XII – the first half of the XIII century. The analysis of the problem is based on the testimonies contained in the „Novgorod First Chronicle” and a number of tangible written sources.*

**Keywords:** *medieval Novgorod, Novgorod land, „Republic of Saint Sophia”, Novgorod posadnik, institute of tysyatskies, Novgorod archbishops, Novgorod veche.*

**Василь ДЕБЕНКО**

**ОСОБЛИВОСТІ УТВОРЕННЯ Й ВЛАДНІ  
ПРЕРОГАТИВИ ОРГАНІВ РЕСПУБЛІКАНСЬКОГО  
УПРАВЛІННЯ НОВГОРОДСЬКОЮ  
ЗЕМЛЕЮ У XII – ПЕРШІЙ ПОЛОВИНІ XIII ст.**

*У статті автор розглядає коло питань, пов'язаних з особливостями формування, становлення та шляхами розвитку владних прерогатив органів республіканського управління в Новгороді, – як світських, так і церковних. Дослідницька увага значною мірою приділяється утворенню інституту посадника, функціональним обов'язкам тисяцьких, а також ролі архієпископа у політичному житті „Республіки Святої Софії” протягом XII – першої половини XIII ст. Аналіз проблематики ґрунтується на свідченнях, що містяться у „Першому Новгородському літописі” й низці дотичних писемних джерел.*

**Ключові слова:** *середньовічний Новгород, Новгородська земля, „Республіка Святої Софії”, новгородський посадник, інститут тисяцьких, Новгородські архієпископи, новгородське віче.*

**Василий ДЕБЕНКО**

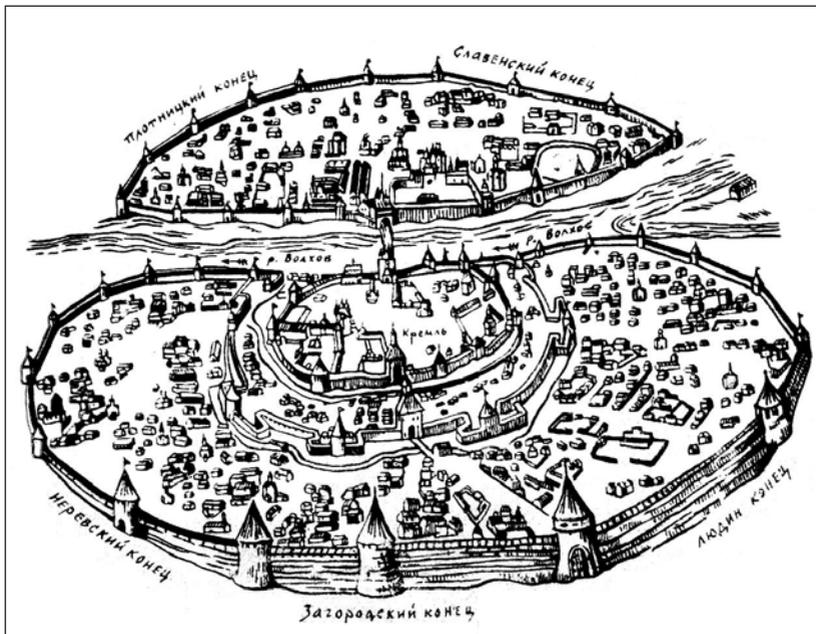
**ОСОБЕННОСТИ ВОЗНИКНОВЕНИЯ И ВЛАСТНЫЕ  
ПРЕРОГАТИВЫ ОРГАНОВ РЕСПУБЛИКАНСКОГО  
УПРАВЛЕНИЯ НОВГОРОДСКОЙ ЗЕМЛЕЙ В XII –  
ПЕРВОЙ ПОЛОВИНЕ XIII ВВ.**

