

# RUSSIAN HISTORY – Postclassical Period

## Overview

The post-classical period of Russian history witnessed the migration of several tribes and cultures of Indo-European and Turkic origin who lived in the Rus' land and contributed to Russian civilization. These were the Germanic tribe the Goths, the Turkic tribes of the Huns, Sabirs, Bulgars, Avars, Khazars, Pechenegs, Cumans and the Slavic tribes the Antae and East Slavs. In the course of early Russian history there was also a Scandinavian people, called Varangians, who settled in the Rus' land and were invited by the East Slavic tribes to rule the territory of Rus'.

After the establishment of the first East Slavic state, the Kievan state, the early Russians' commercial, economic and political relations with their neighbors (the Finns, Balts, Iranian tribes, Byzantines, Turkic and other Slavic tribes), together with their acceptance of Christianity in the 10<sup>th</sup> century created a unique national culture that did not blindly accept foreign cultural customs, but adapted them to their own culture.

With the conquest of the Mongols in the 13<sup>th</sup> century a new page was opened in Russian history. The princes of Kievan Rus failed to unite and strengthen their territories against this nomadic invasion, bringing an end to the Kievan state. The collapse of Kievan Rus was followed by the rise of Muscovy. In the early 13<sup>th</sup> century it was sacked by the Mongols and destroyed, however, when Mongol authority began to decline towards the end of the 15<sup>th</sup> century, Muscovy's power was greatly enhanced to challenge the Mongols.

## EVENTS

### Early Settlers:

**The Goths.** In the late 2<sup>nd</sup> century a Germanic tribe, the Goths, moved from the southern shores of the Baltic Sea to the northern Black Sea region from the lower Vistula River. The Gothic migrations into and settlement of the territories of modern Russia, Belarus and the Ukraine followed almost the same pattern of the later Rus'. Written records about the Goths are scarce, but the most important source is the *Getica* written by the Roman historian Jordanes in the 6<sup>th</sup> century. According to Jordanes, in the 2<sup>nd</sup> century the Goths came from southern Scandinavia across the Baltic Sea to the lower Vistula River region. Around 230 CE the Goths reached the northern coast of the Black Sea where they divided into three major tribes – the Gepids, the Visigoths (or West Goths), and the Ostrogoths (or East Goths). Here the Ostrogoths not only came into contact with the Roman Empire for the first time, but they also moved into the Ukraine. Although the Ostrogoths were able to replace the Sarmatians as the major power on the steppes, they adopted many elements of the Sarmatians' way of life, such as horses and wagons. However, Ostrogothic dominance in this region soon came to an end with the arrival of the nomadic Huns from Central Asia. The Ostrogoths were quickly defeated by the Huns, and were driven west beginning in 375. The Hun's domination of the steppes from Central Europe to Central Asia would last for nearly a century.

**The Huns.** The process of the Great Migration of Peoples began with the tribes of Eastern Europe between the 4<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> century and this process was followed by the migrations of Turkic-speaking nomads and the Huns from Central Asia which completely changed the ethnic and political structure in the region in the late 4<sup>th</sup> century. The Huns established a large, powerful empire in Europe and their leader Attila (406-453) swept into Europe, nearly destroying Rome. After Attila's death the Hunnic state collapsed rapidly. The Huns was divided among his three sons upon his death and they never regain their power; gradually they were absorbed into the populations of Germans and Slavs. The Huns were first mentioned in *Germania* (98 AD) written by Tacitus as Hunnoi.

**The Sabirs.** The Sabirs appeared in the Caucasus around 515 and lived in the region of Azerbaijan and Dagestan. The Avars, and later the Göktürks, conquered their territories and by the late 700s they were assimilated into the Khazars and Bulgars, eventually disappearing from the historical record. In his *De Administrando Imperio* the Byzantine Emperor Constantine VII Porphyrogenetos (908-959) talks about the Magyars called *Sabartoi asphaloi*, meaning strong Sabirs.

**The Bulgars.** The Bulgars were a semi-nomadic tribe of Turkic origin. They settled in the European steppe west of the Volga River from about 370, and moved to the north and east of the Sea of Azov about 460. Mostly destroyed by the Avars, the remaining Bulgars survived either by submitting to another Turkic tribe or settling in Asia. It was during the 7<sup>th</sup> century their sedentary life began in the Pontic-Caspian steppe only after the establishment of the Old Great Bulgaria which was later absorbed by the Khazars. In his work *Getica* (551) Jordanes describes the Pontic steppe as the habitat of the *Bulgari*.

**The Avars.** In the 6<sup>th</sup> century the Avars, another Turkic-speaking tribe, migrated into the regions north of the Black Sea. They established a powerful state between the Black Sea and modern Hungary that lasted into the 8<sup>th</sup> century. The Avars migrated to the Middle Danube region around 568, conquered and then united under their rule the inhabitants of the region and began to merge with some of the East Slavic tribes. The migration of the Avars from Central Asia into southern Russia was first mentioned by an early 7<sup>th</sup>-century Byzantine historiographer Theophylactus Simocattes in his *History*.

**The Khazars.** The Khazars were a tribe of Turkic origin who later adopted Judaism around 740. The Khazars established the largest political organization in Eastern Europe, a large state which extended from the Middle Volga lands in the north to the Northern Caucasus and Crimea in the south and the Ukrainian steppes in the west to the western borders of Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan in the east. The Khazars played a key role in the history of Rus', Hungary and the Caucasus becoming dominant in the lands of Rus' in the 7<sup>th</sup> century. They collected taxes from the Volga Bulgars and some East Slavic tribes that were subject to them. The Khazars halted the Arab assaults that threatened Europe in the 8<sup>th</sup> century and brought peace, stability and religious tolerance to the region. Khazar civilization influenced the early development of the first East Slavic state at Kiev and played a great role in early Kievan history. They were active and successful traders; and they maintained lively commercial contacts with the Arabs, the Byzantines, and various Asian societies. In the 8<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> centuries, many East Slavic tribes paid tribute to the Khazars. Khazar domination in the region lasted until their defeat by the Kievan prince Sviatoslav I in 966. The Khazars were first mentioned by Theophanes in his *Chronographia* in 627.

**The Pechenegs.** The nomadic Pechenegs were a tribe of Turkic origin related to Oghuz. In the first half of the 9<sup>th</sup> century the united Oghuz forces drove the Pechenegs from their lands, and by 915 the Pechenegs made their appearance at the borders of Kievan Rus' for the first time. After 1091 the Pechenegs ceased playing an important historical role in the area and were supplanted by other nomadic peoples such as the Cumans and Mongols. Information regarding the relations, both hostile and friendly, between the Russians and the Pechenegs can be found in Constantine Porphyrogenitus' work *De Administrando Imperio*. In it he describes the Pechenegs as neighbors of the Russians who launched destructive raids against Russia when relations were hostile, but who fought with the Russians when relations were friendly. He also notes that the Russians found it to their advantage to try and maintain good relations with the Pechenegs.

