



Russia toward A.D. 1200

A. EPICS AND STORIES FROM THE CHRONICLES

a. Stories from the *Primary Chronicle*

THE *Primary Chronicle*, or, as it was called by its authors, *The Tale of Bygone Years*, is structurally a very complicated work compiled by various writers in the course of some three-quarters of a century, from about 1040 to 1118. After a short introduction, which forms a prolegomenon to Russian history, the *Chronicle* starts with the year 852 (6360, according to the old Byzantine and Russian calendars) and is organized strictly on a yearly basis. Even when the chronicler had no event to record for a given year he recorded the year, leaving a blank space after it. Some of the entries are extremely laconic and are written in an almost telegraphic style, for example: "In the year 6376 (868) Basil [Emperor of Byzantium] began to rule. In the year 6377 (869) the entire Bulgarian land was Christianized. In the year 6378 (870) . . ." (no entry).

Besides these telegraphic entries, however, the *Chronicle* contains many colorful accounts of the deeds of the Russian princes, of legal documents—such as treaties between Russia and Byzantium, and the *Testament*, or *Instruction*, of Vladimir Monomakh—and lengthier descriptions of the feuds, wars, and other events that took place in old Russia.

According to the renowned Russian philologist Alexis Shakhmatov, whose opinion is generally accepted by most contemporary investigators of *The Tale of Bygone Years*, the first draft of this chronicle was composed between 1037 and 1039. From 1060 to 1073 the task of its continuance was assumed by Nikon, a monk of the Kievan Crypt Monastery. Nikon recorded many events to which he was an eyewitness and also re-edited the earlier entries. From 1093 to 1095 this version of the *Chronicle* was reworked in the Kievan Crypt Monastery and the resulting redaction is usually referred to as the "Beginning Version" by literary historians. Around 1113 another monk of the Kievan Crypt Monastery, Nestor, rewrote the "Beginning Version" and it was probably he, also, who added the introduction with its historical and philosophical discussions. It was at this time, apparently, that the work received its present name, *The Tale of Bygone Years*. Nestor's version of the *Chronicle* also underwent redaction between 1117 and 1118 and this became the final form of the *Primary Chronicle*. As such, it was used as the initial part of most other Russian annals through the fourteenth

and fifteenth centuries, as in the *Laurentian Chronicle*, the *Hypatian Chronicle*, and the *Troitsky (Trinity) Chronicle*, the most important early Russian annals.

The text of the Prolegomenon and various stories taken from the *Primary Chronicle* are presented here in the translation by Samuel H. Cross. Some editorial changes as well as changes in transliteration of geographical and historical names have been made for the sake of consistency in spelling throughout this volume.

1. PROLEGOMENON

THIS IS THE TALE OF BYGONE YEARS:
FROM WHENCE CAME THE RUSSIAN LAND, WHO
FIRST RULED IN KIEV, AND FROM WHICH COURSE
THE RUSSIAN LAND HAD ITS BEGINNING

LET us begin this tale in this way: after the Flood the sons of Noah—Shem, Ham, and Japheth—divided the earth among them. To the lot of Shem fell the Orient, and his share extended lengthwise as far as India and breadthwise (from east to south) as far as Rhinocorura, including Persia and Bactria, as well as Syria, Media (which lies beside the Euphrates River), Babylon, Cordyna, Assyria, Mesopotamia, Arabia the Ancient, Elymais, India, Arabia the Mighty, Coelesyria, Commagene, and all Phoenicia.

To the lot of Ham fell the southern region, comprising Egypt, Ethiopia facing toward India, the other Ethiopia out of which the red Ethiopian river flows to the eastward, the Thebaid, Libya as far as Cyrene, Marmaris, Syrtis, Numidia, Massyris, and Mauretania over against Cadiz. Among the regions of the Orient, Ham also received Cilicia, Pamphylia, Mysia, Lycaonia, Phrygia, Camalia, Lycia, Caria, Lydia, the rest of Moesia, Troas, Aeolia, Bithynia, and ancient Phrygia. He likewise acquired the islands of Sardinia, Crete, and Cyprus, and the river Gihon, called the Nile.

To the lot of Japheth fell the northern and the western sections, including Media, Albania, Armenia (both little and great), Cappadocia, Paphlagonia, Galatia, Colchis, Bospore, Maeotis, Dervis, Sarmatia, Tauria, Scythia, Thrace, Macedonia, Dalmatia, Molossia, Thessaly, Locris, Pellene (which is also called the Peloponnese), Arcadia, Epirus, Illyria, the Slavs, Lychnitis, Adriaca, and the Adriatic Sea. He received also the islands of Britain, Sicily, Euboea, Rhodes, Chios, Lesbos, Cythera, Zacyn-

thus, Cephallenia, Ithaca, and Corcyra, as well as a portion of the land of Asia called Ionia, the river Tigris flowing between the Medes and Babylon, and the territory to the north extending as far as the Pontus and including the Danube, the Dniester, and the Caucasian Mountains, which are called Hungarian, and thence even to the Dnieper. He likewise acquired dominion over other rivers, among them the Desna, the Pripet, the Dvina, the Volkhov, and the Volga, which flows eastward into the portion of Shem.

