

The Baptism of Rus'

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The Origin of the State of Rus'

Towards the end of the 9th century (probably about 882),¹ a Scandinavian chieftain named Oleg took possession of the city of Kiev, which was situated on a hill above the river Dnieper, in present-day Ukraine. Kiev was then a flourishing trading city, inhabited by members of the Polyane tribe of East Slavs, and Oleg was one of the Swedish Vikings known as Varangians² who had for some time been exploring the Dnieper river system with a view to opening up trade with Constantinople, the capital of the Byzantine Empire. Indeed Oleg was not the first Varangian to make himself master of the city of Kiev; when he arrived there, it was already ruled by two Scandinavian adventurers named Askold and Dir. Oleg dislodged them by means of a stratagem of typically Viking cunning: he concealed his troops outside the city, and enticed Askold and Dir out of it by pretending to be a stranger travelling to "Greece" (i.e. the Byzantine Empire) who wished to talk to them. As soon as they came out he gave a signal to his soldiers, who overpowered and killed them.³

¹ Varangian traders, aware of the commercial potentialities of the Dnieper river system, often described as the "water road from the Varangians to the Greeks", had been active in that region for over a century before Oleg's capture of Kiev, and by the second half of the

¹In the oldest Russian chronicle, the *Povest' vremennykh let* (Tale of the Bygone Years), Oleg's capture of Kiev is entered under the years 880-882: see *Povest' vremennykh let*, ed. D. S. Likhachev and B. A. Romanova, p. 20 (henceforward cited as PVL); English translation *The Russian Primary Chronicle*, trans. S. H. Cross, revised by O. P. Sherbowitz-Wetzor (Cambridge, Mass., 1953), pp. 60-61 (henceforward cited as Cross). However, all the dates in the early part of the chronicle are inaccurate by a few years, as a result of a basic error in the use of a Byzantine source: Cross, Introduction, pp. 30-32.

²For the derivation of this name, see A. P. Vlasto, *The Entry of the Slavs into Christendom* (Cambridge University Press, 1970), p. 239, note a.

³PVL, p. 20; Cross, p. 61.

9th century they had begun to exercise political control as well. Some twenty years before Oleg came to Kiev, a Danish chieftain named Rorik or Rurik had established himself as a local ruler over the Slav and Finnic tribes living in the neighbourhood of Lake Ilmen and the trading city of Novgorod, at the northern end of the "water road". According to the *Russian Primary Chronicle* (RPC) — not at this time a very reliable historical guide — he came at the invitation of a group of tribal leaders who complained: "Our land is great and rich, but there is no order in it. Come to rule and reign over us."⁴ Whether or not this invitation was actually made, Rurik did come and rule over them. Oleg is described in the RPC as a kinsman of Rurik, and the chronicle also states that Rurik bequeathed his realm (*Knyazhen'ye*) to him before he died⁵ so that Oleg's attempt to capture Kiev can be regarded as part of a dynastic plan to extend Rurik's political influence. This is indicated by the fact that he brought with him a small boy named Igor', who is described as the son of Rurik,⁶ though he was more probably his grandson. Once Oleg had made himself master of Kiev he controlled the two most important cities of the water road, and thus his successful capture of the city was an important landmark in the development of political control in that area. Hence it is not surprising that historians have chosen to regard that event as marking the first stage in the emergence of the medieval state known as Rus', of which Oleg was the first ruler. When Oleg died in 913 he was succeeded by Igor'; and Igor' 's descendants ruled the "land of Rus' ", and later the principality of Muscovy, which became the kernel of the modern Russian state, until 1598.