**The Cumans.** Another nomadic Turkic people related to the Pechenegs who formed a tribal confederation were the Cumans, also known as the Polovtsy or Kipchaks. In the 10<sup>th</sup> century the Cumans extended from the southern part of Central Asia to the upper Irtysh River. The western branch of the Cumans were in close contact with Kievan Rus'; based on the chronicles, the first encounter between Rus' and the Cumans took place in 1055 and resulted in a peace agreement. In the wake of their defeat by the Mongols in Subcaucasia in 1220, the Cuman khans sought, and received, aid from the princes of Rus'. Nonetheless, even the combined Rus'-Cuman forces were no match for the Mongols who defeated them in 1223 at the Kalka River. The Cumans suffered the same fate in 1237 during the Mongols' second invasion of Eastern Europe. It was in this same period of the late 13<sup>th</sup>-early 14<sup>th</sup> century that both the Cumans and the Tatars converted to Islam. The first mention of the Cumans as Polovtsy occurs in the *Tale of Bygone Years*, composed around the year 1055.

**The Antae (Antes).** Information about the first Slavic tribes in southern Russian territory during the Sarmatian era comes from the 6<sup>th</sup>-century the Roman historian Jordanes in his *Getica*. The Antae were considered to have been the predecessors of the East Slavs. The Antae were based between the Prut and lower Dniester during the 1<sup>st</sup> to 2<sup>nd</sup> centuries AD. A East Slavic nomadic tribe lived in the south between the Dnieper and Dniester rivers in the 3<sup>rd</sup> century. From here they moved into Volhynia and then on to the territory of the middle Dnieper around Kiev in the 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> centuries. As the Antae migrated from the open grassland steppes into the forest steppe, they began to mix with the resident Slavic tribes. In the early 6<sup>th</sup> century they joined in Slavic raids against the Byzantine Empire but were nearly destroyed by the Avars, who passed through their lands around 560. Jordanes in his *Getica* 25 states that the Antae dwelt "along the curve of the Black Sea", from the Dniester to the Dnieper.

**The East Slavs.** The first region to be settled by the East Slavs was in modern Ukraine, along the Dnieper River. From here they migrated to the north into the region of the northern Volga River valley, east of Moscow, and from there west into the northern Dniestr and western Bug River basins. These migrations brought the East Slavs into contact with the Khazars who inhabited the lands of the southern Volga and Caucasus, with the result that many tribes became tributaries of the Khazars. The people mainly hunted, gathered, farmed and fished. These agriculturalists also trade furs. The Varangians, warriors and merchants from Scandinavia, had entered the lands of the East Slavs by the 9<sup>th</sup> century. According to the earliest chronicle called the *Tale of Bygone Years*, Rurik was the first Varangian ruler who established the first Eastern Slavic state in the Rus' territory. The first information concerning the settlement of the first Slavic tribes in the lands of Rus' is found in a work written during the time of the Byzantine Emperor Justinian I (527-565). The 6<sup>th</sup> century statesman and author Procopius mentions the Sclavenes and Antes living in the lands of Rus' in his work *History of the Wars*.

**The Varangians (Vikings).** By the 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> centuries, traders from Scandinavia, who had come to be known as Varangians, appeared along the eastern shores of the Baltic Sea. By the following century the Varangians had established a trade route, the Volga (or Saracen) route, that extended from Scandinavia to the Khazar state. Beginning on the east coast of Sweden at Birka, this route crossed the Baltic and continued into the Gulf of Finland. From there a combination of land routes, river passages and lake crossings (Ladoga, Onega, White) led to the upper Volga. Following the Volga River brought the Varangians into the center of Khazars' territory. Another important trade route also began by crossing the Baltic Sea and passing through the Gulf of Finland, but then proceeded to the Varangian settlement at Staraja Ladoga. The route then turned south towards Lake Ilmen', eventually reaching Novgorod. From Novgorod, the route followed the Dnieper to Kiev, at that time a Khazar outpost. Alternatively, the route down the Dnieper could be followed all the way to the Black Sea and then to the Byzantine capital of Constantinople. This was eventually dubbed the "route from the Varangians to the Greeks (*Put iz varyag v greki*)". The Varangians were able to maintain their control over the far northern trade routes until they were temporarily expelled from the region by their local East Slavic and Finnic vassals. These events were described in the *Tale of Bygone Years* (also known as the *Primary Chronicle*) (*Povest' vremennykh let*) as the unrest and the war of "one against another" that in the mid-9<sup>th</sup> century resulted in the "invitation of the Varangians". It was this final event that is the basis of what has become known as the Varangian theory.

**The Varangian theory.** The Varangian theory about the origins of the Early Russian state was developed by a number of western and Russian historians. Its starting point was an entry in the Russian the *Tale of Bygone Years*, written by the monk Nestor from the Pecherski Monastery, the principle source for early Russian History.

The *Tale of Bygone* includes the following invitation sentence: "Our land is great and rich, but there is no order in it. Come to rule and reign over us." (*Primary Chronicle* in Zenkovsky 1974: 49–50). It appears that in 862 a group of Varangians came with Rurik to take power in Novgorod.

The so-called Varangian Theory was first raised in the 18<sup>th</sup> century. In this century, based on these lines German historians working in Russia in the Academy of Sciences such as Müller, Bayer, and Schlözer proposed the Varangian theory on the origins of the Russians. This theory was supported and expanded in

the 19<sup>th</sup> century by the Russian historians Karamzin and Solovev. In the same century the historians Pogodin and Thomsen from Denmark also published works supporting this theory.

According to this theory the Russians are the descendants of the Varangians from Scandinavia and the Baltic who had been invited by the East Slavs to come and rule as princes over them late in the 9<sup>th</sup> century because of the continual fighting among the princes.

Anti-Varangians, in particular Vasili Tatishchev and Mikhail Lomonosov opposed the Varangian theory in the same century. They all agreed that the first East Slavic state had developed before the arrival of Rurik in 862.

It is difficult to determine how well the first chronicle reflects reality. However, this chronicle is accepted as the first and only historical source for the early history of Rus', and the other versions all mention the invitation of Varangians – an indication that it is not a made-up story. From *The Tale of Bygone Years* it can be understood that these rulers called the Varangian Rus' and the small number of mercenaries who came with them were quickly assimilated into Rus' society. As a result, by developing the existing state structure and uniting the princes, these assimilated Varangian princes brought peace, but did not establish a state. They played a role in the development of culture, but did not lay its foundations. It is also clear from *The Tale of Bygone Years* that the Varangians driven beyond the sea by the people of Novgorod were not the same Varangians later called to rule; the Varangians driven beyond the sea were made up of those who had not been assimilated. After about 960, this Scandinavian element weakened as Slavic became the language of the original Varangians' descendants.

**The first East Slavic State (Kievan State):** Around 880 the Kievan state was established, and this powerful state began to control major trade routes that ran from Varangians to the Greeks, and from Kiev frequently laid siege to Constantinople. Devastating raids by Turkic nomads, the Pechenegs and the Kipchaks (Polovtsy), forced the Rurikid rulers, who at the same time were engaged in their own intradynastic conflicts, to combine their forces, and secure the trade route linking Kiev and Constantinople. However, this unity did not last long, and disagreements over succession to the throne of Kiev provoked intradynastic warfare lasting for decades. This once powerful state lost its influence in the region to the expanding Mongol Empire in the 1240s and became a Mongol vassal state.

**The Mongols.** The princes of Kievan Rus had always faced danger from the steppe and war against nomad armies was a part of Kievan life.

