



Saints in the Slavic Christian World

*Assessing Power, Religion
and Language in Religious*

Edited by Emil Hilton Saggau,
Wawrzyniec Kowalski and Mihai Dragnea



PETER LANG

This landmark edited collection offers a new series of studies of power, religion and language in the literature of the Slavic Christian world. The focus is on how saints became symbols of power during conversion and the process of transition to Christianity. Studies of locally venerated saints provide a road into early Slavic societies because saints and their cults existed and were sustained for a wide variety of reasons. Rulers and church-leaders alike needed symbols and narratives to maintain and expand their power, and hagiographies allow us to study how this power was brokered, shared and grasped by elites. Collectively, the authors in this volume pursue the idea that saints are an outward expression of Christianity becoming embedded and localized in the newly Christianized societies of East and Central Europe.

The period covered here stretches from the Macedonian dynasty in Eastern Rome (c. 800) to the rise of Muscovite rule in Russia (c. 1600). The main focus is on the Slavic religious traditions but, as this volume demonstrates, Greek and Baltic traditions were also significant.

This book will be essential reading for researchers and students interested in the religious and cultural history of Eastern Europe, the cult of saints, and the rise of Christendom.

Emil Hilton Saggau, Ph.D., is a Danish church historian working as a research fellow at Lund University, Sweden. He graduated from the University of Copenhagen in 2020, with a thesis on the Orthodox historiography of former Yugoslavia, and has continued to publish on saints and cults in Southeastern Europe. His main interest is Southeast European history and religion – in particular, the region's connections with Byzantium.

Wawrzyniec Kowalski, Ph.D., is an assistant professor at the Institute of History, University of Wrocław, Poland. He has worked extensively on the nation-making process in Central Europe between c. 500 and c. 1300. His landmark study *The Kings of the Slavs: The Image of a Ruler in the Latin Text of 'The Chronicle of the Priest of Duklja'* was published in 2021.

Mihai Dragnea, PhD, is an associate researcher at the University of South-Eastern Norway and the president of the Balkan History Association. His interests include cultural, social and political relations between Germans, Scandinavians and Slavs during the High Middle Ages, the Viking Age, Slavic identity and state formation, Wallachian and Vlach identity as well as ethnicity and conflict in the Balkans.

ISBN 978-1-63667-781-1



9 781636 677811

www.peterlang.com

South-East European History

Saints in the Slavic Christian World

South-East European History

Mihai Dragnea

Series Editor

Vol. 15

Edited by Emil Hilton Saggau,
Wawrzyniec Kowalski and Mihai Dragnea

Saints in the Slavic Christian World

Assessing Power, Religion and
Language in Religious Literature



PETER LANG

Berlin - Bruxelles - Chennai - Lausanne - New York - Oxford

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Names: Saggau, Emil Hilton, | Kowalski, Wawrzyniec editor |
Dragnea, Mihai

Title: Saints in the Slavic Christian world : assessing power, religion and
language in religious literature / edited by Emil Hilton Saggau,
Wawrzyniec Kowalski, Mihai Dragnea.

Description: New York : Peter Lang, [2025] | Series: South-East European
history, 2768-7554 ; vol. 17 | Includes bibliographical references.

Identifiers: LCCN 2025006711 (print) | LCCN 2025006712 (ebook) | ISBN
9781636677811 hardcover | ISBN 9781636677828 ebook | ISBN 9781636677835
epub

Subjects: LCSH: Christian saints, Slavic--Legends--History and criticism |
Christian saints--Cult--Slavic countries | Christian
hagiography--History--To 1500 | Christian literature, Slavic--History
and criticism | Church and state--Slavic countries | Slavic
countries--Church history | Church history--Middle Ages, 600-1500

Classification: LCC BX380.S25 2025 (print) | LCC BX380 (ebook) | DDC
270.3092/247--dc23/eng/20250512

LC record available at <https://lcn.loc.gov/2025006711>

LC ebook record available at <https://lcn.loc.gov/2025006712>

Bibliographic Information published by the Deutsche Nationalbibliothek

The Deutsche Nationalbibliothek lists this publication in the Deutsche Nationalbibliografie; detailed
bibliographic data is available in the internet at
<http://dnb.d-nb.de>.

Cover image

© Wolfenbüttelský kodex – Gumpoldova legenda – 18v cr - Wenceslaus I, Duk Bohemia
Wikipedia Bahasa Melayu, ensiklopedia bebas

Cover design by Peter Lang Group AG

ISSN 2768-7554

ISBN 978-1-63667-781-1 (Print)

ISBN 978-1-63667-782-8 (E-PDF)

ISBN 978-1-63667-783-5 (E-PUB)

DOI 10.3726/b21476

PETER LANG



Open Access: This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution CC-BY 4.0 license. To
view a copy of this license, visit <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>

Published by Peter Lang GmbH, Berlin, Deutschland

info@peterlang.com - www.peterlang.com

© Emil Hilton Saggau, Wawrzyniec Kowalski, Mihai Dragnea and contributors 2025

This publication has been peer reviewed.