It is difficult to define Rus' in the terminology of medieval political structure. It was not, technically, a kingdom, since it had no king. Until the early 12th century, the descendants of Rurik and Igor' ruled the "land of Rus' " collectively, with the most senior of them (that is, senior in the genealogical sense, not necessarily the oldest) being prince of Kiev; other members were assigned to other cities in such a way that the genealogical seniority of the prince corresponded to the importance of the city. When the prince of Kiev died they all moved up one rung of the political-genealogical ladder. This at least was the theory, laid down in the testamentary dispositions of Prince Yaroslav the Wise who died in 1054.⁷ However, as the princely clan soon became very numerous, this system proved difficult to operate, and by the late 11th century it had given rise to a state of chronic political instability described by the chroniclers as "strife among the princes".

⁴PVL, p. 18; Cross, p. 59.

⁵PVL, p. 19; Cross, p. 60.

⁶PVL, p. 20; Cross, p. 61; see also note 22, p. 234.

⁷PVL, 1054, p. 108; Cross, p. 142.

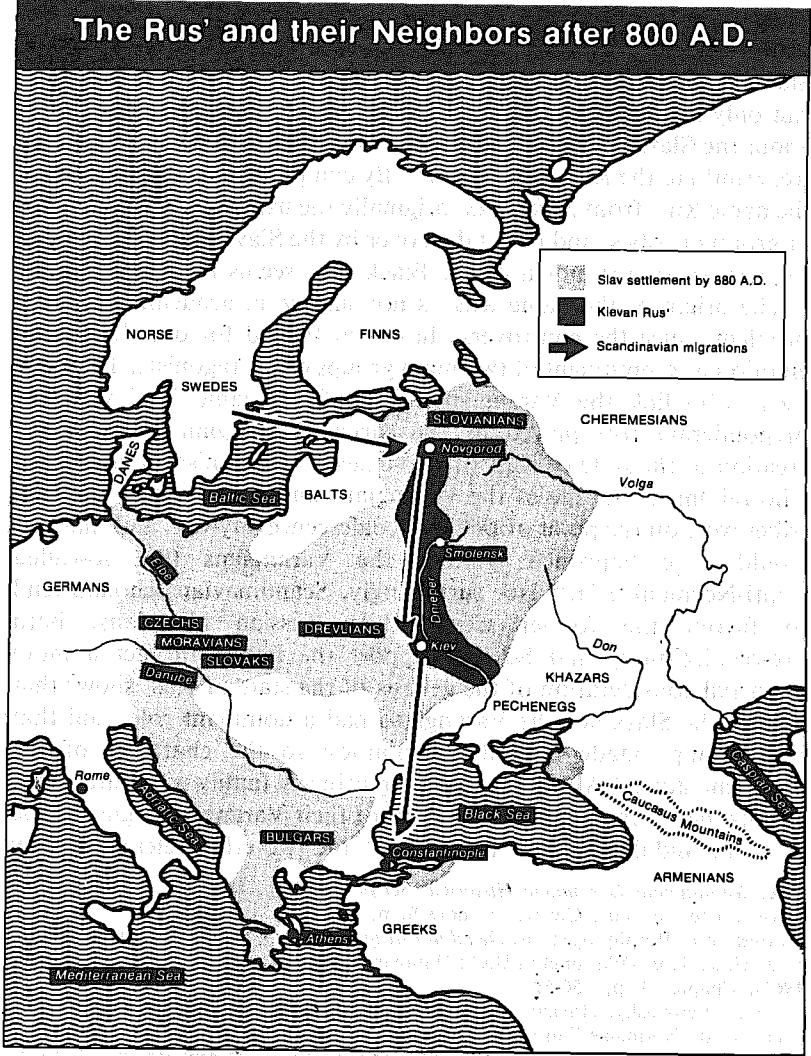
In the course of the 12th century Rus' disintegrated politically into a number of regional principalities, each ruled by a branch of the descendants of Yaroslav the Wise. Nevertheless, the fact that these rulers all belonged to the same family did provide some element of unity, albeit a tenuous one; and no individual member of the prolific Rurikid clan ever managed to dominate the others to the extent of establishing any kind of monarchical authority. They all had the title of prince (*Knyaz'*), though in the 11th and early 12th centuries the prince of Kiev was usually known as Grand Prince (*Veliki Knyaz'*). However, although Rus' was not a kingdom, neither the land of Rus' as a whole nor any of its constituent regional principalities can be compared to a medieval dukedom, since its rulers were sovereign and paid no tribute or allegiance to any overlord.⁸ In contrast to most medieval states in the early phase of their political evolution, in Rus' there were already a number of well-established urban centres, and they continued to increase; moreover, these towns were not merely trading communities, but also centres of political power, and in time they became religious and cultural centres as well. Yet despite the importance of its towns — such as Kiev, described in the chronicles as the “mother of the Russian cities”,⁹ Novgorod, Chernigov, Smolensk, Pereyaslavl', Vladimir and Rostov (to mention only a few) — Rus' was not just a loose federation of commercial city-states. It was a unique political phenomenon.