It was around 1223 a large army led by Chingiz Khan's grandson Batu swept through Rus' territory, and defeated a coalition of Rus' and Cumans at the Kalka River. Afterwards, Batu annexed Russian principalities such as Ryazan, Muscovy, Vladimir, Suzdal, Rostov, and eventually captured Kiev. The only town left untouched by the Mongols was Novgorod.

The princes of Kievan Rus failed to unite and strengthen their territories. In 1229 – 1236 the Mongols mounted successful attacks on the Cumans and the Volga Bulgars, but returned to Rus' in 1237. The Mongols destroyed the northern Rus' princes at the Battle of Sit in 1238 and conquered the south-west the following year; Kiev eventually fell in 1240.

**Muscovite State:** The collapse of Kievan Rus was followed by the rise of Muscovy. A small village during Kievan times, Muscovy was not even mentioned in Russian chronicles until 1147. It was then nothing more than a village belonging to the prince of Rostov-Suzdal.

In 1237 it was sacked by the Mongols and destroyed. In 1263 Muscovy re-entered history as the permanent capital of a minor principality ruled by Daniil Alexandrovich, the youngest son of Alexandr Nevsky.

After about 1350, however, Muscovy became powerful enough to challenge the Mongols. Muscovy's power was increased when it became an ecclesiastical center of Russian Orthodoxy.

## Discussion/Questions

1. What is the origin of the name Rus'? Who are the Russians? Answer the questions based on the entries found in the chronicle of the *Tale of Bygone Years*.
2. How did the Kievan Rus' adoption of Byzantine Christianity affect the development of its politics, economy, society, and culture? In which of these aspects of civilization did Byzantium have the most impact?
3. What impact did the Mongol rule have upon the state and culture of Kievan Rus'? How did it affect the political and cultural development of Muscovy?
4. Discuss the Normanist controversy in early Russian historiography. Present the main arguments of the Normanist and nationalist schools regarding the origins and early development of Kievan Rus'. What sources and evidence to the conflicting interpretations are used to support their positions and refute the opposition's? Can the controversy be solved or reconciled?

## Reading

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## **POLITICAL HISTORY**

### GOVERNMENT

#### **Rurikid Dynasty:**

**Kievan State:** In its earliest stage it was the Varangians (Vikings) who acted as catalysts for the political development of the dispersed, warring East Slavic tribes by establishing tribal unions. It was the Rurikovich (of Varangian origin) who established the first Russian dynasty, and the Rus princes and high ecclesiastical officials of separate principalities exercised their authority in a central aristocratic, administrative district.

It was Vladimir I who chose Orthodox Christianity as Russia's official religion, a decision that had a decisive influence on the development of the political structure of the Russian state. A political system had evolved in Kievan Russia by the 11<sup>th</sup> century in which Kiev was the center of princely authority, legitimate rulers were those who descended from the Rurikid dynasty, and succession was based on seniority.

The Kievan political system was authoritarian, but many institutions had democratic characteristics. The office of Prince was Kiev's major political institution. The Prince, in addition to his military leadership, provided justice, headed the Orthodox Church, and administered the government via the *druzhina* (retinue). The *veche* was a popular assembly, the highest legislative and judicial authority to resolve major issues.

**Mongol Period:** During the first century of the Mongol conquest (1240), the Rus principalities served as effective tax collectors. By collecting tribute from other Russian princes, the central state strengthened its political position.

**Moscow (Muscovite) State:** Moscow had increased its power and prestige by establishing good relations with the Mongols, proving that they were reliable tribute payers and upholders of order in order to obtain a *yarlyk* that authorized their rule. The Mongol Khans ruled Russian territory via Russian princes, and sent their envoys to supervise the collection of tribute.

The Moscow Grand Prince, to rule his principality, summoned his boyars to periodical gatherings (Boyar Duma) when important decisions needed to be taken. Concentrating power and gaining the consensus of the other princes and boyars became the paramount priority for the Grand Princes. Up until the late 15<sup>th</sup> century, Moscow still had a nominal overlord, the Khan of the Great Horde. This ended when disunity came to an end and all the principalities were integrated into a single patrimony, that is into the Moscow state. The Russian Orthodox church also emancipated itself from Byzantium, and Moscow became the ecclesiastical center.

**Oprichnina and Zemshchina:** During the reign of Ivan the Terrible, in order to demonstrate that he was the undisputed ruler of Rus and that the princes and boyars were his subjects, the tsar adopted the title of Tsar of all Russia. Ivan the Terrible's unhealthy life increased his paranoia and brutality, and in order to reduce the Chosen Council's (advisory council) power, dominated by the boyars, he threatened that he would abdicate to the Council. He left Moscow and began to live in Alexandrovskaya Sloboda, agreeing to return only if the boyars granted him absolute power and placed no obstacles to his absolute rule. He then divided his realm into two separate states. He organized a loyal militia, the *oprichnina*, in the lands that constituted his personal domain and which he administered as he wished. The rest of Russia was ruled by the *zemshchina*, the Boyar Duma. In his domain, he exiled the boyars and appanage princes, sent them to their new territories, and gave their ancestral lands to his servitors, the *oprichniki*. The 6,000 *oprichniki*, who dressed in black and carried a dog's head and broom on their horses to symbolize their mission of hunting down and sweeping away the tsar's enemies, began to arrest, torture, imprison and execute all traitors.

For seven years Ivan IV carried out this oppression against his own people. Thousands of boyars lost their lands and their lives. Many innocent people died, especially in towns that were thought to be sheltering traitors. In Novgorod alone, in just five weeks in 1570, the *oprichniki* killed an estimated 40,000 people. Two years later, in 1572 Ivan IV abolished the *oprichnina*, and executed most of the leaders of the *oprichniki*.

Ivan the Terrible, by killing his son and heir in a fit of rage and leaving only a sickly son, Fedor, as his successor, brought an end of the Rurikid dynasty. Moscow descended into civil war, a period known as the *Time of Troubles*.

### **Discussion/Questions**

1. Why was Kiev important for the Early Russians?
2. How was the fragmented Early Rus' united?
- 3-How did the Russian princes rule their territory during the Mongol invasion?
- 4- How did the Mongol domination effect the Kievan political system?

### **Reading**

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## MILITARY

**Fragmented Society and Varangian Mercenaries:** Early Rus' was a fragmented society that lacked a strong central government. Each principality was ruled by a prince and each prince ruled his own territory independent of other rulers, but there was no unity among them. As a result, struggles for power among the princes were endemic. Each prince had his own military forces, but also brought in supplementary warriors. Therefore, the princes, to put an end their internal struggles, looked for assistance from Scandinavian mercenaries (Varangians-Vikings), and these people were later included into the princes 'retinue'. Initially, these mercenaries were invited to end the internal struggles, and bring peace to the fragmented society, but later, the ones who stayed in Rus' land were assimilated into the Eastern Slavs by the late 11<sup>th</sup> century and became part of that society.

Early Russian armies included a few hundred men who could use combined arms tactics, ambushes, flanking assaults and guerilla tactics. After they had learned how to make fortified cities, they came in contact with nomadic tribes from the steppes, such as the Scythians, Sarmatians and Huns, and later the Bulgars, Antes, Khazars and Mongols, and gained much of their military skill from them. From the Scandinavian mercenaries they learned to build ships to gain dominance in the Baltic Sea and raid the Scandinavian territories.