In the share of Japheth lie Russia, Chud, and all the gentiles: Meria, Muroma, Ves, Mordova, Chud beyond the hills, Perm, Pechera, Yam, Ugra, Litva, Zimegola, Kors, Setgola, and Liub. The Liakhs, the Prussians, and Chud border on the Varangian Sea. The Varangians dwell on the shores of that same sea and extend to the eastward as far as the portion of Shem. They likewise live to the west beside this sea as far as the land of the Angles and the Italians. For the following nations also are a part of the race of Japheth: the Varangians, the Swedes, the Normans, the Rus [Russians], the Angles, the Gauls, the Italians, the Romans, the Germans, the Carolingians, the Venetians, the Genoese, and so on. Their homes are situated in the northwest and adjoin the Hamitic tribes.

Thus Shem, Ham, and Japheth divided the earth among them, and after casting lots, so that none might encroach upon his brother's share, they lived each in his appointed portion. There was but one language, and as men multiplied throughout the earth, they planned, in the days of Yoktan and Peleg, to build a tower as high as heaven itself. Thus they gathered together in the plain of Shinar to build the tower and the city of Babylon round about it. But they wrought upon the tower for forty years, and it was unfinished. Then the Lord God descended to look upon the city and the tower, and said: "This race is one, and their tongue is one." So the Lord confused the tongues, and, after dividing the people into seventy-two races, he scattered them over the whole world. After the confusion of the tongues, God overthrew the tower with a great wind, and the ruin of it lies between Assur and Babylon. In height and in breadth it is 5,433 cubits, and the ruin was preserved for many years.

After the destruction of the tower and the division of the nations, the sons of Shem occupied the eastern regions, the sons of Ham those of the south, and the sons of Japheth the western and the northern lands. Among these seventy-two nations, the Slavic race is derived from the line of Japheth, since they are the Noricians, who are identical with the Slavs.

For many years the Slavs lived beside the Danube, where the

Hungarian and Bulgarian lands now lie. From among these Slavs, parties scattered throughout the country and were known by appropriate names, according to the places where they settled. Thus some came and settled by the river Morava, and were named Moravians, while others were called Czechs. Among these same Slavs are included the White Croats, the Serbs, and the Khorutaniens. For when the Vlaks attacked the Danubian Slavs, settled among them, and did them violence, the latter came and made their homes by the Vistula, and were then called Liakhs.¹ Of these same Liakhs some were called Poles, some Lutichians, some Mazovians, and still others Pomorians. Certain Slavs settled also on the Dnieper, and were there called Polianians. Still others were named Derevlans, because they lived in the forests. Some also lived between the Pripet and the Dvina, and were known as Dregovichians. Other tribes resided along the Dvina and were called Polotians on account of a small stream called the Polota, which flows into the Dvina. It was from this same stream that they were named Polotians. The Slavs also dwelt about Lake Ilmen, and were known there by their own original name. They built a city which they called Novgorod. Still others had their homes along the Desna, the Sem, and the Sula, and were called Severians. Thus the Slavic race was divided, and its language was known as Slavic.

When the Polianians lived by themselves among the hills, a trade route connected the Varangians with the Greeks. Starting from Greece, this route proceeds along the Dnieper, above which a portage leads to the Lovat. By following the Lovat, the great lake Ilmen is reached. The river Volkhov flows out of this lake and enters the great lake Nevo. The mouth of this lake opens into the Varangian Sea. Over this sea goes the route to Rome, and on from Rome overseas to Constantinople. The Pontus, into which flows the river Dnieper, may be reached from that point. The Dnieper itself rises in the upland forest, and flows southward. The Dvina has its source in this same forest, but flows northward and empties into the Varangian Sea. The Volga rises in this same forest, but flows to the east, and discharges through seventy mouths into the Caspian Sea. It is possible by this route to go eastward to reach the Bulgars and Khorezm, and thus attain the region of Shem. Along the Dvina runs the route to the Varangians, whence one may reach Rome, and go on from there to the race of Ham. But the Dnieper flows through various mouths into the Pontus. This sea, beside which taught St. Andrew, Peter's brother, is called the Russian Sea.

¹ Original Slavic name for Poles.

2. THE APOSTLE ANDREW COMES TO RUSSIA

In the tenth or eleventh century the belief was held, based on the writing of Eusebius, that the Apostle Andrew, during his trip to the Greek colonies on the Black Sea, had visited the territories that were later to become Russia. This legend became very popular with the Russians and laid the foundation for the later-developed theory of Russia as the guardian of the Orthodox Christian faith. According to the *Primary Chronicle*, Andrew crossed through Russia from the mouth of the Dnieper River, passed the hills on which Kiev was later founded, and went as far north as the ancient city of Novgorod.

When Andrew was teaching in Sinope and came to Kherson (as has been recounted elsewhere), he observed that the mouth of the Dnieper was nearby. Conceiving a desire to go to Rome, he thus went to the mouth of the Dnieper. Thence he ascended the river, and by chance he halted beneath the hills upon the shore. Upon arising in the morning, he observed to the disciples who were with him: "See ye these hills? So shall the favor of God shine upon them that on this spot a great city shall arise, and God shall erect many churches therein." He drew near the hills, and having blessed them, he set up a cross. After offering his prayer to God, he descended from the hill on which Kiev was subsequently built, and continued his journey up the Dnieper.

He then reached the Slavs at the point where Novgorod is now situated. He saw these people existing according to their customs, and on observing how they bathed and drenched themselves, he wondered at them. He went thence among the Varangians and came to Rome, where he recounted what he had learned and observed. "Wondrous to relate," said he, "I saw the land of the Slavs, and while I was among them, I noticed their wooden bathhouses. They warm them to extreme heat, then undress, and after anointing themselves with tallow, they take young reeds and lash their bodies. They actually lash themselves so violently that they barely escape alive. Then they drench themselves with cold water, and thus are revived. They think nothing of doing this every day, and actually inflict such voluntary torture upon themselves. They make of the act not a mere washing but a veritable torment." When his hearers learned this fact, they marveled. But Andrew, after his stay in Rome, returned to Sinope.

