Construindo o 'Outro' e o 'Eu'

Representações de identidade e alteridade em contexto de mobilidade na Idade Média

Paulo Catarino Lopes, ed.

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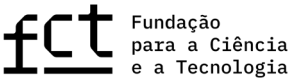

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Becoming the other. The role of princes, presbyters and pilgrims in Kyivan Rus′ new Christian identity

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Abstract

After the late conversion of Kyivan Rus′ in 988, the Orthodox Church became one of the most relevant institutions in the newly Christian polity. From being heathen traders of Scandinavian origin, they eventually became the new Jerusalem, particularly after the Fall of Constantinople. Christianisation was a process that had many political, economic and social ramifications. The present chapter analyses some of the most visible forms of this new Christian identity. On the one hand, the Christian propaganda of the ruling elites, but also the proliferation of religious buildings, which transformed the landscape of Rus′ and, eventually, the growth of local pilgrim's tales to the Holy Land, whose purpose was to serve as models for others to follow. The appropriation of Byzantine Christian culture and heritage was key in the self-definition of the Rus′ as a Christian people. In this process, Kyivan letters also inherited a Christian geography and cosmogony that were previously unknown to them in their religious dimension and that contributed decisively to situate Kyivan Rus′ within the topography of the Christian *oikoumene*.

Keywords

Kyivan Rus′; Christianisation; pilgrimages; monastic foundations; Jerusalem

Biographical note
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Convirtiéndose en el otro: el papel de príncipes, presbíteros y peregrinos en la nueva identidad cristiana de la Rus' de Kyiv

Resumen
Tras la conversión tardía de la Rus' de Kyiv al cristianismo en el año 988, la Iglesia se convirtió sin duda en la institución cultural más importante de nuevo estado cristiano. De ser una élite de comerciantes paganos de origen escandinavo, se convirtieron en la Nueva Jerusalén, especialmente tras la caída de Constantinopla. La cristianización fue un proceso con muchas ramificaciones políticas, económicas y sociales. El presente capítulo analiza algunas de las formas más visibles de esta nueva identidad cristiana. Por un lado, la propaganda cristiana de las élites gobernantes, pero también la proliferación de los edificios religiosos que transformaron el paisaje de Rus' y el surgimiento de los primeros relatos de viajes de peregrinos a Tierra Santa, cuyo principal objetivo era servir de guía a otros peregrinos que emprendieran su camino. La apropiación de la cultura cristiana bizantina y su patrimonio fue clave en la autodefinición de la Rus' como un pueblo cristiano. En este proceso, la literatura kievita también heredó una geografía y cosmogonía cristianas, hasta ese momento desconocidas en su dimensión religiosa y que contribuyó decisivamente a colocar a la Rus' de Kyiv dentro de la topografía de la oikoumene cristiana.

Palabras clave:
Rus' de Kyiv, cristianización, peregrinaje medieval, monasterios, Jerusalén.

Nota biográfica

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In the last decades, particularly in the last years, there has been an increasing questioning among medieval Slavic scholars of the concept of the *translatio imperii* that had traditionally linked Byzantium to modern Russia. The convenient, but inaccurate, formulation of 'Moscow as the Third Rome', which is still frequently used in non-specialised circles, has been increasingly under fire not only for its historical inaccuracy, but also for the chauvinist imperialist tone that, in the worst case scenario, can justify the invasion of a sovereign foreign country. The idea of a Third Rome implied that Moscow was, indirectly, the centre of the Christian Orthodox *oikoumene,* a title purportedly inherited from the Petrine site, Rome, which was transferred to Constantinople once Rome fell in 476 as capital of the Roman Empire in the West. In turn, it would have been transferred again to Moscow when Constantinople also succumbed as capital of the (Eastern) Roman Empire almost a millennium later in 1453.

It is generally understood that is was the American school of medieval Slavic scholars, led by Edward Keenan, who first questioned this idea of continuity that had been proposed and explored by many Byzantinists, or Slavic-Byzantinists before them. Nevertheless, as early as 1989, Léon Poliakov had already published a very good summary of the question, *Moscou Troisième Rome. Les intermittences de la mémoire historique,* that, unfortunately, did not receive as much attention as it deserved, particularly among English speaking scholars immersed in the debate[1]. As in most scholarly polemics, nobody was entirely right or wrong, and nuances matter much more than expected, but shorthand formulations tend to be easy and comfortable, and more often than not they betray not a real *status questionis,* but rather a *status mentis* of the person who uses them.