The Origin of the Name Rus'

The origin of this name is unknown, and this has given rise to a great deal of speculation, expressed in a vast number of polemical articles, the main point at issue being to establish whether the name originated with the incoming Varangians, or with the Slavs already living in the Dnieper area when the Varangians arrived. On the whole it would seem that the claim for Varangian origin is stronger. The author of the *Annales Bertiniani*, an early medieval Western source, describes as “Rhos” a group of Scandinavian merchants who visited the court of Constantinople in 839, and were sent on from there by the emperor to

⁸For a more detailed discussion of this question, see Walter K. Hanak, “The Impact of Byzantine Imperial Thought upon Vladimirian-Jaroslavian Russia”, *Byzantine Studies*, Vols. 8, 11, 12 (1981, 1984, 1985), pp. 117-20.

⁹The adjective “Russian” is used in Cross's translation to translate the adjective *russky*, derived from Rus'; but some confusion arises from the fact that the same word is also used to translate the word *rossiisky*, which applies to a much later period and a different political entity, and also to translate the modern adjective *russky*. In order to clarify this issue, some contemporary writers on Rus', including Omeljan Pritsak, use the form *Rus'ian*, and also use the name Rus' as an adjective.



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the court of Louis the Pious of France.¹⁰ Another 9th century writer, the Arab al-Ya'qubi refers to the Vikings who took part in a raid on Seville in 844 as *ar-rus*.¹¹ Finally, the Byzantine emperor Constantine Porphyrogenitos, in his survey of the empire's neighbours, written (for the guidance of his son) in the middle of the 10th century, includes a section on the annual trading expedition from "Rhosia" (Rus') to Constantinople. He makes a clear distinction between the names used for the cataracts in the lower course of the Dnieper by the Slavs (*Sklavenisti*) and the Russians (*Rhosisti*), which in this context can only mean the Varangians. Earlier in the same passage he talks about the Slavs selling the *monoxyla* (boats fashioned out of a single tree trunk) to the Russians (Rhos).¹² By comparison, the derivation of the name Rus' from *Rukhs-As*, originally the name of an Iranian tribe or group of tribes, and later taken over by the Slav Antes who lived in the steppe country north of the Black Sea, seems less convincing.¹³

The origin of the name Rus' is not simply an academic linguistic problem, since the controversy has been fuelled for decades by the emotional commitment of two main groups of protagonists. These are those who link the Varangian origin of the name Rus' with the preponderant role played by the earliest Varangian rulers in the creation of the state of Rus' (the so-called "Normanists"), and those who minimise the role of the Varangians and consider that the Slav tribes were on the point of political coalescence anyway, and that this would have happened without the Varangians (the so-called "anti-Normanists").¹⁴ Not surprisingly, Scandinavian scholars tend to favour the former view, while Russian historians, both pre-revolutionary and Soviet, support the latter. In fact a more impartial consideration of the genesis of the state of Rus' shows that neither the Slavs nor the Varangians had a dominant role, and that both groups made a vital contribution to the character of the emergent state.¹⁵ Although the ruling princely family was Varangian, and its members remained conscious of their Varangian origin at least until the middle of the 11th century,¹⁶ the two ethnic elements, Slav

¹⁰See *Monumenta Germaniae Historica, Scriptores*, I, p. 434.