**Druzhina:** Each prince had his own retinue *druzhina*, outfitted with a helmet, armor and shield for protection and armed with a sword and a spear. They were composed of boyars and prince's immediate servitors.

### Discussion/Questions

1. Why were the Varangians hired as mercenaries?
2. Did these Varangian mercenaries serve in the prince's retinue?
3. What was the composition of the *druzhina*?

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## SOCIAL HISTORY

### SOCIAL STRUCTURE

The Kievan social structure was complex and stratified. Kievan social structure was fluid in that there were no barriers to social mobility, and movement from one class to another. Rather, status was determined by opportunity and skill.

In the Kievan state there were seven main classes or estates (*soslovie*) stipulated in Kievan law: princes, boyars (nobles), merchants, artisans, *smerdy* (rural peasants), semi free persons, and slaves.

**Prince:** At the top of the classes were the princely families. They had administrative power over most Russian towns and territories. The relations among the princes were always tense, and their struggles for political power led to civil war which resulted in the weakening of the Kievan state.

**Druzhina (Retinue):** After the evolution of the Russian commercial towns, the princes allied themselves with the Varangian warriors who later formed the entourage of the prince, known as *druzhina*. At first each prince had his own military units, of whom many in the beginning were probably Varangians. But soon they merged with already existing groups of Slavic warriors.

**Muzhi:** Beneath the princes and princesses stood upper-class freemen, called *muzhi* (free community members/soldiers) who made up the *druzhina*.

**Merchants:** The merchants had significant influence because of their contributions to the economy, and in some towns, they even exercised political power.

**Smerdy:** Most people in the towns and cities were free and fell into a broad group of artisans, tanners, potters, armorers, goldsmiths, carpenters and masons (*molodshie ljudi*). In the countryside, were the lower class people, free peasants were bore the title *Smerdy*. Some were dependent on princes or boyars, but apparently most were free.

**Zakupy and Cheliad:** *Zakupy* and *Cheliad* (or *kholop*) were also terms used to designate semi-free people, enslaved prisoners who had become subject to purchase and sale in the 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> centuries. These were at the bottom of the social ladder. Some may have been semi free individuals who fell into complete bondage, but a majority were apparently prisoners-of-war, and many were therefore not Slavic. In the early years of Kievan rule, slaves were an important commodity. Slaves had no rights and could even be killed by their owners.

### Discussion/Questions

1. Why were the people arranged in social strata? What made stratification important in Russian society?
- 2- How did the tense relationship between the princes contribute to the power struggle?

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## GENDER RELATIONS

### **Kievan Rus:**

In Kievan Rus, the early Russian Law gave men the highest and most powerful position in the social strata since they hunted, fought, and dominated religious and political life. But, women also engaged in agriculture, worked in the harvest, gathered forest products, weaving, and, when necessary, they even fought to defend their cities. Women controlled their children, their family property, dowry and wealth, and could purchase land and perform charity works.

During Kievan Russia, women enjoyed considerable freedom and independence, both legally and socially which was the remnant of the matriarchal tradition of the Proto-Slavs. In the mid-10<sup>th</sup> century there was a women ruler, and the first Kievan women ruler was Olga, who took power in 962 after her husband's murder, but prevalence of women rulers disappeared until the 14<sup>th</sup> century. Princess Olga also was the first woman who travelled to Constantinople and converted to Christianity.

After the conversion to Christianity in 988, the rights of women were not forgotten. While sometimes women's influence over individual male lives was perceived, women also received negative reactions, were blamed for natural disasters regarded as the "devil's vessel" and were even killed.

## **Muscovite Rus:**

**Segregation of Women in Terem:** In contrast to Kievan Rus, the Muscovite state segregated men and women. The position of women in the Muscovite state was one of complete subjugation to men. Women were deprived of any freedom and they were forced to live in segregation.

The Muscovite royal women lived in a separate women's quarters known as the *Terem*. Upper-class women enjoyed some freedom in the sense that they could own property, manage their own estates and even arrange marriages. The Tsar's wives and daughters had an important public role in dispensing charity, receiving petitions and standing in when men were absent. Elite women were allowed out using curtained recesses in church and closed carriages for outside.

The main task of royal women was to give birth to an heir to the throne and to raise children. No women were allowed in the tsar's formal receptions. Women's portraits scarcely permissible at all outside of a religious context.

There was no seclusion for ordinary townswomen who contributed to household incomes. In the countryside, peasant women worked alongside their men; while the men sowed, women dealt with the reaping.

### **Discussion/Questions**

1. Why was Muscovite women's life confined and their public life so limited? Why did the state exercise such strict control over them?
2. How did the introduction of Christianity effect the status of women?

### **Reading**

- 1-Moss, W.G., *A History of Russia Vol I*, Anthem Press, 2005.
- 2- Evtuhov, C., Goldfrank D., Hughes L., and Stites R., *A History of Russia: Peoples, Legends, Events, Forces*, Houghton Mifflin Company, 2004.
- 3-Pushkareva, N., *Women in Russian History from the Tenth to the Twentieth Century*. Armonk, 1997.

## **ECONOMIC HISTORY**

### **INNOVATIONS**

**Establishment of the First State – Kievan State:** The first East Slavic state, Kievan Rus, emerged along the Dnieper River valley, where it controlled the trade route between Scandinavia and the Byzantine Empire. The rise of Kiev occurred as the Varangians increased their use of the Dnieper. Kiev gained importance around 900, when it functioned as a Khazar administrative and commercial outpost for the local Slavs. The Kievan state lasted from the late 9<sup>th</sup> century to the early 13<sup>th</sup> century. Its territory in the 12<sup>th</sup> century stretched from the Baltic Sea in the north to the Black Sea in the south, and from the Carpathians in the west to the Urals in the east.

**Trade-from Varangians to the Greek:** For the Early Russians and the Varangians, trade was an important source of revenue. The rivers flowing from the north to the south, from the Baltic to the Black Sea were the main routes to conduct trade with the Near East, the Byzantines and the Middle East.

**Conversion to Christianity - Unification of Slavic Tribes:** During the rule of Vladimir I (the Great) the official Christianization of the pagan East Slavs took place in 988. Christianity (Eastern Orthodoxy) came to Kiev from the Byzantine Empire, with which they had close commercial ties. Vladimir I completed unification of all eastern Slavs in his state, and secured its borders against foreign invasions.

**Introduction of the alphabet:** Writing was not known to the Pagan Rus,' and only came to Rus' in the wake of Vladimir I's Christianization process that began in 988. It was the two Slavic-speaking Byzantine

brothers and missionaries, Saints Konstantinos (Cyril) and Methodios, in the late 9<sup>th</sup> century who devised the first alphabet, *Glagic*, for the Slavs. When Cyril and Methodios died, Methodios' successors were forced by the Catholic clergy to move to the south of Bulgaria, and Clement of Ochrid and Konstantine of Preslav continued to work on an alphabet, called *Cyrillic*, that was closely based on the Greek alphabet.

**Icon Painting:** Although Byzantine religious icons were brought to Russia after Vladimir I's conversion to Christianity, Russian artists did not slavishly follow Byzantine styles of icon painting. Instead, Russian icon painters began to create their own original style by modifying Byzantine models and to form distinctive schools of icon painting.