Several aspects of the idea of *translatio imperii* encapsulated in the formulation 'Moscow, the Third Rome' have been since then reassessed, from the legacy of the Mongol conquest in Moscow's governing system, to the real implementation of Christianity among ordinary population[2]. Lately, traditional concepts associated with this idea, such as D. Obolensky's 'Byzantine Commonwealth' have also come under severe criticism[3]. Even the very formulation of the idea of Moscow as the

1 POLIAKOV, Léon – *Moscou Troisième Rome. Les intermittences de la mémoire historique*. Paris: Hachette, 1989. Poliakov's main merit was to explore how the phrase and the idea had been coined in the nineteenth-century debates around Slavophilism movements in Europe and the position of the Russian Empire after the Congress of Vienna within the concert of European global empires. Beyond the debates around the medieval evidence for the idea itself, its contextualisation in modern ideologies is key in its past and current value.

2 Among some of the most relevant titles, see OSTROWSKI, Donald – *Muscovy and the Mongols. Cross-cultural Influences on the Steppe Frontier, 1304-1589*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998, and RYAN, William – *The Bathhouse at Midnight. A Historical Survey of Magic and Divination in Russia*, University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1999.

3 RAFFENSPERGER, Christian – "Revisiting the idea of the Byzantine Commonwealth". *Byzantinische Forschungen*, 28 (2004), 159-174.

Third Rome itself did not seem to have been so widespread in its own time[4]. In the meantime, a more detailed and rigorous analysis of material and non-material evidence, from artistic endeavours to political ideologies, has both increased the number of nuances as well as opened possible avenues for research.

Regardless of which school or theory one wished to follow, there was a necessary intermediate stage, which was the conversion to Christianity of the polity that was the non-exclusive antecedent of modern Russia, Kyivan Rus′.

Princes. The official conversion

The official conversion of Kyivan Rus′ to Christianity is conventionally dated to 988, the year in which Prince Volodymir I was baptised and took a Byzantine princess, Anna Porphyrogenita, as wife. That year, as many other dates in history, does not really mark anything in particular. Neither all the inhabitants of Kyivan Rus′ suddenly received a revelation, nor Volodymir changed his ways overnight to become a really pious ruler. But the first chronicle of Rus′, the *Povest′ vremennykh let* (PVL), known in English as the *Primary Chronicle*, marks that year as the one in which Volodymir had his people massively baptised in the river Dniepr that passes through the capital city of his dominions, Kyiv.

Volodymir's realm comprised at the time the lands inhabited by the Rus′, or Rhos, according to Byzantine sources. These were a multiethnic group of peoples, among which the most numerous element seems to have been the Eastern Slavs, who were politically led by Vikings, or Varangians, who had first arrived to and settled in the northern parts of the realm, near the lakes Ilmen and Ladoga, in search of new trading opportunities. The Varangian elite organised their trade with the Khazars to the East and with the Byzantines to the south, and it is within this trading context where they enter into official contact with the Empire. The Byzantines signed trade treaties or agreements with them in 911 and 944 and 971. In the first of these documents, included later in the PVL, the Rhos are identified with their own ethnonym (Rus′/Rhos′), while the Byzantines are simply called 'Christians'.[5] The

4 OSTROWSKI, Donald – "'Moscow the Third Rome' as Historical Ghost". in Sarah T. Brooks (ed.) – *Byzantium: Faith and Power (1261-1557)*. New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2006, 170-179.

5 See FRANKLIN, Simon; SHEPARD, Jonathan – *The Emergence of Rus, 750-1200*. London: Longman, 1996, 103-107, and RAFFENSPERGER, Christian, OSTROWSKI, Donald – *The Ruling Families of Rus. Clan, Family and Kingdom*. London: Reaktion Books, 2023, 24-25. The wording of these two documents has only survived in the PVL, whose earliest redaction is dated to around three hundred years after the events. Written by members of the monastic community in Rus′, it is a retroactive self-definition of alterity as pagans, whose intentions was probably to fall into the grand teleological narrative of conversion often found in medieval chronicles, as Peter Brown pointed out, already from the earliest middle ages (BROWN, Peter – *Authority and the Sacred. Aspects of the Christianisation of the Roman World*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995, 3-26).

alterity here was clear: the Rus′ at the beginning of the 10th century were simply the non-Christians.