Contents

<i>List of Figures and Tables</i>	v
1. <i>Introduction: Assessing Slavic Saints</i> Emil Hilton Saggau, Wawrzyniec Kowalski & Mihai Dragnea	1
2. <i>The Legacy of the Iconophile Theology of Vita Constantini</i> Ljubica Jovanović	23
3. <i>The Conversion of Pagan Rulers of Lithuania</i> Yanina Ryier	47
4. <i>Prince Voyshelk as a Local Saint</i> Vytautas Jankauskas	69
5. <i>St. Parascheva of Epibatae the Younger</i> Evelina Mineva	89
6. <i>Saint Adalbert and the Five Brother Martyrs</i> Maria Starnawska	117
7. <i>When Sainthood Is Not Enough—Biblical Legitimization of Dynastic Power in Kyivan Rus'</i> Susana Torres Prieto	137
8. <i>The Life of Saint Theodosius of the Cave and the Genre Tradition</i> Dariya Syroyid	159
9. <i>Transmission Practices in the Early Hagiography of Rus' Before the 16th Century</i> Karine Åkerman Sarkisian	175

10. <i>The Latin Mass in Old Church Slavonic</i> Silvio Koščak & Kristijan Kuhar	199
11. <i>The Waldensian Concept of Catholic Saints: Total Rejection or Hidden Faith</i> Aliaksandra Valodzina	213
12. <i>The Holy Kings and the Forms of Sanctity in The Chronicle of the Priest of Duklja</i> Wawrzyniec Kowalski	239
13. <i>Killing the Tsar, Again—Power and Sainthood Among the Early Slavic Ruler Saints</i> Emil Hilton Saggau	265
<i>Notes on Contributors</i>	287



7 When Sainthood Is Not Enough— Biblical Legitimization of Dynastic Power in Kyivan Rus’

Susana Torres Prieto

Early hagiography in Kyivan Rus’ shows a characteristic typology of saints. Aside from the relevant lives of monastic figures, whose exemplary deeds were the inspiration to members of the many monastic communities, and placed them closer to the traditional *startsya*, all other saints lives are connected to the ruling dynasty. While the Rus’ imported all hagiographic literature from Byzantium after its Christianisation, the literary genre soon fourished and local saints’ lives were produced in the newly created monasteries. Moreover, particular developments of the wider genre of the *vita* permitted the recategorization of princely lives as hagio-biographies. This specific local form of princely hagiographies betrays a coherent adoption of Orthodox ideas on sainthood and on political theology, as formulated by the Eastern Fathers. This chapter focuses on the theological, textual and sociopolitical aspects that contributed decisively to the specific fourishing of a genre in Kyivan Rus’ aimed at legitimizing the sacrality of the ruling dynasty.

Sainthood in Byzantine Orthodoxy

Since the time of Augustine of Hippo (354–430), the Latin church, greatly inspired by Classical philosophy, had underlined the relevance of choice in Christian morals. As St. Augustine acknowledged himself in his anti-Pelagian writings, free choice (*liberum arbitrium*) was essential in the understanding of grace and the fulfillment of the Law, and therefore the choices should be conducive, with the aid of divine grace, to the supreme good and to salvation (*libertas vera est Christo servire*). Later on, Gregory the Great (540–604) would

reinforce the importance of choice in his doctrine about sins and judgment of the souls.

By contrast, the Eastern Fathers had a different understanding of moral dissolution. Athanasios of Alexandria (299–373) had already underlined in *De Incarnatione* how sin was to be understood as a fall from grace. More importantly, the doctrine of “deification” (θεοποίησις) was essential in order to recuperate the state of grace, so “their perseverance in the state willed by God depends totally upon the grace already bestowed.”⁴⁰⁵ John A. McGuckin has indicated how the Eastern Fathers underlined the key role of communion with the deity in the process of transcendence for humans. In his opinion, the tendency of humans to corruption or corruptibility (*phtharsia*) is to be understood

primarily ontologically rather than morally; although he [Athanasios] always saw the moral dissolution of men and women as a direct result of their lapse of ontological energy. To this extent, early Christian ethics is always a subfield of anthropology, and rooted in the sphere of ontology.⁴⁰⁶

405 John Behr, *The Nicene Faith*. 2 vols, *The Formation of Christian Theology* (Crestwood, N.Y.: St. Vladimir’s seminary Press, 2004), 189–90. He quotes the following text of Athanasios: “Furthermore, knowing that the free will (τὴν προαίρεσιν) of human beings could turn either way, he, in anticipation, secured the grace they had been given by a law, so that if they guarded the grace and remained good (μένειον καλοί) they would enjoy the life of paradise, without sorrow, pain, or care, besides having the promise of immortality in heaven; but that if they transgressed and turned away and became wicked, they would know [what it is] themselves to endure (ὑπομένειν) the natural corruption of death (τὴν ἐν θανάτῳ κατὰ φύσιν φθοράν), and would no longer live in paradise, but in future dying outside it would remain (μένειν) in death and in corruption” (*Inc.* 3).