¹¹See Vlasto, *op. cit.*, Chapter 5, note 8, p. 389.

¹²Constantine Porphyrogenitus, *De administrando imperio*, ed. Gy. Moravcsik, trans. R. J. H. Jenkins, (Washington D.C.: Dumbarton Oaks Center for Byzantine Studies, 1967), Chapter 9, pp. 56-59.

¹³See G. Vernadsky, *Ancient Russia* (Yale University Press, 1943), pp. 276-78.

¹⁴The word "Normanist" used here has nothing to do with the Normans who built up a powerful duchy in northern France; they represented a different stream of Viking expansion from the Varangians who came to the Dnieper area. The word was presumably chosen for its affinity with the generic word "Northmen".

¹⁵See D. Obolensky, *The Byzantine Commonwealth* (London, 1971), p. 181; and O. Pritsak, *The Origin of Rus'* Vol. I (Harvard Ukrainian Research Institute, 1981), pp. 404-407.

¹⁶PVL, 1054, p. 108; Cross, p. 142.

and Varangian, seem to have begun to merge quite early. Slavs as well as Varangians were members of the private military retinue of the princes, known as the *druzhdina* (itself derived from the Slav word *drug* meaning friend or companion); and both Slavs and Varangians took part, as merchant-entrepreneurs, in the commercial expeditions organised by the Varangians. There is also evidence of intermarriage. Finally it was the Slav language which ultimately prevailed, and as language is an important formative factor in the creation of a national identity, this is a powerful argument in favour of the anti-Normanist view.

First Signs of Christian Influence

At the time when Oleg captured Kiev, both the Varangians and the Slavs remained predominantly pagan, although there had been an attempt to convert them to Christianity while Askold and Dir ruled over Kiev. This so-called "first conversion of Rus'" was the result of a daring attack on Constantinople organised by Askold and Dir in June 860.¹⁷ As part of their strategy for preventing future attacks, the Byzantine government endeavoured to persuade Askold and Dir to be baptised, and to accept Christianity as the religion of their subjects.¹⁸ But the "conversion" did not last; both Slavs and Varangians soon reverted to paganism. No doubt the capture of Kiev by Oleg, who had no Christian commitments, helped this process.

However, during the 10th century the situation began to change. The annual trading expeditions to Constantinople, involving six months' residence in the city, brought many inhabitants of Rus', both Slavs and Varangians, into close contact with the culture and religion of the Byzantine Empire, and it would have been surprising if none of them had felt its attraction. Indeed, there is clear evidence that some did, and that by the mid-10th century there were a number of converts to Christianity in Rus'. There was at least one Christian church in Kiev, dedicated to St Elias¹⁹ (Il'ya, i.e. Elijah), and a commercial treaty concluded between Rus' and Byzantium in 944 contains a reference to baptised and unbaptised "Russes".²⁰ The Church of St Elias probably used the Byzantine rite, in either the Greek or the Old Church Slavonic form, though there is no definite evidence of this.²¹ There is even a reference (in the 983 entry of the chronicle) to two Varangian Christians, father and son, who suffered martyrdom for

¹⁷ See Obolensky, *op. cit.*, pp. 182-83.

¹⁸ See *ibid.*, pp. 183-84; Vlasto, *op. cit.*, pp. 244-45.

¹⁹ PVL, 945, p. 38; Cross, p. 77.