Volodymir's mass baptism was not the first time that Kyivan Rus′ rulers had contemplated the possibility of creating a Christian kingdom. Volodymir's grandmother, Olga, had already been officially baptised in Constantinople in 957, or so the PVL says[6]. According to the *PVL,* she took the baptismal name of Helena, the famous mother of the Emperor Constantine the Great, and had another emperor, Constantine Porphyrogenetos, acting as her godfather. None of these gestures was accidental. Helena, who was widely believed to be responsible for the conversion of her son, Constantine I, and indirectly of the whole empire he ruled, was famous for having brought the relic of the Holy Cross from Jerusalem to Constantinople, and was already venerated in Orthodox liturgy[7]. Moreover, the role of Constantine Porphyrogenetos as godfather was a clear attempt to put the domains she was ruling as regent for her infant son, Sviatoslav, under the protection of a powerful neighbour in order to guarantee for him the lands that her untimely murdered husband had managed to agglutinate around him. By this point, she had already understood the advantages of becoming a Christian ruler in the medieval world. In fact, she might have been baptised in Rus′ beforehand. In order to complete her plan of embracing the new otherness, she requested a Christianising mission from the Patriarchate immediately after her baptism, which apparently was not delivered. Looking for an alternative, she sent a request to the Emperor Otto I of the Holy Roman Empire in 959, in response to which he actually did send Adalbert, the continuator of Regino of Prüm's *Chronicle*. Adalbert, however, returned two years later without having achieved anything at all at the court of Olga's son, the newly appointed prince Sviatoslav, who shunned Christianity allegedly because his retinue would laugh at him if he accepted it[8].

6 The baptism of Olga in Constantinople is also contentious as it is not explicitly mentioned in some relevant contemporary Byzantine sources, which mention her visit as a foreign ruler without alluding to her baptism, and least her godfather being the ruling emperor. On Olga, see Franklin and Shepard, *The Emergence of Rus*…, 133-138, and Raffensperger and Ostrowski, *The Ruling Families,* 26-29. Specifically on her visit to Constantinople, see VILKUL, Tatiana – "Two Emperors of the Princess Olga's visit to Constantinople: Constantine VII Porphyrogenitos versus John Tzimiskes in the copies of the Rus′ Primary Chronicle". in Susana Torres Prieto; Andrei Franklin (eds.) – *Medieval Rus' and Early Modern Russia, Texts and Contexts. Essays in Honour of Simon C. Franklin*. London: Routledge, 2023, 88-102.

7 On the importance of the cults of Helena and Constantine as models for the liturgical cults of Volodymir and Olga, see GRIFFIN, Sean – *The Liturgical Past in Byzantium and Early Rus*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019.

8 See TORRES PRIETO, Susana – "Mercenaries, traders and missionaries. Travelling in the Slavic realm before the year 1000 / Mercenários, mercadores e missionários: viajar no reino eslavo antes do ano 1000". in Paulo Catarino Lopes (ed.) – *Viator. Viagem, Circulação e Mobilidade na Idade Média.* Lisboa: IEM – Instituto de Estudos Medievais, 2024. An English translation of Regino of Prüm's *Chronicle* and its continuator is available in MacLEAN, Simon – *History and Politics in late Carolingian and Ottonian Europe. The Chronicle of Regino of Prüm and Adalbert of Magdeburg*. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2009, 260-263. On Olga/Helena's policy towards Byzantium and Western Christianity, see J. Shepard's analysis in Franklin and Shepard, *The Emergence of Rus*…, 133-137.

Becoming Christian was not an act of faith in the European Middle Ages, certainly not for rulers. It was an act of *realpolitik*. What Olga understood and saw, that his son did not, was the many advantages of counting with powerful allies in the economic and political complex board of alliances. Maybe because she had to confront endless coups and attacks in order to save the crown for that very infant son, she appreciated greatly the advantages of having powerful friends. Undoubtedly, one of the main and clear advantages of becoming a Christian was the possibility of becoming a member of a foreign ruling dynasty by marriage, and that is exactly what Volodymir intended when he took on Christianity: if Anna had had any children, they could have inherited in all likelihood both the imperial throne of Byzantium and the more modest principality of Rus', and the descendants of the Volodymir would have become Porphyrogenetoi. Maybe his ambitions did not go as far as that, but her presence in the new Christian court, and that of her entourage, made a significant difference for the future of the recently Christianised polity[9].