### **Discussion/Questions**

1. What did Vladimir I accomplish by converting Rus to Christianity?
2. What made Kiev an important city for the early rulers of Russia?
3. What significant changes occurred with the invention of the alphabet?
4. What changes in Russian culture were brought about by the conversion to Christianity?

### **Reading**

1-Moss, W.G. *A History of Russia*, Vol. I: to 1917, 2002.

2- Stearns, P., *The Industrial Revolution in World History*, 4<sup>th</sup> Edition, Westview Press, 2013, pp. 89-93, 121-139.

3- *The Cambridge Companion to Modern Russian Culture*, edited by Nicholas Rzhevsky, Cambridge University Press, 1998.

### TRADE

**Varangian Trade Routes:** Even before the establishment of Kievan state, foreign and domestic trade was important. In the 8<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> centuries after the Varangians gained control over numerous trade routes, they combined their tribute gathering with international trade, and the trade routes running across Russia from the Baltic to the Azov and Caspian seas, and from the Dnieper to Constantinople gained importance. In the 10<sup>th</sup> century the Dnieper river way soon became the main route for Russian commerce, and its main southern exit was Constantinople. Therefore, the Black Sea played a very important role in Russian trade; but for Russians the Caspian Sea was a fairly significant route for trade as well. Tmutarakan, an ancient town in Taman peninsula was also an important trading post and outlet for Kievan Rus to reach the Black Sea. Trade in the east with the Volga Bulgars and peoples of the steppe (Cumans) also remained important. In the north, Novgorod emerged as an important Baltic trading post.

**Trade in Kievan State:** Foreign commerce was the backbone of the Kievan economy. However, the role of domestic trade was also important; while the wealth of the upper classes came from foreign trade, domestic commerce was also important for the welfare of the population. Once a week, usually on Fridays, farmers brought their produce for sale in the markets (bazaars) of major Russian cities. They would sell weapons, metal ware, metals, salt, clothes, hats, furs, cloth, pottery, timber, wood, wheat, rye, millet, flour, bread, honey, wax, frankincense, horses, cows, sheep, meat, and ducks. In the major cities the merchants transacted business on a national scale, in the smaller towns only local merchants operated. Novgorod was an important trading city and the Novgorodian merchants operated their agencies throughout Russia. The Novgorodian trade was partly a transit trade. Basic goods such as furs, wax and honey were exported from Novgorod and Smolensk to western Europe.

Russia's foreign trade depended on exported raw materials and manufactured goods and metals received from foreign countries. In the 10<sup>th</sup> century, the Russians exported furs, honey, wax, and slaves to Byzantium, and grain was exported from Russia to the Byzantine Empire in the 12<sup>th</sup> century. Meanwhile, from Byzantium between 10<sup>th</sup> – 12<sup>th</sup> centuries the Russians imported mainly wines, silk fabrics, and objects of art, such as jewelry, icons, glassware and also fruit. Christian slaves were no longer sold abroad by the Russians; but the Cumans sold Russian prisoners as slaves to overseas merchants. Russia exported to the Orient furs, honey, wax, walrus tusks, woolen cloth and linen, while from the Oriental countries they

imported spices, precious stones, silk and satin fabrics, weapons, and horses; precious stones, spices and rugs were transported through Novgorod to western Europe. In the 10<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> centuries Byzantine silk fabrics were transported to northern Europe through the Baltic. From Europe a number of manufactured goods were imported, such as woolen cloth, silk, linen, needles, weapons, and glassware. Through the Baltic, besides wine, beer, salt and herring, Russia imported iron, copper, tin, and lead.

**Mongol Period:** The Mongol invasion that lasted till the 15<sup>th</sup> century greatly hindered Russia's economic development. With the establishment of new and secure trade routes, and with the encouragement of the Mongol Khans and local governors to trade with the East, the Mongols were able to transport precious silks and spices from China and India through Central Asia to the lower Volga and beyond, and across the Black Sea to European markets.

### Discussion/Questions

1. Why did Kievan Rus' enjoy its greatest commerce during the 11<sup>th</sup> century?
2. What made the Muscovite state a favorable location for trade?

### Reading

- 1-Moss, W.G. *A History of Russia*, Vol. I: to 1917, 2002.
- 2- Evtuhov, C., Goldfrank, D., Hughes, L., Stites, R., *Peter the Great: Carving Out the New Russia, 1703-1725*, in *A History of Russia, Peoples, Legends, Events, Forces*, Houghton Mifflin Company, Boston, New York, 2004.
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## **CULTURAL HISTORY**

### **SCIENCE**

Despite the fact that during the same period of Kievan Rus' florescence some of the greatest Islamic thinkers and scientists lived in Bukhara, the likelihood that Kiev would be exposed to Arabic science from that quarter was extremely low. There was contact between the Rus and the Muslim Volga Bulgars who had commercial links with the Arabs, the Volga Bulgars had no interest in Arabic science. There was, however, one exception, medicine, where some knowledge from the Islamic world did reach Kiev.

None of the major Ancient Greek or Hellenistic scientific works were translated in Russia during the medieval era. The translation of Byzantine works introduced some technical scientific terms into Russian, as well as words like 'planet', and translations of the names of signs of the zodiac, but overall Greek science was little influence on the culture of Kievan Rus.

In addition to these factors, the strong resistance to secular learning in Kievan Rus also played a role in keeping Greek scientific works from being translated. This attitude stemmed from the fact that Christianity was a foreign religion that had only recently been adopted from Byzantium, and the art of writing that came with it was equally new. The rulers supported Christianity for both pious and political reasons, and book learning was regarded as merely another method to bolster support for the new faith.

Finally, in the approximately two and a half centuries that Western Europe transitioned from the middle ages to the Renaissance and the early modern period, growing culturally and politically, the Russian principalities were under Mongol rule. Kiev's links with the West and Byzantium were cut, and this, combined with the decline of the Byzantine Empire and the expansion of Ottoman power in the Balkans, left Russia isolated ideologically and culturally.

### Discussion/Questions

1. Why did Greek science have little or no influence on Kievan Rus culture?

## Reading

1- Graham, R. Loren, *Science in Russia and the Soviet Union, A Short History*, Cambridge University Press, 1994.

## ART

### VISUAL ARTS

#### PAINTING

**Icon Painting:** Although Byzantine religious icons were brought to Russia after Vladimir I's conversion to Christianity, Russian artists did slavishly follow Byzantine styles of icon painting. Instead, Russian icon painters began to create their own original style by modifying Byzantine models and to form distinctive schools of icon painting.

As a newly imported art form icons produced in the early Kievan period were still very close to the Byzantine tradition in style. However, many Kievan School icons differed from Byzantine icons in their use of dark, somber colors and in their comparatively large size, a result of being painted on wood that had been hand-cut with an axe.

During the second half of the 12<sup>th</sup> century Kiev was overshadowed as a center of icon production by Vladimir and Suzdal. Icons painted here were distinctive for their harmonious blend of silvery-blue, grayish-purple and pinkish-green colors and use of motifs derived from folk art, while preserving the spirit of Kievan art.

Novgorod became the center of Russian icon painting following the fall of Kiev. Frescoes produced here displayed a distinctive Russian style while still retaining clear Byzantine influence. A pivotal figure in the development of both the Novgorod and Moscow schools Theophanes the Greek (Feofan Grek) came to Russia from Byzantium in the late 14<sup>th</sup> century. Theophanes, after moving to Moscow, began to work with Andrei Rublev of the Moscow School. Their works are characterized energetic drawing, the contrast of large shapes, the use of warm golds and bright yellows, and a simple, economic yet precise style.