3. THE FOUNDING OF THE CITY OF KIEV

The story of the founding of Kiev by three brothers, Kii, Shchek, and Khoriv, constitutes one of the oldest historical legends of Russia. An Armenian historian of the seventh century, Zenob Glak, knew of a similar legend concerning the founding of the city of Kuar (Kiev) in the land of Poluni (Polianians) by three brothers, Kuar, Mentery, and Khorean. It is possible that this legend arose from the actual merging of three settlements that archaeological evidence shows to have existed within the limits of present-day Kiev.

The Polianians lived apart and governed their families, for thus far they were brethren, and each one lived with his gens on his own lands, ruling over his kinfolk. There were three brothers, Kii, Shchek, and Khoriv, and their sister was named Lybed. Kii lived upon the hill where the Borich Trail now is, and Shchek dwelt upon the hill now named Shchekovitz, while on the third resided Khoriv, after whom this hill is named Khorevitza. They built a town and named it Kiev after their oldest brother. Around the town lay a wood and a great pine forest in which they used to catch wild beasts. These men were wise and prudent; they were called Polianians, and there are Polianians descended from them living in Kiev to this day.

Some ignorant persons have claimed that Kii was a ferryman, for near Kiev there was at that time a ferry from the other side of the river, in consequence of which people used to say: "To Kii's ferry." Now, if Kii had been a mere ferryman, he would never have gone to Constantinople. He was then the chief of his kin, and it is related what great honor he received from the emperor when he went to visit him. On his homeward journey, he arrived at the Danube. The place pleased him, and he built a small town, wishing to dwell there with his kinfolk. But those who lived nearby would not grant him this privilege. Yet even now the dwellers by the Danube call this town Kievetz. When Kii returned to Kiev, his native city, he ended his life there; and his brothers Shchek and Khoriv, as well as their sister Lybed, died there also.

4. THE BEGINNING OF THE RUSSIAN STATE AND THE ARRIVAL OF RURIK

The expansion of the Norsemen in the ninth and tenth centuries was not limited to northwestern Europe—Germany, France, and England. Long before the Vikings established themselves in France and, under William the Conqueror, in England, other Norse warriors from Norway, Sweden, and Denmark had penetrated to the Mediterranean Sea and built strong principalities in southern Italy and Greece. Some of these Norsemen entered the service of Byzantium in Constantinople. Simultaneously, another current of Norse expansion extended into eastern Europe. Skillfully utilizing the river systems of Russia, with the Dnieper playing the most important role, the Vikings—or, as the Russians called them, the Varangians—crossed through Russia and began to attack Byzantium, their bands being reinforced by Slavs.

According to both the *Primary Chronicle* and archaeological evidence, some of these Varangians settled in various places on Russian territory. It is difficult to determine now how important their role was in the subsequent organization of the Russian state, but the *Chronicle* records that Rurik, the leader of a group of Varangians, was invited to rule over Novgorod in 862, and legend has it that Rurik became the founder of both the Russian state and the dynasty that ruled Russia until 1598, when Fedor, the son of Ivan IV, died without an heir. The legend of Rurik's founding of the Russian state has been contested by many distinguished scholars and has divided most Russian historians into the Normanists, or "Norsemanists," who believe the legend to be true, and the anti-Normanists, who reject it and consider the Russian state to have been founded long before the arrival of Rurik.

6367 (859) The Varangians from beyond the sea imposed tribute upon the Chuds, the Slavs, the Merians, the Ves, and the Krivichians. But the Khazars imposed it upon the Polianians, the Severians, and the Viaticians, and collected a squirrel skin and a beaver skin from each hearth.

6370 (862) The Slavs, the tributaries, of the Varangians drove them back beyond the sea and, refusing them further tribute, set out to govern themselves. There was no law among them, but tribe rose against tribe. Discord thus ensued among them, and they began to war one against another. They said to themselves: "Let us seek a prince who may rule over us, and judge us according to the law." They accordingly went overseas

to the Varangian Rus; these particular Varangians were known as Rus, just as some are called Swedes, and others Normans, Angles, and Goths, for they were thus named. The Chuds, the Slavs, and the Krivichians then said to the people of Rus: "Our whole land is great and rich, but there is no order in it. Come to rule and reign over us." They thus selected three brothers, with their kinfolk, who took with them all the Rus, and migrated. The oldest, Rurik, located himself in Novgorod; the second, Sineus, in Beloozero; and the third, Truvor, in Izborsk. On account of these Varangians, the district of Novgorod became known as Russian (Rus) land. The present inhabitants of Novgorod are descended from the Varangian race, but aforetime they were Slavs.

After two years, Sineus and his brother Truvor died, and Rurik assumed the sole authority. He assigned cities to his followers, Polotzk to one, Rostov to another, and to another Beloozero. In these cities there are thus Varangian colonists, but the first settlers were, in Novgorod, Slavs; in Polotzk, Krivichians; at Beloozero, Ves; in Rostov, Merians; and in Murom, Muromians. Rurik had dominion over all these districts.