In the case of polities like Kyivan Rus′ the other clear advantage of Christianisation was the arrival of literacy and culture with greater artistic ambitions. Although evidence of functional literacy has been found in the widespread use of birchbark letters mainly in Novgorod, but also in other cities in the north, the use of literacy for liturgy and edification meant the arrival to Kyivan Rus′ not only of books, but mainly of monks and clergyman who copied and produced such texts and artefacts. As members of provincial metropolinates dependent from the Patriarchate of Constantinople, they copied and recreated the Byzantine ways of worshipping the Lord. This concept is key in understanding what Dmitri Obolensky called half a century ago "The Byzantine Commonwealth". Underlying this concept is the idea that all the new territories in the Slavic-speaking lands that adopted Christianity under the protection or supervision, or control, of the Patriarchate of Constantinople aimed at emulating not only liturgy, but a wider understanding of culture and even politics. According to Simon Franklin, there were "three principal modes of the Rus′ reception of Byzantine culture: the direct import of objects and personnel; local copying in Slavonic; and adaptation for local purposes. Throughout the Middle Ages the specific texture of Rus′ Christian culture can be perceived in

9 The concept of a Riurik dynasty, or even of a dynasty, has been recently questioned by OSTROWSKI, Donald – "Was there a Riurikid Dynasty in Early Rus'?". *Canadian-American Slavic Studies*, 52 (2018), 30-49, and more recently by Raffensperger and Ostrowski, *The Ruling Families*… While the concept of dynasty, certainly if compared to tightly defined Western models might be seen as problematical, it seems quite obvious that the members of the ruling branches of the family that descended directly from Volodymir felt some entitlement to the territories under dispute. On Anna Prophyrogenita's role in the Kyivan court, see TORRES PRIETO, Susana – "Una Emperatriz en la corte de Kiev." in Juan Antonio Álvarez-Pedrosa *et al.* (eds.) – *Ratna. Homenaje a la Prof. Julia Mendoza*. Madrid: Escolar Editores, 2017, 433-438, and also TORRES PRIETO, Susana – "The portrait of Anna Prophyrogenita". in Donald Ostrowski; Christian Raffensperger (eds) – *Portraits of Medieval Eastern Europe*. London: Routledge, 2017, 159-165.

the nuances and the interplay of these three modes"[10]. While several revisions of the concept have been made lately, particularly in terms of political culture and ideology, it seems quite indisputable that everything that had to do with religion itself (liturgy, texts, monasticism) were very much replicated *in toto*, at least in the first centuries. To a large extent, it was the most expedient way of becoming the other, so the inhabitants of Kyivan Rus′ became what their antagonists have been before, Christians.

Presbyters. Monks, bishops and other clergy

Almost contemporary to the coinage of the myth of Moscow the Third Rome, the myth of the '*dvoeverie',* or double faith, also became popular in scholarly circles. This myth theoretically encapsulates the suppossed staunch resistance of Slavic paganism after the forced mass conversion ordered by Volodymir. Like the first one, it was constructed on some textual evidence, often taken out of context, and it equally satisfied nineteenth-century Slavophiles, early twentieth-century German Orientalists, Soviet communist scholars and folklorists of all times. The narrative, in all cases, very much coincided: the vast majority of pagan Rus′ were forced, by the aristocratic non-Slavic superstructure, to adhere to a new religion they did not want and silently resisted for centuries, while they tried to defend their ancient rites, which, depending on the scholar, kept their Slavic Russian soul alive and free from Westernising negative influences, or condemned the Slavs as uncultivated brutes and uncivilised peoples not worthy of having a seat in the European concert of nations, or prevented the peasant mass from expressing their true feelings, being condemned to ignorance and slavery by the coercive social superstructures of the State and the Church alike. The collection of texts offered to support this myth was often a mixed bag of Arab travellers' accounts of pre-Christian times, collections of mistranslated Byzantine homilies, some historiographic tales written by local Christian monks and some of the earliest forms of rudder books made for the new clergy in the first decades of the twelfth century. As Stella Rock demonstrated years ago, the so-called 'double faith' is not really two opposed beliefs, but rather a collection of very unorthodox practices, many probably due to very low levels of literacy among peasant communities, some of which might have a pre-Christian antecedent by the time the myth is created in the nineteenth century[11]. The folklore

10 FRANKLIN, Simon – "Kievan Rus′ (1015-1125)". in Maureen Perrie (ed.) – *The Cambridge History of Russia. Vol. 1. From Early Rus' to 1689*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006, 73-97, esp. 96.