406 John Anthony McGuckin, *The Orthodox Church: an introduction to its history, doctrine, and spiritual culture* (Malden, MA; Oxford: Blackwell Pub. Ltd., 2008), 188. In support of this position, McGuckin quotes as well from Athanasios’ *De Incarnatione*, 5.1–2: “Not only did God create us out of nothing, but through the grace of the Word, he also gave us the free grace of a life in communion with himself. Even so, humanity rejected eternal realities and was led by a counsel of the devil to turn to corruptible realities. So it was that we became the cause of our own corruption in death. This followed, as I have said, because humanity’s being was naturally corruptible, even though it was destined by the grace that follows from communion in the Word, to have escaped this natural condition if it had persevered in the good. Since the Word was dwelling with the human race, even its natural corruption could not come near it. But note how Wisdom also says: “God made mankind for incorruption, and as an image of his own eternity, but through the envy of the devil, death came into the world.” (footnote 19). Athanasios’ quotation is from the Book of Wisdom, 2:23–4.

In this light, sin and corruption, was not only the result of a wrong moral choice, but a clear sign of abandonment by God. And it was only thanks to God's own will that humans could return to a state of grace.

The main difference between the Western and Eastern Fathers, which will be accentuated with time, seems to be in what is to be done in order to escape the state of sin and recuperate the grace. While the Latin tradition is more inclined to use free will (*προαίρεσις*) to actively achieve compensation for any previous wrongdoing and reach atonement, the Eastern tradition focuses not on the "doing" but rather on the "undoing" of this "turning away" from the grace that was previously bestowed upon them, but that they had rejected, thus setting the terms of the "divine dilemma," namely, what God should do with a creature that, having been given the grace, actively chooses to disavow it. Athanasios will conclude that the right path, as McGuckin underpins, in order to embrace the transcendental destiny, is to take heed from the martyrs' courage, or the Virgin's chastity or the "desire of the believer to part with money and power, as examples of extraordinary grace that show the nature of such believers has already transcended the natural material limitations of an earthly nature."⁴⁰⁷

These theological differences will in fact have eventually a significant repercussion for the typology of saints and hagiography in the Latin and Orthodox churches. From its beginning, the Church had elevated to sainthood those who had died for being "witnesses" of the Christian belief: starting with Jesus Christ himself, the first example of "passion-sufferer", all the way to the apostles and the so-called protomartyrs, like St. Stephen, martyrdom was a preferred narrative from the dawn of Christianity. Aside from martyrs and confessors, there were also saints whose thaumaturgical powers had already been displayed during their lifetime, either by extraordinary powers of clairvoyance or by achieving works of mercy for others in prayer, like St. Nicholas.⁴⁰⁸ All of them, in one way or another, show clear signs of enjoying the charism of the Spirit while on Earth and were understood to be an extremely valuable link in the "golden chain" that St. Symeon the New Theologian believed was going to help all believers to access Paradise. This is an essential part of the understanding of the communion (*koinonia, sobornost'*) of the saints and other divine beings. In the words of St. Basil,

407 McGuckin, *The Orthodox Church*, 189. For a minimum understanding of Athanasios of Alexandria's doctrine and works, see also Frances M. Young, *From Nicaea to Chalcedon: a guide to the literature and its background*, (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 2010), 40–72, and Behr, *The Nicene Faith*, 163–259.

408 On the Orthodox doctrine on saints, see McGuckin, *The Orthodox Church*, 229–33.

Shining on those that have been wholly purified, the Holy Spirit makes them spiritual through communion with himself. Consider a sunbeam falling on something that is already bright and transparent, how it immediately becomes even more brilliant, and starts to emit a fresh brightness from out of itself. So it is with souls which have the Spirit dwelling in them and illuminating them. They themselves become spiritual, and send out their grace to others. (*On the Holy Spirit*, 23)⁴⁰⁹

In accordance with the theological differences on soteriology between the Latin and Orthodox churches, as described earlier, the understanding of the nature of saints is also different. As McGuckin rightly underlines,

Orthodoxy does not recognize the old Latin conception of the supererogatory merits of saints: as if they had accumulated a store of benefits and merits while on earth, which they are now able to spend on posthumous acts of philanthropy. Orthodoxy sees the power of saints as a habitual effluence, through them, of the energy of the Holy Spirit of God which so absorbed them in life that it has now wholly irradiated them by grace after death.⁴¹⁰