*В статье автор рассматривает круг вопросов, связанных с особенностями формирования, становления и путями развития властных прерогатив органов республиканского управления в Новгороде, – как светских, так и церковных. Исследовательское внимание в значительной мере уделяется созданию института посадника, функциональным обязанностям тысяцких, а так же роли архиепископа в политической жизни „Республики Святой Софии” на протяжении XII – первой половины XIII вв. Анализ проблематики основывается на свидетельствах, которые содержатся в „Первой Новгородской летописи” и ряде близких по тематике письменных источников.*

**Ключевые слова:** *средневековый Новгород, Новгородская земля, „Республика Святой Софии”, новгородский посадник, институт тысяцких, Новгородские архиепископы, новгородское вече.*

A significant amount of information relating to the process of emergence, formation and establishing of higher executive bodies in Novgorod is known to be contained in the Novgorod First Chronicle [3]. It is in this written source that the functional responsibilities and legal status of representatives of that state power on the territory of the Novgorod land-posadnik, tysyatsky and archbishop are reflected [3, p. 311-354]. It should also be noted that in the middle of the XII century the power prerogatives of the Church began to dominate in the „Republic of Saint Sophia”.

The formation of the republican government bodies dates back to the time of the reign of Mstislav Vladimirovich (1095-1117). In this period, alongside with the Prince body, there appears a boyars' body – the посадник body that initially had only a symbolic character in terms of institutional priorities [15, p. 50]. However, as early as the XII century, the посадник begins to play certain, gradually increasing role in state governance; in the end he begins to confront the prince [16, p. 32-33]. After the uprising of 1136, the посадник body is transformed into the main body of Novgorod boyar statehood. The final formation of the republican governing bodies takes place over a sufficiently



**Fig. 1.** Novgorod „districts” (areas of the city).  
Map-chart of the beginning of the XV century

long period of time after the uprising [11, p. 108]. The functions of the *posadnik* in the XII century can be judged, as it is emphasized above, on the basis of the annals [4, 5], although the information itself, unfortunately, is limited. The chronicler paid more attention to the internal struggle that was taking place for the position of the *posadnik* in Novgorod (fig. 1; 2; 3). It is also necessary to state that during the entire period of the Novgorod independence, the *posadnik* body exercised its power along with the princely throne. The relevant letters in a number of cases capture even the facts when the *posadniks* exercised control over the activities of the prince, or severely restricted his power [1, 6]. Consequently, the evidence of the sources results in a clear conclusion: the power of the *posadniks* in the second half of the XII – early XIII century exceeded the prince’s one.

Often, by the decision of the *veche*, the *posadnik* headed the embassy to the prince, whom the Novgorodians invited to reign in their land. Sometimes the *posadnik* was forced to invite one or another

prince, even if the posadnik himself remained his opponent [11, p. 109]. In 1215, the posadnik Yuri Ivankovich, an active supporter of Mstislav the Fortunate and an enemy of Suzdal princes, was at the head of the embassy to Yaroslav Vsevolodovich. However, the posadnik, like the prince, could chair the veche and lead it. Most of the treaties of Novgorod with the princes, which were concluded by the decision of the veche, were written on behalf of the posadnik, tysyatsky and archbishop [16, p. 102-104]. In the sources of the era, there are rules that state the duty of the prince to „kiss the cross of Novgorod, as his



**Fig. 2.** Nerevsky district of excavation.  
Bridge Holopye street

fathers and grandfathers kissed”. A typical example of such a rule is a famous ten-year treaty of Novgorod with the Germans and Gotland (1189-1199) [11, p. 109].

The posadnik in many cases played the role of mediator between Novgorod and the prince. When the prince came into conflict with Novgorod, the negotiations began. Novgorod sent to the prince an embassy, which, as a rule, was headed by the posadnik. In 1195, at

the head of the Novgorod embassy to the Grand Prince Vsevolod III there was the *posadnik* Miroshka Nezdinich. In 1216, during a severe famine, the *posadnik* Yuriy Ivankovich headed the embassy of Novgorod to Prince Yaroslav Vsevolodovich for the second time [16, p. 121]. During the military campaigns, *posadnik* repeatedly led the army together with the prince. The prince commanded his *druzhina* (prince's armed force), and the *posadnik* – Novgorod regiments. For example, the *posadnik* Tverdislav participated in the campaign of Mstislav the Fortunate against Vsevolod Chermny [1, p. 87-88]. Sometimes *posadnik* alone led the campaign; most often there were cases when the prince was young [14, p. 65].