11 See ROCK, Stella – *Popular Religion in Russia: "Double Belief" and the Making of an Academic Myth*. London; New York: Routledge, 2007.

tradition and practices, as studied in-depth by William Ryan, are also linked as well to the poor levels of general education before Soviet times[12].

Notwithstanding the fact that it is almost impossible to know how the inhabitants of Kyivan Rus′ felt about the Holy Trinity, they certainly could not really be oblivious or unaware of the new situation. The landscape of their cities changed, with churches and monasteries proliferating everywhere; the new corpora of canon law, a copy of the Byzantine *nomokanones,* forced them to appear before Church authorities for a wide array of private offences and crimes, and not only those related to Orthodoxy[13]. And it is clear from the popularity they enjoyed from the beginning, that monasteries and monastic life, previously unknown in any form of pre-Christian belief, were quickly spread across the land.

The first monastic institution founded in Kyivan Rus′ was the Monastery of the Caves in Kyiv. Situated not far away from the palace of the ruling princes, it was the institution that received the first envoys from Constantinople and, most importantly, the place from which monks departed to other corners of Kyivan Rus′ to replicate the model they had learnt to appreciate in Kyiv while they received their education there. There might have been as much as seventy monasteries founded in Rus′ before the Mongol invasions of 1238-40[14], but in most cases only the monastery's name, the date of its foundation and sometimes the identity of its founder are known[15]. These monasteries would have been in the outskirts of the main cities, which also had some form of ecclesiastical authority, such as bishoprics, nearby. The bishoprics, by the time of the death of Vladimir Monomakh in 1125, covered the vast part of the middle Dnieper region: Chernihiv, Pereiaslavl', Belgorod, Iur'ev, Turov, Polotsk and up to Novgorod. All depending from the metropolitan in Kyiv, who was usually a Byzantine[16]. The majority of these bishops initially came from Byzantium or Bulgaria, at least until the second half of the eleventh century, when the names of some locally trained bishops start to appear in the sources.

Inaugurated a century after the official conversion of the Rus′, the Caves monastery was allegedly founded by a certain monk Antonii who, having most

12 See the above-mentioned W. Ryan, *The Bathhouse at Midnight*… (note 2).

13 On the adaptation of Byzantine *nomokanones* into what became known, in singular, a *kormchaia kniga,* see FRANKLIN, Simon – *Writing, Society and Culture in Early Rus, c. 950-1300*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002, 132-159.

14 This reckoning is provided only by one author (GOLUBINSKII, E. E. – *Istorija russkou cerkvi*. Moscow, 1904) on mixed evidence. The full toll might not have been that high, even including those institutions that have been completely banished and that are only accounted for in secondary sources.

15 The MAPA project *The Golden Age of Kyivan Rus′* at the Harvard Ukrainian Research Institute has a detailed map of those monastic foundations which can be geocoded today. From all the possible referred monasteries in secondary sources, only twenty-seven can be confidently localised, four of which were feminine monastic institutions. See TORRES PRIETO, Susana; BONDARENKO, Konstantin – *The Golden Age of Kyivan Rus′* [online]. Available at https://gis.huri.harvard.edu/golden-age-kyivan-rus.

16 The distribution of the bishoprics, with the year of their foundation, is also available at Torres Prieto and Bondarenko, *The Golden Age*…

likely been to Mount Athos, returned to Kyiv and began to live in a cave on the outskirts of the city, in Berestovo, near the princely residence. Fortunately, the *paterik* (a collection of edifying tales and monks' lives, together with the history of the monastic foundation) has survived and provides extremely valuable information about early monastic life in Rus'[17]. Others followed, and soon a community thrived. Officially named the Monastery of the Dormition of the Theotokos in Kyiv, most commonly known as the Kyivan Caves Monastery, its construction started in 1073 and its main church building was consecrated in 1089. This was not the only monastery built in the city of Kyiv. The *PVL* records in the year 6545 A.M. (1037 C.E.) that Iaroslav Vladimirovich, later called the Wise (1019-54), had previously endowed two monasteries in Kyiv, one dedicated to St. George and another to St. Irene, the patron saints of himself and his wife, Ingigerd of Sweden. Neither of these seems to have become as relevant as the Caves Monastery, the building of which started under the rule of Iaroslav's son, Sviatoslav Iaroslavich.