With Rurik there were two men who did not belong to his kin, but were boyars. They obtained permission to go to Constantinople with their families. They thus sailed down the Dnieper, and in the course of their journey they saw a small city on a hill. Upon their inquiry as to whose town it was, they were informed that three brothers, Kii, Shchek, and Khoriv, had once built the city, but that since their deaths, their descendants were living there as tributaries of the Khazars. Askold and Dir remained in this city, and after gathering together many Varangians, they established their domination over the country of the Polianians at the same time that Rurik was ruling at Novgorod.

6374 (866) Askold and Dir attacked the Byzantine capital during the fourteenth year of the reign of the Emperor Michael. When the emperor had set forth against the Saracens and had arrived at the Black River, the eparch sent him word that the Russians were approaching Constantinople, and the emperor turned back. Upon arriving inside the strait, the Russians made a great massacre of the Christians, and attacked Constantinople in two hundred boats. The emperor succeeded with difficulty in entering the city. The people prayed all night with the Patriarch Photius at the Church of the Holy Virgin in Blachernae. They also sang hymns and carried the sacred vestment of the Virgin to dip it in the sea. The weather was still, and the sea was calm, but a storm of wind came up, and when great waves

straightway rose, confusing the boats of the godless Russians, it threw them upon the shore and broke them up, so that few escaped such destruction. The survivors then returned to their native land.

5. PRINCE OLEG'S CAMPAIGN AGAINST CONSTANTINOPLE

According to the *Primary Chronicle*, Rurik died in 879, leaving the conduct of state affairs to his relative, Oleg, in view of the infancy of Rurik's son, Igor. Oleg was the first nonlegendary ruler of Russia. In 882 he moved the capital from Novgorod to Kiev, and consolidated most of the Russian and Eastern Slavic tribes under his rule. A successful warrior and cautious ruler, Oleg became a popular figure in Russian historical tradition, and was called "the Seer" by his contemporaries. His campaigns against the Byzantine Empire, referred to by the writer of the *Chronicle* as the "Greek Empire," were particularly successful.

The tribes mentioned in the following text are primarily of Slavic origin. The Krivichians were a Slavic people who inhabited the entire northwestern Russian territory between the present cities of Moscow, Tver', Pskov, and Minsk. The Chuds, Merians, and Ves were Finno-Ugric tribes of northern Russia.

6415 (907) Leaving Igor in Kiev, Prince Oleg attacked the Greeks. He took with him a multitude of Varangians, Slavs, Chuds, Krivichians, Merians, Polianians, Severians, Derevlians, Radimichians, Croats, Dulebians, and Tivercians as the guides. All these tribes are known as Great Scythia by the Greeks. With this entire force, Oleg sallied forth by horse and by ship, and the number of his vessels was two thousand. He arrived before Constantinople, but the Greeks fortified the strait and closed up the city. Oleg disembarked upon the shore, and ordered his soldiery to beach the ships. They waged war around the city, and accomplished much slaughter of the Greeks. They also destroyed many palaces and burned the churches. Of the prisoners they captured, some they beheaded, some they tortured, some they shot, and still others they cast into the sea. The Russians inflicted many other woes upon the Greeks after the usual manner of soldiers. Oleg commanded his warriors to make wheels, which they attached to the ships, and when the wind was favorable they spread the sails and bore down upon the city from the open country. When the Greeks beheld this, they were afraid, and, sending messengers to Oleg, they implored him not

to destroy the city, and offered to submit to such tribute as he should desire. Thus Oleg halted his troops. The Greeks then brought out to him food and wine, but he would not accept it, for it was mixed with poison. Then the Greeks were terrified and exclaimed: "This is not Oleg, but St. Demetrius, whom God has sent upon us." So Oleg demanded that they pay tribute for his two thousand ships at the rate of twelve *grivnas* per man, with forty men reckoned to a ship.

The Greeks assented to these terms, and prayed for peace lest Oleg should conquer the land of Greece. Retiring thus a short distance from the city, Oleg concluded a peace with the Greek emperors Leo and Alexander, and sent into the city to them Karl, Farulf, Vermund, Hrollaf, and Steinvith, with instructions to receive the tribute. The Greeks promised to satisfy their requirements. Oleg demanded that they should give to the troops on the two thousand ships twelve *grivnas* per bench, and pay in addition the sums required for the various Russian cities: first Kiev, then Chernigov, Pereiaslavl, Polotzk, Rostov, Liubech, and the other towns. In these cities lived princes subject to Oleg.

The Russians proposed the following terms: "The Russians who come hither shall receive as much grain as they require. Whosoever come as merchants shall receive supplies for six months, including bread, wine, meat, fish, and fruit. Baths shall be prepared for them in any volume they require. When the Russians return homeward, they shall receive from your emperor food, anchors, cordage, and sails, and whatever else is needful for the journey." The Greeks accepted these stipulations, and the emperors and all the courtiers declared: "If Russians come hither without merchandise, they shall receive no provisions. Your prince shall personally lay injunction upon such Russians as journey hither that they shall do no violence in the towns and throughout our territory. Such Russians as arrive here shall dwell in the St. Mamas quarter. Our government will send officers to record their names, and they shall then receive their monthly allowance, first the natives of Kiev, then those from Chernigov, Pereiaslavl, and the other cities. They shall not enter the city save through one gate, unarmed and fifty at a time, escorted by soldiers of the emperor. They may purchase wares according to their requirements, and tax-free."

Thus the emperors Leo and Alexander made peace with Oleg, and after agreeing upon the tribute and mutually binding themselves by oath, they kissed the cross, and invited Oleg and his men to swear an oath likewise. According to the religion of the Russians, the latter swore by their weapons and by their god

Perun, as well as by Volos, the god of cattle, and thus confirmed the treaty.