Hagiography in Byzantium

The ideas about how sanctity was received or bestowed in Eastern Christianity played a decisive role in the literary genre of hagiography in Byzantium.⁴¹¹ Byzantine literature already had a parallel literary tradition of writing lives, even princely lives, and other literary forms, such as the *basilikos logos* or mirror of princes, that could be understood as being close or even cognate with hagiography. Although the earliest hagiographical manuscripts from Byzantium are only datable to the ninth century, the writing, probably in a low or simple style, was clearly very popular before then.⁴¹² Despite its apparent popularity, the genre, if it can be defined as such, has been little studied in traditional scholarship until recently. First, the fact that the vast majority of texts are anonymous did not help. Second, the language used, except in the relatively low number of cases of known authors, tended to be low and popular. It also had the additional difficulty that their forms evolved quickly and also changed according to the area of the empire where certain texts became popular. In a

409 This passage is quoted by McGuckin, *The Orthodox Church*, 269, n. 191.

410 Ibid. 233.

411 The most thorough study of Byzantine hagiography probably remains, Stephanos Efthymiadis, ed., *The Ashgate Research Companion to Byzantine Hagiography* (Farnham, Surrey, Ashgate, 2011).

412 See also the very insightful chapter by Stephanos Efthymiadis in the more recent OHBL: "Rewriting," in Stratis Papaioannou, ed. *The Oxford Handbook of Byzantine Literature*, (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2021), 348–364.

nutshell, it was deemed either too protean or too popular, or both, to have a prominent role in literary histories.

Even in this situation, there seem to have been some main typologies that both the audience and the writers (known or unknown) recognized. The two most important ones are the *martyrion*, which is a dramatic narrative of only the trial and execution of a saint, and the *vita*, which is usually an extended narrative of the life of a saint from birth or childhood to death, or to the point when the life is written. Other forms are usually understood as being often related, such as the *enkomyion*, which is rhetorical rather than narrative, and usually focuses on specific deeds of the saint, or, in the case of monastic saints, some forms of *apophthegmata patrum*. Specific subtypes focused on the post-mortem miracles of a particular shrine, or the narration of the translations of relics, sometimes also narrating miraculous events, were developed in the middle and late Byzantine periods. The difficulties in providing a foolproof generic classification, however, led to some specialists to open the definition of hagiography to any narrative or rhetorical form, in prose or verse, that would include a personage particularly connected to God or the divine; a certain stylized relationship between language and historical reality; a more performative than informative function of language in hagiographical discourse; and, finally, certain themes and archetypes supporting such stylization.⁴¹³ As S. Efthymiadis has also shown, in the case of hagiography, where rewriting was so common and changes of literary register abounded from the ninth century onwards, any attempt to define hagiography as a literary genre linked to any particular stylistic or linguistic characteristics was almost impossible.⁴¹⁴

In his excellent analysis of hagiography in Byzantium, Christian Høgel has shown how the genre enjoyed a strong revival once the iconoclastic controversies had come to an end:

And soon even emperors and their staff engaged, in an unprecedented way, in the writing and the commissioning of hagiography. The hagiographical interests of the imperial court had been evident since the translations of relics commanded and

413 Christian Høgel, *Symeon Metaphrastes: Rewriting and Canonization*, (Copenhagen: Museum Tusulanum Press, University of Copenhagen, 2002), 22. Very similar difficulties were encountered by Slavic scholars in the search for a definition of what constituted a hagiography in Slavic; see Susana Torres Prieto, "A Godly Regiment in the Heavens Came to Help Aleksandr: Sanctity of Heroic Princes in Medieval Russia," in Russell E. Martin, Brian Boeck, and Daniel Rowland, eds., *Dubitando: Studies in Early Slavic History and Culture in Honor of Donald Ostrowski*, (Ohio: Slavica, 2012), 67–83.

414 Efthymiadis, "Rewriting," 355f.

enterprised by the emperor Constantius, but apart from the lives of Constantine the Great and his mother Helena, only very few members of the imperial family had been commemorated as saints. Justinian and his wife, Theodora, were commemorated in the synaxarion, but no actual life seems to have been written. The empress Theodora, the reinstater of Orthodoxy, was praised in a life shortly after her death. But emperors had, in general, not been saints, and certainly not writers of hagiography.⁴¹⁵

Høgel underlines as well the fact that, despite the interest of tenth-century emperors in hagiography as a means of promoting themselves, in his opinion, epitomized by Constantine VII Porphyrogenetos, commission of the Hagia Sophia synaxarion, the processes of official canonization were almost unnecessary in Byzantium:

The process of canonization, the official recognition of saints and texts, would have been an obvious method [of promoting themselves], at least since it existed in the west, but this praxis was never instituted in Byzantium. Only a few saints were in later Byzantium taken through a process comparable to a canonization. One of the reasons may be that Constantinople, being both the religious and political center, needed only present its list of saints and texts; unlike the papacy in the west. Nevertheless, there existed what we could call a *de facto* canonization. The saints and texts that were included in officially sponsored collections and decoration programs were *de facto* canonized.⁴¹⁶

This would be, in fact, the technique used in Kyivan Rus' to elevate the members of the ruling dynasty to sainthood.