²⁰ *Ibid.*

²¹ See Vlasto, *op. cit.*, pp. 247-48; Obolensky, *op. cit.*, p. 199.

their faith because the father would not allow his son to be sacrificed to a pagan idol.²²

The most illustrious of the individual converts was Princess Ol'ga, the wife of Igor', who ruled in Kiev as regent for her son Svyatoslav after Igor' 's death in 945, until Svyatoslav himself came of age in 962. The exact date and circumstances of Ol'ga's baptism are not known, but it probably took place in 954 or 955, in the Church of St Elias in Kiev,²³ though according to the *Russian Primary Chronicle* she was baptised during a state visit to Constantinople in 955, with the Emperor Constantine Porphyrogenitos standing as her godfather.²⁴ It seems that Ol'ga tried hard to persuade her son Svyatoslav to follow her example and make Christianity the religion of Rus', but he refused.

“How shall I alone accept another faith?” he asked, “My followers will laugh at that.” But his mother replied: “If you are converted, all your subjects will perforce follow your example.” But Svyatoslav did not heed his mother, but followed heathen usages, for he did not know that whoever does not heed his mother will come to distress.²⁵

The Baptism of Prince Vladimir

Ol'ga may have been disappointed by her son's refusal to follow her example, but Christianity was slowly gaining ground in Rus'; as early as 955 the *Primary Chronicle* remarks: “When any man wished to be baptised, he was not hindered, but only mocked.”²⁶ By the time Svyatoslav's son Vladimir had established himself as prince of Kiev around 980 (by the brutal but effective method of liquidating his brothers), it was clear that Rus' was becoming increasingly isolated, politically and culturally, by remaining pagan. Mieszko I, King of Poland (Rus' 's western neighbour), had accepted Christianity under Roman jurisdiction in 965; Khan Boris of Bulgaria had been baptised in 864, and after some hesitation had finally accepted Byzantine jurisdiction for the Bulgarian Church in 870. The Byzantine Empire, Rus' 's main trading partner, had of course been Christian for several centuries, and also active, in evangelistic activity among her pagan neighbours. The inhabitants of Rus' were also in contact with the Muslim religion through their trade relations with the Volga Bulgars

²²PVL, 983, p. 58; Cross, p. 95.

²³Vlasto, *op. cit.*, p. 250.

²⁴PVL, 955, p. 44; Cross, p. 82 (see also Cross's note 62, pp. 239-40).

²⁵PVL, 955, p. 46; Cross, p. 84.

²⁶PVL, 955, p. 45; Cross, p. 83.

who lived in the upper part of the Volga river network.²⁷ According to a lengthy entry in the *Russian Primary Chronicle* under the year 986, Vladimir was visited during that year by representatives of four different religious groups, each of which tried to persuade him to accept their faith: "The Bulgars of the Mohammedan faith" (that is, the Volga Bulgars referred to above); "the Germans, asserting that they came as emissaries of the Pope", the Jewish Khazars, and a "scholar" sent by the Greeks.²⁸ It is unlikely that these missions arrived in the rapid succession depicted by the chronicle, and possibly they did not take place at all in the manner reported. But they do reflect the mental and spiritual climate of the times in Rus', and there is probably some factual basis for this entry.

Vladimir, always a shrewd politician, decided to send out his own fact-finding mission to examine the various faiths (except that of the Jews). Their report, included in the 987 entry of the *Primary Chronicle*, is a frequently-quoted passage:

Thus they [Vladimir's envoys] returned to their own country, and the Prince called together his boyars and elders. Vladimir then announced the return of the envoys, and suggested that their report be heard. He commanded them to speak out before his retinue. The envoys reported "When we journeyed among the Bulgars, we beheld how they worship in their temple, called a mosque, while they stand ungirt. The Bulgar bows, sits down, looks hither and thither like one possessed, and there is no happiness among them, but instead only sorrow and a dreadful stench. Their religion is not good. Then we went among the Germans, and saw them performing many ceremonies in their temples; but we beheld no glory there. Then we went to Greece, and the Greeks led us to the edifices where they worship their God, and we knew not whether we were in heaven or on earth. For on earth there is no such splendor or such beauty, and we are at a loss how to describe it. We only know that God dwells there among men, and their service is fairer than the ceremonies of other nations. For we cannot forget that beauty. Every man, after tasting something sweet, is afterwards unwilling to accept that which is bitter, and therefore we cannot dwell longer here." Then the boyars spoke and said, "If the Greek faith were evil, it would not have been adopted by your grandmother Ol'ga, who was wiser than all other men." Vladimir then inquired where they should all accept baptism, and they replied that the decision rested with him.²⁹