In contrast to icons from Novgorod, Pskov icons initially displayed greater poetic inspiration, even if less sophisticated in their execution. Over time, Pskov icons adopted some features of the Novgorod style. In particular, Pskov painters adopted the strong outlines of Novgorod painting as well as certain certain topics. Early Pskov icons are characterized by their intense colors, which contrast with the subdued palette of Kievan icons. In addition, what the figures in Pskov icons lack in elegance of proportion is more than compensated for by dynamic nature of their composition.

#### SCULPTURE

Due to Orthodox Church's ban on statuary, there are almost no examples of large-scale sculpture from this period. However, miniature sculpture was not included in this ban and was highly developed. Scenes from the Gospels and representations of saints with backgrounds of hills, trees and buildings were created by Russian artists using figures that were generally less than 1 ½ inches high.

#### ARCHITECTURE

Russian art and architecture prior to the acceptance of Christianity consists of idols from the pagan period made of wood and stone, and burial mounds. In the 10<sup>th</sup> century we see that wood craftsmanship held an important place. This can be seen from artifacts recovered in archaeological excavations, remains of temples, and surviving princes' palaces. It is known that during the time of Prince Vladimir Svyatoslavich the number of wooden structures and stone temples increased significantly, and in Kiev the Cathedral of St. Sophia with thirteen spires was also built. The interior of the the cathedral is decorated with frescos and mosaics.

In the 11<sup>th</sup> century we can see an increase in the number of structures made from stone. During this period in Novgorod the Cathedral of St. Sophia, and in Chernigov Spasskiy Cathedral were built. All of these cathedrals were adorned with rich frescos and mosaics. Also in this century Kiev became famous for its golden gates, made in the time of Yaroslav.

In the second half of the 12<sup>th</sup> century and early years of the 13<sup>th</sup> century both churches and princes' palaces were made of stone. These structures display an architectural style that displays a synthesis of Byzantine elements combined with local traditions. This period witnessed the construction of the Georgiyevskiy Cathedral and the Spasskiy Church in Novgorod's lower sections, the Uspenskiy and Dmitriyevskiy Cathedrals in the city of Vladimir, a palace in Bogolyubovo, and nearby the Pokrov Church. These cathedrals were decorated with statues. In the late 13<sup>th</sup> – early 14<sup>th</sup> century, in the period of Ivan Kalita, four architectural works were erected in the Kremlin in Moscow: the Uspenskiy Cathedral, the Church of Ivan Lestvichnik, the Spas Church, and the Arkhangelskiy Cathedral. Of all the aforementioned structures, only a few have been preserved. Those in Moscow were restored in the time of Dmitriy Donskoy, and the Kremlin's walls were reinforced with white limestone. The Lazarus Church in Murom, a timber structure from the last years of the 14<sup>th</sup> century, is the first surviving example and holds an important place in Russian architecture.

The two schools of architecture opened in Novgorod and Pskov left their mark on Russian architecture in the 15<sup>th</sup> century. The Moscow School of Architecture, established on the basis of the architectural traditions of Pskov and Novgorod, later became one of the most important schools. In Zvenigorod, the Uspenskiy Cathedral, and the Troitse-Sergiyev and Savvino-Storozhevskiy Monasteries were built in the Moscow style. Aristotel Fioravanti, brought from Italy in 1479, finished the construction of the Uspenskiy Cathedral in the Kremlin. Dionisii, his two sons and his students gained fame from the frescos they painted in the Kremlin's Uspenskiy Cathedral and in the Pafnu'yev-Borovskiy Monastery.

## PERFORMING ARTS

### DANCE

Ancient Russian dance was religious in nature, a part of organized pagan rituals where dances were performed in honor of the gods. Although dance later lost its religious character, it remained a part of social events such as births, marriages, religious and national holidays, festivals, etc.

### MUSIC

When Prince Vladimir converted to Orthodox Christianity in 988 he ruled a land that had not yet become a sovereign state and whose culture was pagan in nature. As a result, the Church moved quickly to become the dominant cultural force in Kievan Rus'. However, Vladimir's decision to convert to Orthodoxy led to Russia's political isolation from its neighbors, and in order to prevent outside religious influences from entering Russia the Russian Church became isolationist. One area of culture in which the Church sought to assert its influence was music, both religious and secular.

### **Early Liturgical Music**

Like Orthodox Christianity itself, the music of the Russian Orthodox Church was imported in the 10<sup>th</sup> century from the Byzantine Empire. Initially, musical instruments were not used in the liturgy, as their use was considered sinful by the Orthodox Church, an attitude which would not change until the middle of the 17<sup>th</sup> century. Another aspect of this hostility towards the use of musical instruments was the church's long, bitter struggle against folk musicians, in particular instrumentalists. This animosity was fueled by the Orthodox Church's rivalry with the Catholic Church, which allowed instrumental music, and by its struggle against Russia's pagan heritage, a heritage which folk instrumentalists were continuing in the church's view.

Liturgical music in the Orthodox Church was sung a capella by all-male choirs who performed a monodic chant in unison. Over time this type of liturgical music began to evolve into new forms that were unlike the

Byzantine chants. One of these, developed some time around the 12th century was the *Znamenny chant* (*Znamenny raspev*). These chants were performed using a system of eight voices.

### **Traditional Instruments and the *Skomorokhi***

Before the introduction of Christianity the musical instruments found in Russia were similar to those used throughout medieval Europe. Among these were the *svirel*, an oboe-like instrument; the *gusli*, similar to a zither; the *gudok*, similar to a fiddle; and horns. In addition there were tambourines, assorted noise makers, drums, and small bells, instruments more typically associated with shamanic rituals. These instruments were played during religious and court ceremonies, and for entertainment. They were also associated with the *skomorokhi*, folk musicians in Kievan Rus and Muscovy who often played at weddings.

Skomorokhi were the wandering minstrels in Russia; they were singers of freedom, who dared to ridicule the power, the clergy, and the rich and sympathized with the common people. The *skomorokhi* found themselves officially banned during the “Time of Troubles”, the period when Muscovite Rus’ was being transformed into a secular, centralized state between the 14<sup>th</sup> – 17<sup>th</sup> centuries. The reasons for this ban are not entirely clear; they may have been sacrificed to maintain relations between the church and the state, or they may have been regarded as a threat to the state. Whatever the true reason, pressured by the church Tsar Alexei Mikhailovich issued the decree banning the *skomorokhi* in 1648. After having been an integral part of Russian popular culture for over 700 years, the *skomorokhi* found themselves exiled to northern Russia or Siberia, and their instruments destroyed.

### **THEATER**

Pagan ceremonies in which tales, proverbs and fables were recited, together with the songs and dances of itinerant jesters, known as *Skomorokhi*, laid the foundation for the development of Russian theater. The Skomorokhi, based on Byzantine models, appeared around the middle of the 11<sup>th</sup> century in Kievan Rus and were performers who played musical instruments, sang, danced and even composed the scored for their performances.