The Christianisation of Kyivan Rus'

The official Christianisation in 988 of the emerging polity of Rus', whose capital city was Kyiv but whose domains extended over to Novgorod, and over both sides of the Dnieper river, was key in defining its future in the world of the new millennium. The fact and the process of Christianisation affected all aspects of the daily life of the inhabitants of Rus', independently of how strongly they felt the beliefs of their newly adopted religion or indeed how aware they were of its basic theological tenets. It meant, for a start, that, as Christians, the inhabitants of Rus' (Slavs and non-Slavs alike) could not be sold as slaves by neighboring traders anymore, or by their own originally foreign ruling elites, as indeed they seem to have been until then.⁴¹⁷ It also meant that their chiefs

415 Høgel, *Symeon Metaphrastes*, 53–4.

416 Idem. 59.

417 The question of the slave trade in the Byzantine Empire and its neighboring polities has somehow been shunned by scholarship for long. It is now being analyzed under a

were able to negotiate better trade deals with the powerful Byzantine empire or with the Khazars to the East, that would undoubtedly benefit a large part of the population.⁴¹⁸ It meant, additionally, that the landscape of the towns and villages they inhabited was soon going to change as religious buildings proliferated, mainly funded by the revenues of the aforementioned trade. Furthermore, in their private lives, it meant that there were some extra taxes to be paid now to the newly appointed representatives of the new church who, by the way, were also now passing sentences on a whole new list of crimes that fell under their jurisdiction. So, contrary to the nineteenth-century myth of passive resistance of Slavic paganism, Christianity must have changed the lives of ordinary Rus' quite substantially.

There was a quite smaller group of Rus' for whom the change was much more dramatic, even life-changing. The political and ruling elites of the Rus' were forced, in view of the new cultural and ideological framework brought by Christianity, to recategorize the justification of their existence. If for an ordinary Rus' the changes brought about by Christianity were metaphysical, for the ruling elites the change was ontological.

Before Christianisation, the justification for kingship had been mainly material. Chiefs seem to have been appointed, at least among the Scandinavian elites who arrived to these lands, according to their success in trade and in battle, or in both. Legitimation was granted to the extent that revenue was provided. The ruler was usually surrounded by a group of loyal comrades-in-arms, what later came to be known as the *druzhina*, who would travel, trade and, if needed be, plunder with him.

new light owing to recent archaeological discoveries in Central Europe and the work of specialists such as Marek Jakowiak. See Felix Biermann and Marek Jankowiak, eds., *The archaeology of slavery in early Medieval Northern Europe: the invisible commodity* (Cham, Switzerland: Springer, 2021), David Abulafa, "Asia, Africa and the Trade of Medieval Europe," in Cynthia Postan, Edward Miller and M. M. Postan, eds., *The Cambridge Economic History of Europe from the Decline of the Roman Empire: Volume 2: Trade and Industry in the Middle Ages* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), 402–473, and Susana Torres Prieto, "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, 2023), forthcoming.

418 On the relations of Kyivan Rus' with Khazaria, see Simon Franklin and Jonathan Shepard, *The Emergence of Rus 750–1200* (London: Longman, 1996), 60–91, and Jonathan Shepard, "Rus'," in Nora Berend, ed., *Christianization and the Rise of Christian Monarchy. Scandinavia, Central Europe and Rus' c. 900–1200* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 369–416.

One of the first examples provided in the sources of the dynastic right to rule comes, in fact, by way of a woman. When her husband Igor was assassinated, Olga not only would exact a brutal revenge on the murderers of her husband, but she would do it to protect the right of her infant son, Sviatoslav, to be the next acknowledged leader.⁴¹⁹ She also seems to be the first Rus' ruler to realize the value of religion in her personal search for legitimation, and legitimization, of her son as heir. Aside from the strength of her personal Christian beliefs, whose honesty is not to be necessarily doubted in view of the spread of Christianity among elite ladies before her time,⁴²⁰ Olga understood very well the importance of deploying the potential of the Church and its officials in support of her claims. She asked both the Emperor in Byzantium and the Emperor of the Franks for a mission to Christianize the lands under her regency. The former, Constantine VII Porphyrogenetos, or maybe his son Romanos II, refused to send it; the second, Otto I, sent a mission headed by Adalbert of Magdeburg, which was a complete fiasco.⁴²¹