²⁷ See Vlasto, *op. cit.* p. 256, note b.

²⁸ PVL, 986, pp. 59-74; Cross, pp. 96-110.

²⁹ PVL, 987, p. 75; Cross, p. 111.

No students of early Russian history take this passage absolutely literally; it bears all the signs of being the work of an enthusiastic monastic chronicler writing after the event, and doing his literary best to justify what had happened and present it in the most attractive light. Still it is both politically and psychologically credible. Vladimir's decision to adopt the "Greek faith" was predictable, in view of the long-standing and profitable trade relations with Byzantium, the example of Princess Ol'ga (whether or not this was actually mentioned at the meeting with the envoys), and the presence of a growing number of adherents of that faith in Kiev. Moreover, if Vladimir's envoys had attended the Byzantine liturgy in the great Cathedral of Holy Wisdom, Hagia Sofia (as they probably had), seen its walls covered with mosaic and frescoes, and listened to the Byzantine chant rendered by experienced singers, they might well have felt that they were in another world. It is easy to believe this part of the report in essence, even if the words written were not actually spoken at the time.

The basic decision, then, need cause no surprise, but the actual timing was influenced, if not determined, by a political crisis in Byzantium which is not mentioned in the Russian chronicle. The Byzantine emperor at that time was Basil II, whose position was being severely threatened by a rival claimant to the imperial throne, Bardas Phocas, who was advancing with an army through Asia Minor. In this extremity Basil appealed to Prince Vladimir for military help.³⁰ Vladimir agreed, but the price was high: marriage with the emperor's sister Anna. Such a marriage was contrary to Byzantine court protocol, which did not normally allow members of the imperial family to marry foreigners. But the emperor's need was great, and a treaty of alliance was duly concluded, probably in the late summer of 987; Vladimir then arranged to despatch 6,000 Varangian mercenaries to Constantinople. Their intervention saved the emperor. Bardas Phocas was finally defeated at the battle of Abydos in the spring of 989, and after that his rebellion collapsed.

Although it is nowhere explicitly stated, the agreement between Prince Vladimir and Basil II must have included a promise by Vladimir to accept baptism. It is unthinkable that the emperor would allow his sister to marry a pagan, and Vladimir had almost certainly decided to be baptised anyway.³¹ It seems reasonable to assume that he was prepared for baptism (possibly by members of the Byzantine diplomatic mission) as soon as the treaty with the emperor was

³⁰See A. Poppe, "The Political Background to the Baptism of Rus'", *Dumbarton Oaks Papers*, 30 (1976), p. 224.

³¹This is implied by the comments made after the report of the envoys had been heard.

concluded, and baptised in Kiev towards the end of 987.³² Vladimir's personal baptism was soon followed by the mass baptism of a large number of his subjects in the river Dnieper early in 988, and it is this date which is normally accepted as marking the "Baptism of Rus'", and which has decided the date of the forthcoming millennium.³³

The Christianisation of Rus'

Vladimir's baptism was a very important event, but it was just the first step in the introduction of Christianity as the national religion of his people. According to the *Russian Primary Chronicle*, the first stage in this process was the public humiliation of the chief god in the Slav pantheon, namely Perun, the god of thunder:

He [Vladimir] ordered that Perun should be bound to a horse's tail and dragged down Borichev to the stream.³⁴ He appointed twelve men to beat the idol with sticks, not because he thought the wood was sensitive, but to affront the demon who had deceived men in this guise, that he might receive chastisement at the hands of men.³⁵