The Skomorokhi were not universally popular in Kievan Rus; they are described in pejorative terms in the *Primary Chronicle*. Both the ruling authorities and the Orthodox Church viewed the Skomorokhi as being in league with the devil, and persecuted them for maintaining what they saw regarded as pagan traditions. A major reason for the Skomorokhi’s unpopularity with both the secular and religious leaders was the nature of their art. The Skomorokhi’s performances were aimed at ordinary people, and often were in opposition to those in power. As a result the clergy and feudal rulers viewed the Skomorokhi as useless to society at the very least, and politically and religiously dangerous at the very worst.

Both civil and religious leaders subjected the Skomorokhi to particularly intense persecution during the period of Mongol rule, a period which also coincided with the Orthodox Church’s strong advocacy of asceticism.

The Skomorokhi’s performances continued to be viewed with suspicion during the time of Ivan IV; it was believed that they undermined the authority and interest of the civil and religious leaders. There were even claims that their practices were somehow a form of devilry from the Greeks.

### **Discussion/Questions**

- 1-How did Russian traditional folk dances lose its religious character?
- 2-Why is folklore important in the contemporary world?
- 3-Discuss the *skomorokhi* and their importance in the history of Russian theater.
- 4- Discuss the early developments in Russian music. For what reasons were the Skomorokhi banned?
- 5-Icons had long served in Orthodox practice as devotional aids that portrayed sacred figures, and whose familiar images were associated with the concept of “legitimacy”. Can the political posters that appeared during the Bolshevik revolution be regarded as using themes and elements inspired by Russian Orthodox

iconography, such as lighting etc., to legitimize both the revolution and its leaders, despite the new state's avowed atheism?

6-Talk about the development of iconography in Russia. Why did Russians adopt the style of Andrey Rublev as traditional Russian art?

7- In the early history of Russia the Orthodox Church banned statuary. Why did the Church accept icons as acceptable devotional objects, but not sculpture, unlike Roman Catholic Church which recognized sculpture's iconographic role?

8-Discuss how Christianity effected the architecture in Russia. Do these structures show the influence Byzantine architecture?

### Reading

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2- Malnick, B., "The Origin and Early History of the Theater in Russia", *The Slavonic and East European Review*, Vol. 19, No. 53/54, The Slavonic Year-Book (1939 - 1940), pp. 203-227

3- Senelick, L., T., *The Cambridge Companion to Modern Russian Culture*, Ch.11. The Cambridge University Press, Inc., 1998, pp. 264-299.

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5-Bowit, John, E., "Art", *The Cambridge Companion to Russian Modern Culture*, Edited by Nicholas Ryzhevsky, Cambridge University Press, 2012, pp. 205-235.

6-Rice, Tamara Talbot, *A Concise History of Russian Art*, Frederick A. Praeger Publisher, 1967, pp.189-213.

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### RELIGION

**Paganism:** Prior to the adoption of Christianity the Russian people worshiped pagan gods, fairies, spirits, the earth, trees, stones, fire, the sun and water. In order to cure people of illness the Russians would place them in trees whose trunks were split or broken, seek sacred stones, and offer them to the forests, lakes, and wells. The burials of princes and nobles become elaborate rituals; burial mounds were made for the dead, and one of their wives or slaves was buried with them. After the burial competitions were arranged and memorial meals were given.

The Russians' religion was also based on the influence of hunting and agriculture, and for these people things such as fields, forests, rivers, lakes, pools, houses, and stables held great importance. As a result their religious thinking and emotions were formed within the framework of this life. These people who obtained their living from hunting and from the earth sought the aid of supernatural powers to protect them from difficulties and dangers they encountered in their daily lives and to live in peace, even giving these powers a corner in their homes.

**Christianization:** The acceptance of Christianity in Kievan Russia began a new era in Russian history. In the late 10<sup>th</sup> century the centers of eastern and western Christianity were Constantinople and Rome. By accepting Christianity from Byzantium the Russians moved in the direction of Byzantine civilization, and thus isolated from Rome, and western culture. Through Byzantium the Russians took the customs of Near Eastern, Greek and Christian civilizations "ready-made", but adopted them by giving them a uniquely Russian character. The political hegemony of princes recognized by the Orthodox Church in Byzantium was carried to Kievan Russian also, and was the reason for the princes' consolidation of their power. At the same time, Christianity ended the separation between the indigenous and foreign tribes, merging these peoples with one another. Not only the Slavic tribes, but the Finnish tribes, too, were forced to accept Christianity, and thus, the first step in the new religion's spread from Kiev to Lake Ilmen. As soon as Christianity had been accepted, beginning with Kiev churches and monasteries were constructed, icons made and craftsmen were brought from Byzantium. Kiev became a religious center, the Metropolitan of Kiev was appointed from Constantinople and became the highest ranking religious leader in Russia. The

first Metropolitan for the Russians was Greek, and this situation that would continue to 15<sup>th</sup> century. In 1051 the Metropolitan Ilarion, a Russian, was accepted by Constantinople, but remained in his post for only one year. The rules for the churches in Russia (Nomokanon) were also brought from Byzantium.

Another characteristic that the Russians inherited from Byzantium was the relationship between the church and the state. In Russia, as in Byzantium, the church remained subservient to the state. In western Europe the church and the state were often in conflict, the church was independent of the state and often held a position superior to the state.

In 1054 the Christian world witnessed the final schism dividing the Eastern Orthodox and the western Roman Catholic churches. The western church had adopted the principle of papal superiority and authority over all churches and in matters of doctrine, and claimed that this principle could not be questioned. The Russian church, having its origin in Byzantium, sided with the Orthodox church and opposed Rome.

As a result of the tolerance shown to all religions during the period of Mongol rule, the position of the Russian church was strengthened. Churches were exempt from all taxes, and respect was shown to all rites and ceremonies conducted in them. Such was the level of tolerance that in 1261, with the permission of the Mongol khan, a new bishopric was established in Saray, the seat of the khanate.

Due to the Principality of Kiev's loss of power, the Metropolitan Maxim moved his seat to the city of Vladimir in 1305. Peter, who took Maxim's place after his death, maintaining close relations with Ivan Kalita played a major role in the construction of Uspenskiy Cathedral in Moscow, the expansion of the Principality of Moscow and its becoming the permanent center of the Russian church. Fifty new monasteries were constructed by the monk Sergi Radonezh in this century and monastic life gained vitality.

The 15<sup>th</sup> century was the period in which the Moscow church declared its independence. The Metropolitan of Moscow, Isidore, who had signed the declaration of the Council of Ferrara-Florence reuniting the eastern and western churches, was removed from his position. The newly appointed Metropolitan, Iona, was the Metropolitan of Moscow and thus the head of the independent Orthodox Church. After the fall of Constantinople in 1453, Moscow's dream of becoming the Third Rome resulted in Moscow's status as a patriarchate being accepted.

### **Discussion/Questions**

- 1-How is Christianity reflected in Russian culture?
- 2-Is it possible to see traces of pagan culture in Orthodox Russia?
- 3-Talk about the concept of the Tsar as God. Where did this concept come from? How did the Byzantines regard their Emperor?

### **Reading**

- 1- The Cambridge Companion to Modern Russian Culture, Cambridge University Press, 1998, Ch.3: Religion: Russian Orthodoxy.
- 2- Mandelstam, M.B., Russian Traditional Culture, Religion, Gender and Customary Law, The Introduction of Christianity in Russia and the Pagan Traditions, ME Sharp, 1992.
- 3- Pipes, R., *Russia Under the Old Regime*, New York, 1974, Ch. 9.