Her son seems to have had no interest whatsoever in Christianity, but her grandson, Volodimyr I, who finally adopted Christianity as official religion in 988, seems to have had very similar ideas to her grandmother as to the usefulness of the religion of the Byzantines in having a stronger legitimation of power. And he, or those around him, also seem to have quickly realized how important it would be to have members of the family elevated to the category of saints. This, in fact, was a groundbreaking innovation by the ruling elites of Rus', because it challenged, on the one hand, the ideas of political legitimization and divine role of rulers inherited from their pre-Christian religion and, on the other, the religious conventions on royal saints inherited from Byzantium. While our knowledge of Slavic paganism is limited, and our understanding of the religious practices that these Norsemen could have brought when they became the ruling elites Rus' is also fragmentary, and usually based on our knowledge of Scandinavian practices elsewhere, it seems that in neither form of their pre-Christian religion the role of the ruler was that of an intermediary with the divinity. In fact, one of the main differences between Indo-European religious practices, of which both societies (Norse and Slavic) were representatives, and the Semitic and Eastern Mediterranean ones is that, in the former, the connection with the divinity was mainly established through a priestly class, despite the title that its supreme ruler could adopt, like the Emperor in

419 The story of Olga and her several revenges was recorded in the *Primary Chronicle* (*Povest' vremennykh let*, *passim* PVL) under the years 945–6 (6453–4).

420 See Shepard, "Rus'," 377–9.

421 Torres Prieto, "Mercenaries."

Rome, who was nominally appointed as *Pontifex Maximus*. The main difference between those two forms of understanding religion is that the figure of the sacred ruler, or the king-priest. In Mesopotamia, Egypt, and, to a certain extent, in Israel, the appointed ruler had a cosmic dimension related to the welfare of the whole kingdom: his relation with the divinity was direct, he was said to speak on behalf of the divinity (except occasionally in Israel where the role of the prophets was underlined), and his welfare reflected the welfare of the whole kingdom. The sacred king was usually a king-priest, who assumed the paramount role of maintaining social order. The sacred rulers of the Eastern Mediterranean were appointed and sustained by direct transference of divine capacities, if only sometimes aided by priests or prophets, whose role was auxiliary.

In Indo-European religions, by contrast, the welfare of the ruler did not contain in itself a cosmic dimension of the welfare of the polity, and the divinity did not reveal itself directly to the monarch, establishing with him a dyadic relation of transference of power that granted the ruler immediate anointment. What we find in Indo-European peoples are pantheons of gods, all functionally determined, to whom anyone, from king to pauper, could turn for favor. In these societies, the mediation of the priestly class, whether it was the Pythia, the shaman or the sorcerer, was essential to the communication with the divine. Moreover, and probably for the same reason, the legitimation of rulers was extra-divine, firmly established in warfare, conquest and personal leadership, or charisma. When the ruler was appointed by the divinity, such ruler acquired his divine status by emulation of the divine, not by transference of his governing capacities. Later, when Christianity became the imperial religion, rulers became imitators of Christ or his apostles, but it was only the saints who could have divine capacities (such as granting protection and healing), and this they acquired usually after death.⁴²² When the saints, or their relics, did not perform miracles on this Earth by direct transference of God's divine powers, they could only be, as the priestly class, intermediaries with the divine, as intercessors, only more powerful than the priests could ever be.

Nevertheless, from the adoption of Christianity as imperial religion by Constantine, and as the Western Church in Rome grew steadily apart from the Eastern Orthodoxy, several fundamental theological differences became clearly outlined. Among them, one key in the present discussion is the very

422 The idea of the healing touch of kings that came about only in Western societies in later medieval and early modern times, probably as a parallel development of early modern autocratic monarchies. The sacredness of the king's body was developed in 1957 in the classic by Ernst H. Kantorowicz, *The King's Two Bodies: a Study in Mediaeval Political Theology* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2016, repr.)

diferent relation between Church and State, or earthly and heavenly powers, established, respectively, by the Papacy and the Patriarchate. This diference is not only justified in the diferent geopolitical situations that the heirs of the Western Empire and its Church based in Rome had to face before the end of the millennium. It is, to a very large extent, rooted in a diferent understanding of Christian doctrine on how to achieve sainthood between East and West. It was this diference between what one could and could not do, and should and should not do in order to achieve sainthood, as discussed at the beginning in the case of personal atonement, what would ultimately shape the understanding of good rulership in either realm of European Christianity.

Hagiography in Kyivan Rus'

A quick survey of the earliest hagiography in Kyivan Rus' would include, at least, three princes and two monks: Boris, Gleb and Volodimir in the frst group, and Feodosii and Avraam of Smolensk in the second.⁴²³ If the scope is slightly widened in terms of genre definitions, and includes also translations of lives of non-Kyivan saints, the hagiographic catalog is evidently wider and more varied. The frst encounter of the newly Christianised Rus' with saints lives was in the liturgy imported for the new cult.⁴²⁴ In his recent book, Sean Grifn has convincingly demonstrated how the hagiographic models imported from the very beginning in Kyivan Rus' for their use in liturgy were key in the creation of new autochthonous models, particularly in the case of the lives of Volodimir and Olga.⁴²⁵

Aside from the obvious interest by members of the royal family in military saints, such as Theodore, Demetrios and George, as propitious intercessors in times of war,⁴²⁶ there is evidence that certain saints were of particular interest

423 These are the texts included by Paul Hollingsworth in his anthology, *The Hagiography of Kievan Rus'*, (Boston: Harvard University Press for the Ukrainian Research Institute of Harvard University, 1992).

