

Title: The Role of Feodosii's Mother in Zhitie prepodobnaago ot'tsa nashego Feodosiia, igumena Pecherskago

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Abstract:

According to V. N. Toporov, who has written the most extensive study of the topic, Zhitie prepodobnaago ot'tsa nashego Feodosiia, igumena Pecherskago (written ca. 1080 by Nestor) represents a new model of Slavic holiness and, likewise, a new model of Slavic hagiography. The novelty of Zhitie Feodosiia Pecherskago is most striking in contrast to Nestor's earlier hagiographic effort, Chetenie o zhitii i pogublenii blazhennykh strastoterptsev Borisa i Gleba (hereafter, Chetenie Borisa i Gleba). Here, the saints in question are martyrs, who imitate Christ through their passive non-resistance to their murders. Importantly for Toporov, the saintliness of Boris and Gleb is entirely bound up in their death; that is to say, were it not for the fratricidal efforts of Sviatopolk, their holiness would have remained latent. This, however, is far from the case with Feodosii, whose holiness is evident in his entire life and, Nestor indicates, was even perceptible (at least to the penetrating eye) from birth, providing the reason behind his name. Moreover, Feodosii does not imitate Christ's suffering and martyrdom, but rather seeks to imitate his holy path, flawless life, and founding of a sanctified community of faith. In this paper I will argue that, nonetheless, the story of the relationship between Feodosii and his mother, which makes up the first part of Feodosii's hagiography, is treated in terms similar to that of the descriptions of Boris and Gleb's martyrdom. As the narrative of a martyr can be read as a way to reinterpret the trauma of death or the trauma of a political event as an event of spiritual reintegration, I will argue that the story of Feodosii was meant to sanctify the Russian land, thus reinterpreting the "family" of Rus' as a spiritual "family" in imitation of Christ's disciples and integrated into holy history.