### **PHILOSOPHY**

Russia was introduced to philosophy via religion, specifically through *The Fathers of the Church*, a work translated from Greek shortly after the late 10<sup>th</sup> century conversion to Christianity. Translations of other religious works, the theological works of St. John Damascene in the 12<sup>th</sup> century and Dionysius the Areopagite in the 14<sup>th</sup>, provided the impetus for some Russian clergymen to compose their own works on philosophy and theology.

## Discussion/Questions

- 1- Why was there a strong resistance to secular learning in Kievan Rus?
- 2- Why Russian philosophical thought only emerged in the second half of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, remaining faithful to its Western founders?

## Reading

- 1- Graham, R. L., *Science in Russia and the Soviet Union, A Short History*, Cambridge University Press, 1994.
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## LITERATURE

The story of Russian literature begins in 988 - a date of great importance in Russian political and cultural history, when the ruler of Kievan Rus officially accepted Christianity and made it the new faith of his realm. Prior to this date there was no written literature in Rus, but with his conversion Prince Vladimir laid the foundation for what is now known as medieval Russian literature, although it would not attain its true form — on the basis of the literature which survived the destruction of the Mongol invasions - for a number of years thereafter. But the eastern Slavs received an alphabet created by Cyril and Methodius, and also became heirs to the extensive Byzantine cultural heritage which had already been and would later be translated from the Greek.

**Religious literature:** In the Kievan period the foreign works which were translated in Russia primarily reflected the interests of the church: almost all were translated from Greek, and most were related to the interests of the church. Written in 1056-1057, *The Ostromir Gospel* (Ostromirovo evangeliye) is the oldest Russian manuscript which can be securely dated. Hilarion's *Sermon on Law and Grace* (*Slovo o zakone i blagodatii Ilariona*) is another notable religious story of Old Russian literature.

**Hagiography (biographies of the saints):** Hagiography was the most common genre of Old Russian literature, with a number of works from the earliest period. Among these surviving works are a chronicle and two hagiographies of Boris and Gleb, the first Russian saints. The most important hagiography of this period is the *Life of Saint Sergius of Radonezh* (Zhitie Sergia Radonezhskogo) written by Epifany Premudry.

**Epics and historical works:** The most important secular work written in the period between the end of the 11<sup>th</sup> century and the beginning of the 12<sup>th</sup> century is the *Primary Chronicle* (Povest' vremennykh let) written by Nestor in the Pecherskiy Monastery in Kiev some time in the first half of the 12<sup>th</sup> century, and covers the history of Russia between the years 1040-1118. The *Chronicle* begins with the genealogy of the Slavs. Other important works from the early 12<sup>th</sup> century are the *Testament of Vladimir Monomakh* (Pouchenie Vladimira Monomakha) and *The Tale of Igor's Campaign* (Slovo o polku Igoreve), a type of epic poem concerning Prince Igor's raid against the Polovtsy (Kipchak), a steppe people, his capture, and his escape.

A series of works in assorted genres, known collectively as the Kulikovo cycle, celebrated the first Russian victory over the Tatars in 1380 under the leadership of Grand Prince Dmitry Ivanovich Donskoy. A less-accomplished imitation of the Igor Tale, the *Zadonshchina* glorifies Dmitry Donskoy.

Concurrent with Moscow's increasing power, a number of writings appeared on the subject of the "translation of empire", writings whose purpose was to legitimize Russia's imperial claims. They sought to do achieve this by creating elaborate genealogies and relating accounts of how imperial and ecclesiastical regalia were transferred to Russia. Among the most influential of these works was the monk Filofei's epistle to Vasily III (written between 1514 and 1521). In it he put forward the claim that in the wake of the Ottoman conquest of Constantinople (the second Rome), Moscow was the Third Rome of the only truly Christian state, Orthodox Russia. In essence, this proposition was an attempt to legitimize Russian ambitions.

Some of the other well-known works of the period include stories designed to entertain; the *Tale of Peter and Fevroniya of Murom* (Povest o Petre i Fevronii Muromskikh) is one such example. A merchant, Afanasy Nikitin, describes his voyages to Persia and India between the years 1466–1472 in his *Journey Beyond Three Seas* (Khozheniye za tri morya). However, one of the most significant aspects of this period is the fact that the Renaissance completely bypassed Russia, a fact which only helped to increase the cultural differences between Russia and the West. Russia would not produce the secular literature found in the West.

The themes of almost all works composed in the 14<sup>th</sup> century are the establishment of the centralized Russian state, the unity of Russian territory, the struggles to re-establish the independence of the lands invaded by the Tatars, and the crushing defeat inflicted on the leader of the Golden Horde, Mamai Khan, at the Battle of Kulikovo in the late 14<sup>th</sup> – early 15<sup>th</sup> centuries. The most important literary works of this century are the *Story About the Bloody Battle of Grand Prince Dmitrii Ivanovich with Mamai* (Povest' o poboishche velikogo knyazya Dmitriya Ivanovicha na Donu s Mamaem), *Story About the Bloody Battle of Mamai* (Skazanie o Mamaevom poboishche), *The Life of the Metropolitan Peter* (Zhitie metropolita Petra), and *The Story About Timur Aksak* (Povest' o Temir Aksake).

In the 15<sup>th</sup> century patriotic consciousness reached its peak, reflections of this consciousness are clearly seen in the works of writers such as Epifaniy Premudriy, Maksim Grek and Andrey Rublev. Biographies maintained their place in the literature of this period. Important works from the 15<sup>th</sup> century include *The Life of Stephen Permsky* (Zhitie Stefana Permskogo), *The Life of Sergiy Radonezhsky* (Zhitie Sergiya Radonezhskogo), Nestor *Iskander's Tale on the Taking of Tsargrad* (Povest' Nestora Iskandera o vzyatii Tsar'grada), Afanasy Nikitin's *Journey across Three Seas* (Khozhenie za tri morya Afanasiya Nikitina).

**Popular literature:** The 16<sup>th</sup> century literature consists of popular literature on socio-political subjects. Writers both within and outside of the church dealt with the most important state and societal issues in their works. The most important works of 16<sup>th</sup> century literature are *The Tale of the Princes of Vladimir* (Skazanie o knyazyakh Vladimirskikh), *Legend of Sultan Mehmet* (Skazanie o Magmete-saltane), *Great Monthly Readings* (Velikie Chet'i - Minei), *The Book of Degrees of the Tsars' Genealogy* (Kniga stepennaya tsarskogo rodosloviya), *Chronicle of Kazan* (Skazanie o Kazanskom tsarstve) and *Domostroy* (Domostroy).

### Discussion/Questions

- 1-Why were Christian Russians unable to entirely eliminate all traces of paganism in their culture?
- 2-Talk about the origin of Byliny and how were they spread.
- 3-What are the historical and socio-cultural factors that have played a role in the evolution of the Russian language?
- 4- What do medieval Russian documents from the 11<sup>th</sup> century reveal about the literary genres used in this time?
- 5- How do the writings about saints' lives differ from modern biographical stories?
- 6- How did the lives of early Russians change after they began to use writing?
- 7-Describe the deities the pagan Russians worshiped that were absorbed into Christianity.
- 8-What sources provide us with information about Russian mythology?

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