424 Hagiography was certainly not transmitted as an independent literary genre from Byzantium at frst, and it was not even the most popular genre at the beginning. From all the manuscripts that constitute the Old Church Slavonic canon, where we find several psalters and tetraevangelia, for example, only one, the *Codex Suprasliensis*, which is really a menaion for the month of March contains 24 hagiographical texts, and almost as many homilies.

425 Sean Grifn, *The Liturgical Past in Byzantium, and Early Rus* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019).

426 Monica White, *Military Saints in Byzantium and Rus, 900–1200* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016).

to the Kyivan readership, according to early attested translations. Among the earliest examples of writing to be found in Early East Slavic are a fragmentary life of St. Quadratus and another fragmentary life of St. Thekla, both martyrs.⁴²⁷ These texts were included in some of the earliest liturgical books, but these detached folia are particularly interesting due to their clear East Slavic features and because they may betray independent copies of lives found to be particularly compelling by the monks in Kyivan Rus'. By the twelfth century, the catalog of *vitae*, both in miscellanies and independently bounded, seems to have expanded. From the first half of the century, we find a life of Sabbas the Sanctified (Shmidt # 61), a long miscellany of many different types of texts (a *zlatorustry*) containing, aside from some homilies of John Chrysostom, apocryphal and hagiographical texts, such as a life of the protomartyr St. Stephen or an incomplete (the beginning is missing) life of St. Alexis of Rome. Interestingly, at the end of this manuscript there is a fragmentary life of Boris and Gleb (Shmidt # 74, f. 198). Additionally, dated to the twelfth century, there is another fragmentary life of Theodosios of Alexandria (Shmidt #96) and, from the end of the century, the full lives of Niphon of Cyprus and Theodore the Studite (Shmidt #119).

The first texts written originally in Kyivan Rus' that contain *vitae* that could be qualified somehow as hagiographic are the lives of the monks included in the *paterik* of the Monastery of the Caves in Kyiv.⁴²⁸ A *paterik*, as their Greek antecedents, was a collection of ascetic writings and lives of monks destined mainly for the edification of the members of a given monastery, closer to the aforementioned model of the *aphothegmata patrum*. The one composed for the first monastery of Kyivan Rus' contains not only the very famous life of Feodosii, its founding abbot, but shorter lives, of a few pages long in modern editions, of other exemplary brothers and miracle workers, among which are a certain Ioann and Sergii, Evstratii the Faster, Nikon, Kuška, a holy martyr,

427 In S. O. Shmidt's catalog of early manuscripts, these are numbers 16 and 17. They are both from the eleventh century. Only two folia survive in each case. The pages are laid out in two columns in uncial script. They correspond to partial translations of the *Passio s. Condrati* (BHG 359), narrating the martyrdom of Quadratus of Nicomedia, and the *Acta Pauli et Theclae* (BHG 1710), narrating the martyrdom of Thekla, which became one of the most popular apocryphal texts in Slavic, attested in at least 43 manuscripts according to Aurelio de Santos Otero, *Die handschriftliche Überlieferung der altslavischen Apokryphen. Band I.* (Berlin, New York: de Gruyter, 1978), 43–51, and Aurelio de Santos Otero, *Die handschriftliche Überlieferung der altslavischen Apokryphen. Band II.* (Berlin, New York: de Gruyter, 1981), 242. Both were edited by Vatroslav Jagić in 1882 (Vatroslav Jagić, "Zur Berichtigung des altrussischen Text," *Archiv für slavische Philologie*, VI, 1882), 228–238.

428 The *Paterik* has been translated into English by Muriel Heppell, *The Paterik of the Kievian Caves Monastery* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1989).

and Pimin, another faster, Afanasii the Solitary, venerable Sviatoša, the monks Erazm and Arefa, the priest Tit and the deacon Evagrii, Nikita and Lavrentii, both nicknamed the Solitary, Agapit, holy and blessed, Grigorii the miracle worker, Ioann, another much-suffering solitary, a venerable Moisei the Hungarian, the monk Prokhor, the venerables, Marko, Feodor and Vasilii, Spiridion the baker and Alimprii the icon-painter, another venerable and long-suffering father Pimin, and finally Isaakii the Cave-dweller. The *paterik* has at least three different authors, the famous Nestor, Simon, Bishop of Vladimir and Suzdal' and Polikarp, and it is quite contemporary to the lives it recounts, which makes it extremely valuable as it reflects the life of this monastery almost from its foundation around 1073 to the Mongol invasion in 1240.