Under the jurisdiction of *posadnik* there were the main issues of internal governing. As a head of the government, he, together with the prince, could appoint and dismiss officials. The Supreme Court of the



**Fig. 3.** Crossroads of the Great  
(Central and Kholopye streets)

Novgorod Republic, which existed in intervals between veches, was under joint leadership of prince and posadnik. There was no definite, clearly defined term for which posadniks were elected in the XII – early XIII centuries. Posadnik could occupy his post for many years, as, for example, Miroshka Nezdinich (1189-1204), Stepan Tverdislavich (1230-1243) or Mikhail Fedorovich (1257-1268) [1, p. 318-319].

Of course, the posadnik term of office could be also short: Yuri Ivankovich was a posadnik only a little more than a year (1215-1216) [1, p. 59]. Quite often, one and the same posadnik could be elected several times; obviously, there were no restrictions on this at the level of legislative regulation. In the chronicles, for example, it is mentioned that Michalko Stepanovich and Tverdislav Mikhalkovich were elected four times, Zavid Nervinich – three times [1, p. 260; 6, p. 89].

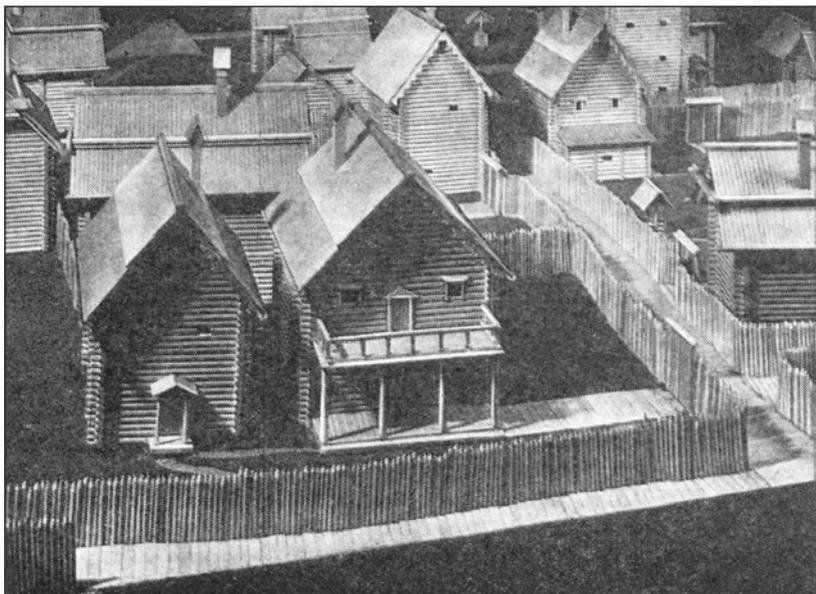
In the middle of the XIII century there were changes in the organization of the republican power in Novgorod (*fig. 4; 5*). Alongside with the posadnik position, a representative council is formed. In June 1268, notifying the arrival of Yaroslav Yaroslavich to Novgorod, the chronicler calls the names of three boyars, whom the Grand Prince accuses of ill-considered actions, which led to defeat in the war with the Germans, and wants to „deprive them of volost (district)” [1, p. 486-487]. Most likely, these boyars formed a council at the posadnik, as they shared power with him and played a role in the military policy of Novgorod.