The Caves Monastery in Kyiv was a key institution for several reasons. Firstly, it brought monasticism to the newly converted in Rus′ in the form closer to the Stoudite reform. The Stoudite liturgical reform had been carried out by the abbot Theodore in 799 in the Monastery of Stoudious, near the Sea of Marmara, and was an attempt to revitalise the liturgical uses, bringing them more in line to an inner, ascetic form of prayer reminiscent of the practices of the Desert Fathers. The typikon (a guide to monastic liturgy and prayer, as well as a guide for monastic discipline and governance) adopted in Rus′ had, nevertheless, been slightly modified by being adapted by Patriarch Alexius of Constantinople (in office 1025-1043) for its use in the Monastery of the Dormition of the Theotokos founded by him in Constantinople. It is this modified rule that was adopted in Kyiv. Secondly, this rule and its liturgy were eventually adopted in all other monastic foundations in other parts of Rus′ and remained in use until the cenobitic monastic reforms in the mid-fourteenth century. In this way, the Caves Monastery became the beacon for monasticism in Rus'. Thirdly, and maybe more importantly, the majority of the local religious elites in the centuries to come, at least until the Mongol invasion in the mid-thirteenth century, had been pupils and monks at the Kyivan monastery. Bishops, abbots and successive founders of monasteries had all studied, learnt and prayed in the Caves before being dispatched to a new life in the church echelons. It is estimated that before the arrival of the Mongols as much as half of all bishops in Rus′ had been monks at the Caves. The uses of books, and more widely the book culture in Kyivan monastic environments, was probably very similar to the one in Byzantium, at least

17 On monastic life in Early Rus, see Franklin and Shepard, *The Emergence of Rus*…, 303-313, and GONNEAU, Pierre; LAVROV, Aleksandr – *Des Rhôs à la Russie : Histoire de l'Europe Orientale (730-1689)*. Paris: Presses universitaires de France, 2012, 516-520.

at the beginning, including the principles of copying, the uses of texts in learning and liturgy or the functionality of illustrations.

Pilgrims to Holy Land. A new cosmography

It was only to be expected that, after the first decades of importing foreign models, the Rus′ will start to conquer their own intellectual space, stepping from emulation to original creation. Among the very first literary works composed in Kyivan Rus′, aside from monastic *pateriki* or homiletics, we find narrations of pilgrimages to the Holy sites. Written for Christians in Kyivan Rus′, their function was not only to stimulate the reader to start a pilgrimage of penance to either Jerusalem or Constantinople, but also to make him or her familiar with a Christian geography and topography whose knowledge was essential in their newly acquired Christian faith. This particular genre of pilgrim tales ('*khozhdenie*', meaning go walking somewhere) became extremely popular, particularly at the dawn of literary activity in Rus′. It is estimated that there were about 70 different works written between the 11th and the 17th centuries. Among the most famous titles of pilgrims' accounts we find pilgrims to the Holy Land, usually taking the sea route from Constantinople: *The Pilgrimage of the Abbot Daniel* (c.1106-08), or to Constantinople (Tsargard) itself: *The Pilgrimage of Anthony of Novgorod to Constantinople* (c. 1204), *The Pilgrimage of Stephen of Novgorod to Constantinople* (1349), *The Pilgrimage of Ignatius of Smolensk to Constantinople* (1389-92), *The Pilgrimage of Aleksandr the Clerk to Constantinople* (1391-96); pilgrimages to sites or events in Western Christianity, such as *The Pilgrimage of Avraam of Suzdal* (1437-39, to the Council of Ferrara), or *The Pilgrimage to the Council of Florence of an unknown Suzdalian,* on the same year, or pilgrimages to Jerusalem following a different route *The Pilgrimage of the priest Varsanoph to the Holy City of Jerusalem* (1456 and 1461-62), who provided the first descriptions of Egypt and the Sinai in Russian letters[18].