Oleg gave orders that silken sails should be made for the Russians and linen ones for the Slavs, and his demand was satisfied. The Russians hung their shields upon the gates as a sign of victory, and Oleg then departed from Constantinople. The Russians unfurled their silken sails and the Slavs their sails of linen, but the wind tore them. Then the Slavs said: "Let us keep our canvas ones; linen sails are not made for the Slavs." So Oleg came to Kiev, bearing palls, gold, fruit, and wine, along with every sort of adornment. The people called Oleg "the Seer," for they were but pagans, and therefore ignorant.

6. THE DEATH OF OLEG

The life of Oleg, the Seer, furnished material for several popular legends, one of which treats his death as predicted by the magicians.

6420 (912) Thus Oleg ruled in Kiev, and dwelt at peace with all nations.

Now autumn came, and Oleg bethought him of his horse that he had caused to be well fed, yet had never mounted. For on one occasion he had made inquiry of the wonder-working magicians as to the ultimate cause of his death. One magician replied: "O Prince, it is from the steed which you love and on which you ride that you shall meet your death." Oleg then reflected, and determined never to mount this horse or even to look upon it again. So he gave command that the horse should be properly fed, but never led into his presence. He thus let several years pass until he had attacked the Greeks. After he returned to Kiev, four years elapsed, but in the fifth he thought of the horse through which the magicians had foretold that he should meet his death. He thus summoned his senior squire and inquired as to the whereabouts of the horse which he had ordered to be fed and well cared for. The squire answered that he was dead. Oleg laughed and mocked the magician, exclaiming: "Soothsayers tell untruths, and their words are naught but falsehood. This horse is dead, but I am still alive."

Then he commanded that a horse should be saddled. "Let me see his bones," said he. He rode to the place where the bare bones and the skull lay. Dismounting from his horse, he laughed, and remarked: "Am I to receive my death from this skull?" And he stamped upon the skull with his foot. But a serpent crawled

forth from it and bit him in the foot, so that in consequence he sickened and died. All the people mourned for him in great grief. They bore him away and buried him upon the hill which is called Shchekovitza. His tomb stands there to this day, and it is called the Tomb of Oleg.

7. IGOR'S DEATH AND OLGA'S REVENGE

After Oleg's death, Igor became the ruler of Russia. He was neither successful in his military enterprises nor popular with the people. A campaign undertaken by him against the Slavic tribe of Derevlans, who lived between Kiev and the present-day Polish border, resulted in his death. His clever widow, Olga, cruelly revenged the death of her husband. Folklore motifs are evident in this story of her revenge, which is one of the most colorful narratives of *The Tale of Bygone Years*.

6453 (945) In this year, Igor's retainers said to him: "The servants of Sveinald are adorned with weapons and fine raiment, but we are naked. Go forth with us, O prince, after tribute, that both you and we may profit thereby." Igor heeded their words, and he attacked Dereva in search of tribute. He demanded additional tribute, and collected it by violence from the people with the assistance of his followers. After thus gathering the tribute, he returned to his city. On his homeward way, he said to his followers, after some reflection: "Go forward with the tribute. I shall turn back, and rejoin you later." He dismissed his retainers on their journey homeward, but being desirous of still greater booty, he returned on his tracks with a few of his vassals.

The Derevlans heard that he was again approaching, and consulted with Mal, their prince, saying: "If a wolf comes among the sheep, he will take away the whole flock one by one, unless he be killed. If we do not thus kill him now, he will destroy us all." They then sent forward to Igor inquiring why he had returned, since he had collected all the tribute. But Igor did not heed them, and the Derevlans came forth from the city of Izkorosten, and slew Igor and his company, for the number of the latter was few. So Igor was buried, and his tomb is near the city of Izkorosten in Dereva even to this day.

But Olga was in Kiev with her son, the boy Sviatoslav. His tutor was Asmund, and the troop commander was Sveinald, the father of Mistisha. The Derevlans then said: "See, we have killed the Prince of Russia. Let us take his wife Olga for our

Prince Mal, and then we shall obtain possession of Sviatoslav, and work our will upon him." So they sent their best men, twenty in number, to Olga by boat, and they arrived below Borichev in their boat. At that time, the water flowed below the heights of Kiev, and the inhabitants did not live in the valley, but upon the heights. The city of Kiev was on the present site of the palace of Gordiat and Nicephorus, and the prince's palace was in the city where the palace of Vratslav and Chud now stands, while the ferry was outside the city. Without the city there stood another palace, where the palace of the Cantors is now situated, behind the Church of the Holy Virgin upon the heights. This was a palace with a stone hall.

Olga was informed that the Derevlans had arrived, and summoned them to her presence with a gracious welcome. When the Derevlans had thus announced their arrival, Olga replied with an inquiry as to the reason of their coming. The Derevlans then announced that their tribe had sent them to report that they had slain her husband, because he was like a wolf, crafty and ravaging, but that their princes, who had thus preserved the land of Dereva, were good, and that Olga should come and marry their Prince Mal. For the name of the Prince of Dereva was Mal.

Olga made this reply: "Your proposal is pleasing to me; indeed, my husband cannot rise again from the dead. But I desire to honor you tomorrow in the presence of my people. Return now to your boat, and remain there with an aspect of arrogance. I shall send for you on the morrow, and you shall say: 'We will not ride on horses nor go on foot; carry us in our boat.' And you shall be carried in your boat." Thus she dismissed them to their vessel.