As it is noted by N.Podvigina, a well-known researcher of the history of the medieval Novgorod lands, in addition to them, the council had to include the posadnik Mikhail Fedorovich, who perished in the Battle of Rokovor, and the newly elected posadnik Pavlo Onaninich [11, p. 110]. Mikhail Fedorovich was associated with the Slavensky end (one of the five districts of the medieval Novgorod), Pavsha Onaninich – with Plotnitsky, and Mikhail Mishanich, who also became a posadnik later, with the Nerevsky end [1, p. 320]. This testifies that the council at the posadnik was a territorially representative body. And V. Yanin, the most authoritative expert in the history of Novgorod in our time shares this opinion [16, p. 154-156].

Completing the characteristic of the authority of the medieval Novgorod posadniks, it should be noted: representation in the council at the posadnik was for life, therefore, for many years the same people

associated with the boyars of various city „ends” came to power in Novgorod. New names usually appeared only after the death of predecessors. In addition, it should be emphasized that, according to the sources, the representatives of two Novgorod districts – the Zagorodsky end and the Liudin end were most rarely in the council.

Along with *posadnik*, the chronicler often mentions *tysyatsky*. Appeared at the end of the XII century, this republican power institute has not yet taken shape and in the first half of the XIII century in the Novgorod sources and acts *tysyatsky* appears much less than in the



**Fig. 4.** The mansion of the rich inhabitant from Novgorod.

The house of the middle of the XII century. (reconstruction of P. Zasuksev)

future. According to the researchers [8, p. 59; 9, p. 12; 10, p. 100], the emergence of the institute of *tysyatskies* is likely to be linked, first of all, with the struggle within the ruling elite of the Republic of Saint Sophia, and not with the rivalry of the boyar factions. However, later, the representatives of the Novgorod boyars were involved in this political struggle, which acquired destructive forms and consequences.

The scholar N. Podvigina focuses on the struggle of the „older” boyars against non-boyar feudal estate, or, as they were sometimes

called, „smaller” boyars who did not have political power and tried to win it. The introduction of the designated election position also testified to the further development of the republican institutes of the Novgorod feudal state, which largely ended in the middle of the XII century [11, p. 111].

Initially, the tsysyatsky „rank” was to some extent opposed to the posadnik position. If the posadnik exercised the republican control over the prince and the boyars, then the tsysyatsky controlled the rest of the layers of free population: merchants, artisans and landowners who did not belong to the boyars. Depending on how strong was the boyar grouping which could make his candidate the posadnik the supporter or opponent of the posadnik became tsysyatsky.

When the opposition circles were weak or in the minority, posadnik and tsysyatsky were elected from the same political group. An example is the well-known (according to the sources) „tandem” – the posadnik Tverdislav and tsysyatsky Yakun [5, p. 206-207]. If, however, the opposition had a sufficiently large force which had to be taken into consideration, tsysyatsky was elected from among the opposition. In particular, in such a situation, Miroshka became the posadnik and the first tsysyatsky Mironég was elected in opposition to the posadnik in order to restrict his power. The situation was aggravated when the powerful prince or appointee of a strong prince appeared on the Novgorod throne; then the posadnik and the tsysyatsky, regardless of which political groups they stood for, were forced to act together in order to prevent the strengthening of the prince’s power [15, p. 52-53].

At first, the republican tsysyatsky existed in parallel with the princely one. In 1218, in the chronicles, there is a message that Prince Sviatoslav sent his tsysyatsky to the veche [1, p. 260]. The researcher V. Yanin links the introduction of the elective office of tsysyatsky with a new organization of the local government in Novgorod, which was subordinated not to the prince, but directly to the veche [16, p. 156-157]. Consequently, there was the formation of a new, not the capture of the previous, already existing system of governing. As a result, the taxation system of Novgorod was directly under Republican control, since the sotnia organization, like any administrative system, was primarily fiscal in nature. The activities of the tsysyatsky in the first decades of the XIII century can be judged on the basis of comparison