The tale by the Abbot Daniel, whose exact title is 'Life and Pilgrimage of Daniel, the Abbot of the Rus′ land', dates to the beginning of the 12th century, and it starts and finishes in Constantinople. No description is offered about his trip from and to Kyivan Rus′. Being the earliest one, it is highly responsible for introducing their readers to all the new places of Christendom, to which they now belong. It is thanks to this account that newly converted Christians in Kyivan Rus′ first became familiar with holy places and the Holy Land, entering literarily the space of the

18 Bearing a similar title in Russia (*khozhdenie*) but unrelated in content, there are also later accounts of traders, *A Journey Beyond the Three Seas by Afanasy Nikitn* (1466-1472) relating the travels to India of a merchant from Tver, and, under a similar title, *The Travels of the Trader Fedot Kotov to Persia,* which the Moscow trader undertook in 1623-1624.

holy *oikoumene*. In this sense, pilgrims' narrations of their own journeys were indispensable for the Rus′ to become the other, this is, the Christians they were now supposed to be.

Daniel's journey apparently lasted more than two years. This time was initially considered to be 1113-1115, then it was calculated maybe from 1106-1108, and now it is considered probable that the journey took place in 1104-1106. The work was very popular in centuries to come and it has been preserved in about 150 manuscripts, the oldest of which dates back to the second half of the 15th century. It is not really known who he was, although in view of the welcome given to him by the King of Jerusalem and the liberty with which he takes residence in one of the monasteries there, it should probably be inferred that he carried with him letters of introduction from the highest political and religious authorities.

After departing from Constantinople, he then goes by ship to Jaffa in Palestine, describing in detail the cities along the coast, the distances between them, in the unit of distance used in Rus′ (*verst*)[19] and their main attractions:

> "From Tsargrad (Constantinople) one has to go along the sea coast three hundred *versts* to the Great Sea (Mediterranean). To the island of Petalas[20], there are one hundred *versts;* this is the first island in the narrow sea; there is a good bay there and there stands the city of Heraklion the Great[21]. And across from that city holy myrrh is extracted from the sea's depths: here many holy martyrs were drowned by their torturers. From the island of Petalas to Gallipoli, one hundred *versts*, and from Gallipoli to the city of Abydos[22] eighty *versts*. Across form that city is where the saint Euthymius the Younger was taken[23]. And from there to Crete [Imros][24] twenty *versts*, and there is the exit to the Great Sea: to the left, towards Jerusalem, to the right, to the Holy

19 A *verst* was equivalent to 1.066 kilometres.

20 Most likely, the island of Marmara, in the homonymous sea.

21 This would correspond to Heraclea Perinthus in the sea of Marmara, modern Marmara Ereğlisi in Turkey, one of the earliest bishoprics in Christian times, as capital of the Roman province of Europa.

22 Due to its strategic position in the middle of the Dardanelles strait, Abydos has been a busy port and fort from Antiquity. During the Byzantine period, it was repeatedly captured (once by the Rus′ themselves in 1024) and recovered by the Empire. Its *strategos* (governor), first mentioned in 1004, had authority over the northern shore of the Hellespont and the islands of the Sea of Marmara. It was also see of a bishopric.

23 Euthymius of Athos (c. 955-c.1024) was a Georgian monk, translator and scholar, who developed his scholarship at the Iviron monastery on Mount Athos, that had been co-founded by his father, John the Iberian, where he is buried. He was captive of the Byzantine empire in Constantinople and, once freed by his father, they set sail to apparently return home or even go to the Iberian Peninsula, according to one of his *vitae*. They were detained in the city of Abydos, or maybe Madytos, and taken together to Mt. Athos, where they both worked and died. The verb used in the original (*'lezhit'*) could also imply being buried, but this could have been a confusion between being detained and being killed, given the relative short time of Daniel's journey after the real death and burial of Euthymius in Iviron.

24 This is not the island of Crete, but the island of Imros (modern Gökçeada in Turkey), in the mouth of the strait. The island of Crete, however, has a very famous canyon with the same name, Imros, that maybe was the cause of the confusion.