Now Olga gave command that a large deep ditch should be dug in the castle with the hall, outside the city. Thus, on the morrow, Olga, as she sat in the hall, sent for the strangers, and her messengers approached them and said: "Olga summons you to great honor." But they replied: "We will not ride on horseback nor in wagons, nor go on foot; carry us in our boat." The people of Kiev then lamented: "Slavery is our lot. Our prince is killed, and our princess intends to marry their prince." So they carried the Derevlans in their boat. The latter sat on the crossbenches in great robes, puffed up with pride. They thus were borne into the court before Olga, and when the men had brought the Derevlans in, they dropped them into the trench along with the boat. Olga bent over and inquired whether they found the honor to their taste. They answered that it was worse

than the death of Igor. She then commanded that they should be buried alive, and they were thus buried.

Olga then sent messages to the Derevlians to the effect that, if they really required her presence, they should send after her their distinguished men, so that she might go to their prince with due honor, for otherwise her people in Kiev would not let her go. When the Derevlians heard this message, they gathered together the best men who governed the land of Dereva and sent them to her. When the Derevlians arrived, Olga commanded that a bath should be made ready, and invited them to appear before her after they had bathed. The bathhouse was then heated, and the Derevlians entered in to bathe. Olga's men closed up the bathhouse behind them, and she gave orders to set it on fire from the doors, so that the Derevlians were all burned to death.

Olga then sent to the Derevlians the following message: "I am now coming to you, so prepare great quantities of mead in the city where you killed my husband, that I may weep over his grave and hold a funeral feast for him." When they heard these words, they gathered great quantities of honey, and brewed mead. Taking a small escort, Olga made the journey with ease, and upon her arrival at Igor's tomb, she wept for her husband. She bade her followers pile up a great mound, and when they had piled it up, she also gave command that a funeral feast should be held. Thereupon the Derevlians sat down to drink, and Olga bade her followers wait upon them.

The Derevlians inquired of Olga where the retinue was which they had sent to meet her. She replied that they were following with her husband's bodyguard. When the Derevlians were drunk, she bade her followers fall upon them, and went about herself egging on her retinue to the Massacre of the Derevlians. So they cut down five thousand of them; but Olga returned to Kiev and prepared an army to attack the survivors.

6454 (946) Olga, together with her son Sviatoslav, gathered a large and valiant army, and proceeded to attack the land of the Derevlians. The latter came out to meet her troops, and when both forces were ready for combat, Sviatoslav cast his spear against the Derevlians. But the spear went between the ears of his horse, and struck its feet, for the prince was but a child. Then Sveinald and Asmund said: "The prince has already begun battle; press on, vassals, after the prince." Thus they conquered the Derevlians, with the result that the latter fled, and shut themselves up in their cities.

Olga hastened with her son to the city of Izkorosten, for it was there that her husband had been slain, and they laid siege

to the city. The Derevlians barricaded themselves within the city, and fought valiantly from it, for they realized that they had killed the prince, and to what fate they would in consequence surrender.

Olga remained there a year without being able to take the city, and then she thought out this plan. She sent into the town the following message: "Why do you persist in holding out? All your cities have surrendered to me and submitted to tribute, so that the inhabitants now cultivate their fields and their lands in peace. But you had rather die of hunger, without submitting to tribute." The Derevlians replied that they would be glad to submit to tribute but that she was still bent on avenging her husband.

Olga then answered: "Since I have already avenged the misfortune of my husband twice on the occasions when your messengers came to Kiev, and a third time when I held a funeral feast for him, I do not desire further revenge, but am anxious to receive a small tribute. After I have made peace with you, I shall return home again."

The Derevlians then inquired what she desired of them, and expressed their readiness to pay honey and furs. Olga retorted that at the moment they had neither honey nor furs but that she had one small request to make. "Give me three pigeons," she said, "and three sparrows from each house. I do not desire to impose a heavy tribute, like my husband, but I require only this small gift from you, for you are impoverished by the siege."

The Derevlians rejoiced, and collected from each house three pigeons and three sparrows, which they sent to Olga with their greetings. Olga then instructed them, in view of their submission, to return to their city, promising that on the morrow she would depart and return to her own capital. The Derevlians reentered their city with gladness, and when they reported to the inhabitants, the people of the town rejoiced.

Now Olga gave to each soldier in her army a pigeon or a sparrow, and ordered them to attach by a thread to each pigeon and sparrow a match bound with small pieces of cloth. When night fell, Olga bade her soldiers release the pigeons and the sparrows. So the birds flew to their nests, the pigeons to the cotes, and the sparrows under the eaves. Thus the dovescotes, the coops, the porches, and the haymows were set on fire. There was not a house that was not consumed, and it was impossible to extinguish the flames, because all the houses caught fire at once. The people fled from the city, and Olga ordered her soldiers to catch them. Thus she took the city and burned it, and captured the elders of the city. Some of the other captives

she killed, while she gave others as slaves to her followers. The remnant she left to pay tribute.

She imposed upon them a heavy tribute, two parts of which went to Kiev, and the third to Olga in Vyshegorod; for Vyshegorod was Olga's city. She then passed through the land of Dereva, accompanied by her son and her retinue, establishing laws and tribute. Her residences and hunting preserves are there still. Then she returned with her son to Kiev, her city, where she remained one year.