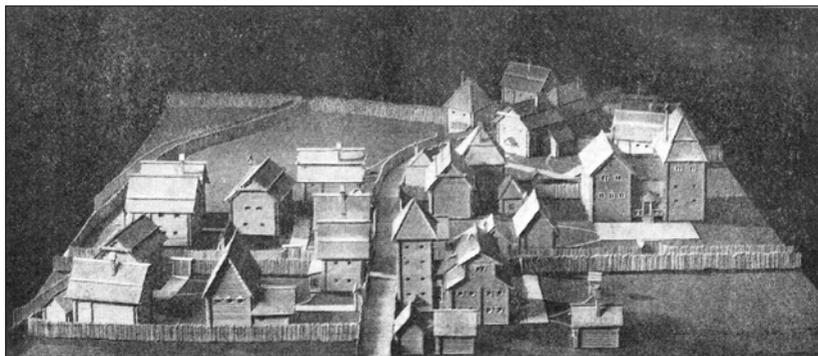
of the chronicle data with the Church Statute of Vsevolod and the Manuscript of Vsevolod Mstislavovich. The Prince Statute refers to the participation of the tsysyatsky in a trade court alongside with the bishop and the Ivansky starosta. In this episode tsysyatsky performs as a representative of „all Novgorod”, under which the chronicler implies the organization of the commanders of sotnia. In its turn, in the Manuscript, the tsysyatsky is directly called a representative of „zhyti and black people (people of non-boyar origin) in a trade court” [6, p. 22-24]. In the specified context, there are grounds to claim that he has become one of its central figures.

The tsysyatsky also dealt with the mixed affairs of Novgorod with foreigners. Neither prince, nor boyars, nor posadnik had the right to interfere with the tsysyatsky’s court. The Statute of Vsevolod emphasizes the independence of the trade court from the boyars’ management. On the other hand, it is appropriate to draw attention to the fact that from the end of the XII century and till the early 20s of the XIV centuries the tsysyatskies were elected from the non-boyar environment. According to the chronicles [4, p. 131], none of them, at least during the first half of the XIII century, did not become a posadnik and even did not have family ties with the posadnik families. Typically, posadnik was a feudal-non-aristocrat who owned not less, and sometimes even larger lands, than the boyar. The Novgorod chronicles repeatedly report about the burning down of villages and homesteads in the course of popular uprisings belonging to the tsysyatskies [4, p. 134: 5, p. 83].

For example, in 1229 the homesteads of the tsysyatsky Vyacheslav and his brother Boguslav were robbed. Thus, in the history of the „Republic of Saint Sophia”, the position of tsysyatskies, as well as the posadnik institute itself, became their unlimited power privilege. In addition, in the „republican” period of the medieval history of Novgorod, the boyars totally controlled the state tax system, and the court of the tsysyatsky, which was independent from the boyar families before [6, p. 24]. However, taking into account a lot of grounds, a special place in the political life of Novgorod belonged to the bishop or archbishop. According to the sources [1, p. 273; 5, p. 208], the first Novgorod Archbishop Iliya had a cathedra for 21 years. In 1186 he died. The two following archbishops: Gavriil, Iliya’s brother, and his successor, Martyrius, were also archbishops until their death; but

the Archbishop Mitrofan, who replaced Martyrius at the cathedra, was expelled by the townspeople and exiled to the town of Toropets [18, p. 126]. The next Archbishop of Novgorod – Anthony – was introduced to the cathedra by veche three times: in 1210, 1225 and 1228. His first bishop office lasted eight years, the second – three years, and the third – less than one year.

When in the spring of 1219 Anthony went to Torzhok, the Novgorod residents elected a new archbishop „in absentia”, showing a sharp „dislike” to Anthony [14, p. 113]. However, as it can be seen from the chronicle descriptions [5, p. 210-211], the latter did not renounce his claims to the archbishopric cathedra. In this ambiguous situation the veche ordered to send both archbishops to the Metropolitan, who had to decide – which of them is legitimate. The mentioned case



**Fig. 5.** Central part of the Nerevsky end of Novgorod in the middle of the XII century. Southern view (reconstruction of P. Zasurtsev)

testifies that at the beginning of the XIII century the struggle for power lasted not only in secular circles; strident strife and controversy were also going on in the church environment. In the first decades of the XIII century the struggle for the archbishop’s cathedra increased considerably. In particular, the next archbishop Arseniy was thrown down by the „ordinary people”, who accused him of occupying the cathedra illegally [1, p. 250].