The chronicle then describes the mass baptism in the Dnieper referred to above. In such dramatic manner did Vladimir signal the beginning of the new religious order. It is also clear that more practical tasks were not neglected: shrines dedicated to pagan idols were replaced by wooden churches. Vladimir himself founded at least two churches, one dedicated to St Basil, his patron saint,³⁶ and one dedicated to the Mother of God, known as the *Desyatnaya* or Church of the Tithes, since he endowed it with a tenth (tithe) of his property.³⁷ He also took steps to educate the people in the new faith: "He began to found churches and to assign priests throughout the cities, and to invite the people to accept baptism in all the cities and towns."³⁸ The chronicle also states that the "children of the best families" were sent for "instruction in book-learning", and adds: "The mothers of these

³²Poppe, *op. cit.*, p. 240; Vlasto, *op. cit.*, p. 258.

³³According to the PVL, Vladimir was baptised in Kherson (in the Crimea) in 989: PVL, 988, pp. 75-77; Cross, pp. 111-13. For a detailed analysis of this so-called "Kherson legend", see Poppe, *op. cit.*, pp. 207-24.

³⁴Borichev was the name of a path leading from the old fortress in Kiev to the bank of the Dnieper: see Cross, p. 288, note 56.

³⁵PVL, 988, p. 80; Cross, p. 116.

³⁶PVL, 988, p. 81; Cross, p. 117.

³⁷PVL, 989, p. 83, 996, p. 85; Cross, pp. 119, 120-21. See A. Poppe, *Pánstwo i kościół na Rusi w XI wieku* (Church and State in Russia in the XIth Century) (Warsaw, 1968), who stresses that the tithe was not copied from West European usage, but based on "the fund of commandments and moral precepts concerning the divine tenth part brought by the church to Rus'" (p. 251).

³⁸PVL, 988, p. 81; Cross, p. 117.

children wept bitterly over them, for they were not yet strong in the faith, but mourned as for the dead."³⁹ Probably these children were educated in order to form a cadre of native clergy, since in the early years after the conversion, while Rus' was still a missionary area, the first priests and bishops must have been Byzantines, or possibly Bulgarians.⁴⁰

Although the *Russian Primary Chronicle* makes it quite clear that Vladimir accepted the "Greek faith", it says nothing about how Byzantine ecclesiastical jurisdiction was actually organised. As the relevant evidence in Byzantine sources is fragmentary, there has inevitably been considerable speculation on this subject. It has been suggested that the church in Rus' was controlled by the Archbishop of Ochrid, by an autonomous archbishop based in Tmutorokan', and even that it was under the jurisdiction of the Pope.⁴¹ However, it is most probable that from its inception the Russian Church was under the jurisdiction of a Metropolitan appointed by the Patriarch of Constantinople,⁴² as it was from the year 1039 onwards,⁴³ and for many centuries after that.

During the reign of Vladimir's son Yaroslav (known as Yaroslav the Wise, 1024-1054), and those of his sons, the church of Rus' became more firmly established and developed a more national character. More churches were built, including the famous church of St Sophia in Kiev, which when completed became the seat of the Metropolitan. More bishoprics were founded, to act as administrative, missionary and educational centres in the major cities; there was also rapid progress in literacy, at least among the upper classes, and in the production of Christian literature to nourish the new faith.⁴⁴ An important element in the consolidation and growth of the new faith in Rus' was the development of monastic life. By the time of the Mongol invasions (1238-40), at least seventy monasteries are known to have existed, the majority being in or near the larger cities. About most of these little is known; but one monastery, the *Kievo-Pechersky*, or Kievan Monastery of the Caves, which originated in the first half of the 11th century, has left detailed records of its activities.⁴⁵ This monastery produced the first known icon-painter in Rus',⁴⁶ Alimpi,

³⁹PVL, *ibid.*, Cross, *ibid.*

⁴⁰PVL, 989, p. 83; Cross, p. 119. See also Vlasto, *op. cit.*, pp. 260-62.