C. THE LIVES OF SAINTS AND MONKS

a. Stories from the *Primary Chronicle*

21. THE MARTYRDOM OF BORIS AND GLEB

AFTER the death of Vladimir, a fratricidal struggle broke out among his sons. The eldest, Sviatopolk, seized power and began plotting the elimination of his brothers, Boris, Gleb, and Yaroslav. The murder of Boris and Gleb in 1015 is described in a touching manner by the chronicler: the two refused to take up arms against their elder brother in order to prevent further bloodshed. They decided to accept their fate passively, following the example of Christ. The story of their tragic death was the first instance in Eastern and Western medieval ecclesiastic tradition of the imitation of Christ as a humble martyr dying for the sins of man. In both Western and Byzantine Christianity at that time, Christ's image was that of a pantocrat: an awe-inspiring, omnipotent ruler of the universe, to be dreaded. The humble aspect of Christ was stressed neither in Byzantine nor in Western Christianity until the time of St. Francis, some two hundred years after the martyrdom of Boris and Gleb.

The text presented here is the Samuel H. Cross translation.

Sviatopolk settled in Kiev after his father's death, and after calling together all the inhabitants of Kiev, he began to distribute largess among them. They accepted it, but their hearts were not with him, because their brethren were with Boris. When Boris returned with the army, not having met the Pechenegs, he received the news that his father was dead. He mourned deeply for him, for he was beloved of his father before all the rest.

When he came to the Alta, he halted. His father's retainers then urged him to take his place in Kiev on his father's throne, since he had at his disposal the latter's retainers and troops. But Boris protested: "Be it not for me to raise my hand against my elder brother. Now that my father has passed away, let him take the place of my father in my heart." When the soldiery heard these words, they departed from him, and Boris remained with his servants.

But Sviatopolk was filled with lawlessness. Adopting the device of Cain, he sent messages to Boris that he desired to live at peace with him, and would increase the patrimony he had received from his father. But he plotted against him how he

might kill him. So Sviatopolk came by night to Vyshegorod. After secretly summoning to his presence Putsha and the boyars of the town, he inquired of them whether they were wholeheartedly devoted to him. Putsha and the men of Vyshegorod replied: "We are ready to lay down our lives for you." He then commanded them to say nothing to any man, but to go and kill his brother Boris. They straightway promised to execute his order. Of such men Solomon has well said: "They make haste to shed blood unjustly. For they promise blood, and gather evil. Their path runneth to evil, for they possess their souls in dishonor" (Proverbs, 1:16-19).

These emissaries came to the Alta, and when they approached, they heard the sainted Boris singing vespers. For it was already known to him that they intended to take his life. Then he arose and began to chant, saying: "O Lord, how are they increased who come against me! Many are they that rise up against me" (Psalms, 3:1). And also: "Thy arrows have pierced me, for I am ready for wounds and my pain is before me continually" (Psalms, 38:2, 17). And he also uttered this prayer: "Lord, hear my prayer, and enter not into judgment with thy servant, for no living man shall be just before thee. For the enemy hath crushed my soul" (Psalms, 140:1-3). After ending the six psalms, when he saw how men were sent out to kill him, he began to chant the Psalter, saying: "Strong bulls encompassed me, and the assemblage of the evil beset me. O Lord my God, I have hoped in thee; save me and deliver me from my pursuers" (Psalms, 22:12, 16; 7:1). Then he began to sing the canon. After finishing vespers, he prayed, gazing upon the icon, the image of the Lord, with these words: "Lord Jesus Christ, who in this image hast appeared on earth for our salvation, and who, having voluntarily suffered thy hands to be nailed to the cross, didst endure thy passion for our sins, so help me now to endure my passion. For I accept it not from those who are my enemies, but from the hand of my own brother. Hold it not against him as a sin, O Lord!"

After offering this prayer, he lay down upon his couch. Then they fell upon him like wild beasts about the tent, and overcame him by piercing him with lances. They also overpowered his servant, who cast himself upon his body. For he was beloved of Boris. He was a servant of Hungarian race, George by name, to whom Boris was greatly attached. The prince had given him a large gold necklace which he wore while serving him. They also killed many other servants of Boris. But since they could not quickly take the necklace from George's neck, they cut off

his head, and thus obtained it. For this reason his body was not recognized later among the corpses.

The murderers, after attacking Boris, wrapped him in a canvas, loaded him upon a wagon, and dragged him off, though he was still alive. When the impious Sviatopolk saw that he was still breathing, he sent two Varangians to finish him. When they came and saw that he was still alive, one of them drew his sword and plunged it into his heart. Thus died the blessed Boris, receiving from the hand of Christ our God the crown among the righteous. He shall be numbered with the prophets and the Apostles, as he joins with the choirs of martyrs, rests in the lap of Abraham, beholds joy ineffable, chants with the angels, and rejoices in company with the choirs of saints. After his body had been carried in secret to Vyshegorod, it was buried in the Church of St. Basil.

The impious Sviatopolk then reflected: "Behold, I have killed Boris; now how can I kill Gleb?" Adopting once more Cain's device, he craftily sent messages to Gleb to the effect that he should come quickly, because his father was very ill and desired his presence. Gleb quickly mounted his horse, and set out with a small company, for he was obedient to his father. When he came to the Volga, his horse stumbled in a ditch on the plain, and broke his leg. He arrived at Smolensk, and setting out thence at dawn, he embarked in a boat on the Smiodyn. At this time, Yaroslav received from Predslava the tidings of their father's death, and he sent word to Gleb that he should not set out, because his father was dead and his brother had been murdered by Sviatopolk. Upon receiving these tidings, Gleb burst into tears, and mourned for his father, but still more deeply for his brother. He wept and prayed with the lament: "Woe is me, O Lord! It were better for me to die with my brother than to live on in this world. O my brother, had I but seen thy angelic countenance, I should have died with thee. Why am I now left alone? Where are thy words that thou didst say to me, my brother? No longer do I hear thy sweet counsel. If thou hast received affliction from God, pray for me that I may endure the same passion. For it were better for me to dwell with thee than in this deceitful world."