At the same time, it must be emphasized that the exile of the Novgorod archbishops remained rather uncommon in general. In most cases, the archbishops headed the capital cathedra until their death. The Archishop almost never intervened in the feudal struggle;

the chronicler, at least, does not report such facts. Most often, the archbishop acted as a peacekeeper and mediator between the prince and the *posadnik*. The events of 1219 can be an example, associated with the collision of Prince Vsevolod Mstislavich with the *posadnik* Tverdislav [1, p. 262]. The Novgorod First Chronicle also describes another interesting fact – when the archbishop became a peacekeeper of the popular rebellion. During the uprising in 1207 the Novgorod residents wanted to throw murdered *posadnik* Dmitry Miroshekinich off the bridge into the river Volkhov, but the Archbishop Mitrofan prevented this. His next step was to curb the uncontrolled crowd of burghers [1, p. 222].

In addition to the church power, the archbishop had a fairly large secular power. Along with Ivansky merchant corporation and the city organization in the person of the *sotnya* commanders, he exercised control over the standards of measure and weight. The sources clearly state: the archbishop was one of three electoral officials who ruled the Novgorod republic [4, p. 217]. In the treaties of Novgorod with the princes, the name of the archbishop stands in the first place, in front of the names of the *posadnik* and the *tysyatsky* [6, p. 75]. From the end of the XII and for almost all XIII century the archbishop's participation in public and political affairs was stipulated by his considerable authority as the head of the Church. In 1172, for example, Archbishop Iliya visited Volodymyr, met with Prince Andrey Bogolyubsky and concluded with him the treaty „for the whole truth” [1, p. 266]. The sources also fixed a number of cases where the archbishop, along with the *posadnik*, was part of the embassy, which was sent to the prince to invite the latter to the Novgorod throne. In 1221 the above Novgorod First Chronicle notes the arrival of Archbishop Mitrofan and the *posadnik* Ivanko with the Novgorod elders to Prince Vsevolod, to negotiate [1, p. 268].

From the end of the XIII century the names of archbishops are mentioned in the peace treaties and trade agreements of Novgorod with the West. Of course, such treaties were concluded in previous times, and probably, with the blessing of the archbishop. The analysis of the written sources suggests: international treaties of Novgorod were signed in some cases with the direct participation of the archbishops. The direct evidence is their seals, found by the archaeologists in

the 60-s and 70-s of the XX century [11, p. 114]. The researchers attribute them to the end of the XII – the beginning of the XIII century. Now there are the following seals of that era: Iliya's (1 Bishop and 1 Archbishop), Martyrius's (3 identical copies) and Anthony's (1 copy). Such seals in most cases sealed different types of letters [17, p. 55-57].

Among other sphragistic artifacts, 6 seals of the archbishop in the middle of the XIIIh century are known; they belonged to the archbishop Dalmat. Two of them, along with the prince's and the seal of „all Novgorod”, sealed the treaty of 1262-1263 with the Gothic coast, Lubeck and four other German (Hanseatic) cities about peace and trade. As V.Yanin notes, since the time of the archbishop Dalmat, the archbishop's „bullae” are quite often found in the archaeological excavations. In his opinion, this indicates an increase in the archbishop's role in the system of republican governing [17, p. 57].

Thus, summarizing the factual evidence in the article, one can note the main trend that gained distinct features at the end of the XII and substantially increased during the first half of the XIII century. It was expressed in the gradual but steadily growing role, on the one hand, of the secular element of the Novgorod republican power (corresponding posts and prerogatives of the tysyatsky and posadnik), on the other hand – the element of the church (religious), the embodiment of which was the archbishop. It is his power functions in the middle of the XIII century that became dominant in the „Republic of Sophia”.

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