⁴¹For a summary and analysis of the relevant evidence and arguments, see *ibid.*, pp. 268-81.

⁴²*Ibid.*, pp. 277ff.

⁴³PVL, 1039, p. 103; Cross, p. 138.

⁴⁴PVL, 1037, p. 102; Cross, p. 137.

⁴⁵The *Kievo-Pechersky Paterik* (the *Paterik* of the Kievan Monastery of the Caves), ed. D. I. Abramovich (Kiev, 1911), reprinted Munich, 1964 (Slavische Propyläen, 2), ed. D. Tshchizhevskiy.

⁴⁶See KPP, Discourse 34.

and one of the founders of the Russian liturgical chant;⁴⁷ it developed in a relatively short time a high level of hagiography and chronicle writing, which was maintained for centuries in this and other monasteries. It also provided numerous monks of suitable calibre to be appointed as bishops,⁴⁸ and so contributed towards the existence of a solid core of native bishops, which helped to form the "national" character of the church of Rus'.

So by the time the principalities of Rus' had to face the onslaught of the Mongol invasions in the 13th century, the church was already a mature institution. In spite of its ecclesiastical dependence on Constantinople, and the fact that from the time of the conversion up to the sack of Kiev by the Mongols in 1240 all but two of the Metropolitans were Greeks, it was very definitely a "national" church. It had its own Slavonic liturgy and other offices, and a strong Rus' element in the episcopate; it had its own traditions in icon-painting, architecture and hagiography which, though based on Byzantine models, were very far from being slavish imitations of these; it also had its own saints.⁴⁹ In short it was a church well fitted to keep alive and nourish the national spirit during the long and difficult period of Mongol rule.

Postscript: The Mongol Invasions and their Aftermath

Although Kiev was very badly damaged by the Mongol attack of 1240, it remained the seat of the Metropolitan until 1299, when the Greek Metropolitan Maximos moved to Vladimir-in-Suzdal'.⁵⁰ His successor, a Russian named Peter (d. 1325) made frequent visits to Moscow and established close ties with its ruling prince. He also founded a church there, the future Cathedral of the Dormition (Assumption) in which he is buried; thereafter Moscow became the permanent seat of the Metropolitan. In the second half of the 14th century, Kiev and the surrounding area came under the control of the powerful Grand Duchy of Lithuania. Although its rulers were then pagan, and later accepted Christianity under Roman jurisdiction, they took a keen interest in the welfare of their Orthodox subjects, and on three occasions managed to secure a separate Metropolitan of Kiev,

⁴⁷KPP, Discourse 25, p. 126.

⁴⁸Simon, bishop of Vladimir and Suzdal', one of the authors of KPP writing early in the 13th century, says that at least fifty monks from the Monastery of Caves had been made bishops, up to and including himself: see KPP, Discourse 14, p. 103.

⁴⁹The most important were Boris and Gleb, sons of Great Prince Vladimir I of Kiev, who voluntarily accepted death rather than fight against their older brother; and Feodosi, abbot of the Monastery of Caves from 1062 to 1074.

⁵⁰See M. Heppell, *The Ecclesiastical Career of Gregory Camblak* (London, 1979), p. 37.

independent of Moscow.⁵¹ But this scheme, which was implacably opposed by the princes of Moscow and never really had the approval of Constantinople, failed to become part of the permanent structure of the Russian Church. By the early 15th century its headquarters was firmly established in Moscow, where it has remained.⁵²

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 38-64.

⁵² As late as 1415 the Orthodox bishops in Lithuania could still nostalgically assert that Kiev should be the seat of an undivided Metropolitanate (see *ibid.*, p. 63), but this no longer corresponded to political realities.