> Mountain [Athos], to Salonika and to Rome. And from Crete [Imros] to the island of Tenedos thirty *versts*."[25]

The narration continues thus throughout: interspersing religious and hagiographic references with remarkable accurate geographic localisations. Daniel eventually arrived to Jaffa in the company of other pilgrims and continued the route to Jerusalem by land, subjected often to the attacks of Muslims. He arrives to Jerusalem in times of King Baldwin I, who seems to have patronised his visit, and whom he describes as humble, good, pious and kind. After that, he would spend almost one and a half years living at the Monastery of St. Savva in Jerusalem, where apparently one of the resident monks explained to him the history of all the holy places in the city, which Daniel then visits and describes. Apart from leaving a vivid description of Jerusalem, Daniel went several times to the Jordan river and the Dead Sea, and visited Bethlehem, Hebron and other places in the region. He managed to make a journey north, to Galilee, as a member of the entourage of king Baldwin. The army then went to Damascus, and Daniel asked and received permission to join from the king himself. With the crusaders, Daniel reached the upper Jordan, stayed there for ten days until the king returned, and took the opportunity of exploring Galilee around the Sea of Tiberias, as well as Tabor, Nazareth, Cana of Galilee. From there, also with a "numerous retinue", Daniel went to Acre, recently taken by Christians (1104), and, further along the coast, to Caesarea, finally returning to Jerusalem through Samaria. Taking advantage of the kind attitude of king Baldwin to himself, Daniel was able to put a lamp "on behalf of all the Rus′ land" on the stone of the Holy Sepulchre and found himself a good spot for viewing, during the Easter service at the Sepulchre, the moment when the lamps standing on the stone of the Sepulchre were lit. Calling himself "the Rus′ land hegumen", Daniel, therefore, thought of himself in Palestine not as a private person and representative not only of his particular monastery or one specific region, but really of "the whole Rus′ land" as a kind of political whole, for which he put the lamp. Daniel beautifully described these festive events in a special story placed at the end of the journey.

He finally returned to Constantinople by sea, through Jaffa, Caesarea, Acre and Virita (Beirut), sailing past the mouth of the Orontes, on which Antioch had stood.

The other traveller, almost a century later, was Anthony, archbishop of Novgorod at three different times, from 1210 to 1218, from 1226 to 1228, year in which he was first demoted and then reappointed until 1229. In the middle, he was also bishop of Pereiaslav from 1220 to 1225. It is possible that he actually went to

25 The translation is mine from the text prepared and edited by G. M. Prokhorov in LIKHACHEV, Dmitri S., *et al.* (eds.), *Biblioteka Literatury Drevnei Rusi*. Vol. 4. Moscow: Nauka, 1997, 26-117, and 584-599 (commentary). Here, pp. 28-29.

Constantinople twice: the first time in the year 1200 as envoy or ambassador for the prince of Halych and Volhynia, Roman Mstislavich (d. 1205). He remained there until the arrival of the Latin Crusaders in 1204, after which he returned to Rus′. Apparently it had been his intention to continue to Jerusalem, but after the arrival of the Crusaders, he could not. From his pilgrimage to Constantinople, he brought to Novgorod a number of relics: the vestments of Theodore Stratilates, the relics of St. Blaise of Sebaste (Armenia), one of the many sets of his body, part of the stone from the tomb of John the Evangelist, a part of the True Cross, placed in the large cross of St. Sophia in Novgorod, the real measures of the "sepulcher of the Lord" and the relics of the Great Martyr Barbara. His "Book of the Pilgrim" (*Kniga Palomnik*) has survived in nine manuscripts dated from the 16th to 18th centuries[26]. There are two versions of the pilgrimage, which has made some specialists think that there were actually two trips to Constantinople, but this remains unproven. Anthony's work is not much longer than a treaty about a dozen pages long and it focuses on an extremely detailed description of the Cathedral of Hagia Sophia in Constantinople and its many relics.

The fact that Anthony felt it was his task to bring 'parts' and bits of the holy city of Constantinople for adoration in his native land, as much as Daniel felt it was important to provide the exact number of metres and days between one city and the other in the Holy Land, speak of the wish they both had of introducing the Holy Land as a sacred and physical space to the new Christians. It was this wish of making of the Rus′ new Christians Old Christians what motivated not only the pilgrimages, but the narrations written about them. Like Olga, they were aware that belonging to the Christian *oikoumene* could render many advantages. When Constantinople finally fell to the Ottomans in 1453, it seems that history actually proved them right.

26 For a detailed study of this text, see LENHOFF, Gail – "Kniga Palomnik. A Study in Old Russian Rhetoric". *Scando-slavica*, 23, 1 (1977), 39-61.

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