While he was thus praying amid his tears, there suddenly arrived those sent by Sviatopolk for Gleb's destruction. These emissaries seized Gleb's boat, and drew their weapons. The servants of Gleb were terrified, and the impious messenger, Goriasser, gave orders that they should slay Gleb with dispatch. Then Gleb's cook, Torchin by name, seized a knife, and stabbed

Gleb. He was offered up as a sacrifice to God like an innocent lamb, a glorious offering amid the perfume of incense, and he received the crown of glory. Entering the heavenly mansions, he beheld his long-desired brother, and rejoiced with him in the joy ineffable which they had attained through their brotherly love.

"How good and fair it is for brethren to live together!" (Psalms, 133:1). But the impious ones returned again, even as David said, "Let the sinners return to hell" (Psalms, 9:17). When they returned to Sviatopolk, they reported that his command had been executed. On hearing these tidings, he was puffed up with pride, since he knew not the words of David: "Why art thou proud of thy evildoing, O mighty one? Thy tongue hath considered lawlessness all the day long" (Psalms, 52:1).

After Gleb had been slain, his body was thrown upon the shore between two tree trunks, but afterward they took him and carried him away, to bury him beside his brother Boris in the Church of St. Basil. United thus in body and still more in soul, ye dwell with the Lord and King of all, in eternal joy, ineffable light, bestowing salutary gifts upon the land of Russia. Ye give healing to other strangers who draw near with faith, making the lame to walk, giving sight to the blind, to the sick health, to captives freedom, to prisoners liberty, to the sorrowful consolation, and to the oppressed relief. Ye are the protectors of the land of Russia, shining forever like beacons and praying to the Lord in behalf of your countrymen. Therefore must we worthily magnify these martyrs in Christ, praying fervently to them and saying: "Rejoice, martyrs in Christ from the land of Russia, who gave healing to them who draw near to you in faith and love. Rejoice, dwellers in heaven. In the body ye were angels, servants in the same thought, comrades in the same image, of one heart with the saints. To all that suffer ye give relief. Rejoice, Boris and Gleb, wise in God. Like streams ye spring from the founts of life-giving water which flow for the redemption of the righteous. Rejoice, ye who have trampled the serpent of evil beneath your feet. Ye have appeared amid bright rays, enlightening like beacons the whole land of Russia. Appearing in faith immutable, ye have ever driven away the darkness. Rejoice, ye who have won an unslumbering eye, ye blessed ones who have received in your hearts the zeal to fulfill God's only commandments. Rejoice, brethren united in the realms of golden light, in the heavenly abodes, in glory unfading, which ye through your merits have attained. Rejoice, ye who are brightly irradiate with the luminance of God, and travel throughout the world expelling

devils and healing diseases. Like beacons supernal and zealous guardians, ye dwell with God, illumined forever with light divine, and in your courageous martyrdom ye enlighten the souls of the faithful. The light-bringing heavenly love has exalted you, wherefore ye have inherited all fair things in the heavenly life: glory, celestial sustenance, the light of wisdom, and beauteous joys. Rejoice, ye who refresh our hearts, driving out pain and sickness and curing evil passions. Ye glorious ones, with the sacred drops of your blood ye have dyed a robe of purple which ye wear in beauty, and reign forevermore with Christ, interceding with him for his new Christian nation and for your fellows, for our land is hallowed by your blood. By virtue of your relics deposited in the church, ye illumine it with the Holy Spirit, for there in heavenly bliss, as martyrs among the army of martyrs, ye intercede for our nation. Rejoice, bright daysprings, our Christ-loving martyrs and intercessors! Subject the pagans to our princes, beseeching our Lord God that they may live in concord and in health, freed from intestine war and the crafts of the devil. Help us therefore who sing and recite your sacred praise forever unto our life's end."

22. THE BEGINNING OF THE KIEVAN CRYPT MONASTERY AND ITS FOUNDER, ST. ANTONIUS

The Crypt Monastery, located on the hilly banks of the Dnieper River on the outskirts of the city of Kiev since its foundation in the eleventh century, became the main spiritual and cultural center of early Russia. Its founders, Sts. Antonius and Theodosius, were remarkable religious leaders whose lives and teachings inspired endless generations of the Russian people. Until the revolution of 1917, the Crypt Monastery remained the principal place for Russian devotional pilgrimages, and even now its churches and crypts attract numerous pilgrims.

Works describing life in the monastery are collected either in the *Primary Chronicle*, their author apparently being one of the monks of this monastery, or in the *Kievan Crypt (Monastery) Paterikon* (the Greek word *paterikon* means a collection of lives of saints or stories about the life of monastery inhabitants). The *Kievan Crypt (Monastery) Paterikon* was written in the first quarter of the thirteenth century by Bishop Simon and Monk Polycarpe, both having been monks of this monastery. Later, more stories were added to the *Paterikon* by other writers. Despite the fact that Simon and Polycarpe lived more than one hundred years after the final compilation of the *Primary Chronicle*, the style of their work differs very little from that of the



St. George in the garb of a medieval Russian knight. A sixteenth-century icon.

medieval Russia's epics, chronicles, and tales

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