It is clear that, by this time, after copying and using saints' lives in their daily liturgies and composing brief sketches of the lives of their own members, the monks of Caves monastery had already managed well the rudiments of encomiastic hagiography. Since the Caves Monastery acted as the beacon of monastic and literary culture in the whole realm, because most monasteries built in Kyivan Rus' were founded by former Caves monks, there was enough know-how in the eleventh century to tackle the task of composing the first hagiographies of members of the ruling dynasty. It might be worth remembering that written culture, particularly that with any literary ambition, flourished exclusively in monastic foundations in Rus', which were, as indeed the Caves monastery had been from its building, close to the court of the ruling prince in the region. The monks preserved manuscripts in their scriptoria and their libraries as they were creating and developing a historical narrative of the new polity that could best serve the interests of its rulers.

The choice of the first saints was not, indeed, accidental. Within the traditional Christian model of presenting the Christianisation of Rus' as a swift and almost sudden phenomenon, in line with all similar narratives in Early Medieval Europe, as Peter Brown has pointed out, the *Primary Chronicle* (PVL) presents the narrations of the conversion to Christianity as the personal triumph of one single man, the prince Volodymyr.⁴²⁹ It also presents it as a contest between several monotheistic religions, even different Christian churches, in which Orthodoxy becomes gloriously victorious. What the monks were writing ret-

429 On contemporary narratives of Christianisations and their influence on modern perceptions, see Peter Brown, *Authority and the Sacred* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), 64–5. In the particular case of Kyivan Rus', see Oleksiy P. Tolochko, 'Christian Chronology, Universal History and the Origin of Chronicle Writing in Rus', in Ildar H. Garipzanov, ed., *Historical Narratives and Christian Identity on a European Periphery: Early History Writing in Northern, East-Central, and Eastern Europe* (c. 1070.1200), (Turnhout: Brepols, 2011), 207–228.

respectively was mere propaganda to justify their daily upkeep and the social standing of their patrons. Despite the immense number of articles and books written on the chronicle's veracity or plausibility, it is important not to lose sight of the fact that this was not a work written for modern positivist historians to use as a historiographic source, and certainly not, as a matter of course, a faithful account of anything. Truthfulness or factualness were not the drivers for its composition, and we were obviously not the public for whom it was composed. Moreover, in a time when the emulation of received models was the most employed literary technique, the PVL was written by people whose main sources of inspiration were biblical, parabiblical and patristic writings. So, if anyone with such intellectual background and formation decides, or is requested to, write a history of their land and the role of the ruling dynasty in its consolidation, a scrupulous respect for accurate facts, as we might understand it, is certainly not something one should expect to find.

The PVL narrates both the life and deeds of Prince Volodimir and of the princes and brothers Boris and Gleb, children of the former, although arguably not in a purely hagiographic style. All of them have other texts attached to their cult. In the case of Volodimir, Christianiser of the Rus', there are at least two main texts, aside from the entries related to the years of his rulership in the PVL, and specifically those under which the Christianisation of Rus' is central, 1015–1019. The first one is the *enkomion* dedicated to him as Christianiser of the Rus' inserted by Ilarion in his *Sermon of Law and Grace*. This text has rightly become one of the most quoted and, as its Byzantine parallels, its register is highly rhetorical. According to Simon Franklin, the *enkomion*, which constitutes the third part of the whole *Sermon*, can in turn be divided into four parts: the first describes his life before conversion, the second makes the case for Volodimir's sanctity, the third will present the proof of his sanctity in the flourishing of Christianity under his son, and the fourth is a direct address to Volodimir for intercession.⁴³⁰ Parts one and three are clearly more narrative than the other two.

The other relevant text is the one known in English as *Memorial and Encomium for Prince Volodimir (Pamiat' i pokhvala knjaziu ruskomu Volodimyru)*.⁴³¹ As Hollingsworth points out, the title might be misleading because it is actually

430 For a detailed study of Ilarion's life and works, and the *Sermon* in particular, see Simon Franklin's *Sermons and rhetoric of Kievan Rus'* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1991), xvi–xliv. The translation into English of the *enkomion* is in the same volume, pages 17–26.

431 On this text, see Hollingsworth, *Hagiography*, lxxxiv–xciii, and also Francis Butler, *Enlightener of Rus' : the Image of Vladimir Sviatoslavich Across the Centuries* (Bloomington, Ind.: Slavica, 2002), 74–80.

a composite of at least three independent texts that only sometimes seem to have been transmitted together in menologia: the first part is the *enkomion* to Volodymyr proper, the second part is another *enkomion* to Volodymyr's grandmother, Olga, and the third one is a life of Volodymyr. As expected, the contents are more or less similar, even if emphasis is placed sometimes on different aspects of Volodymyr's life and merits: while the PVL and the menologion *Memorial* underline the personal experience of conversion of Volodymyr, Ilarion's *Sermon*, as well as the *Memorial*, stress his prowess as warrior and pious Christian, and both Ilarion and the *Memorial*, particularly the latter, abound in the comparison of Volodymyr with Constantine and Olga with Helena.

Similarly, in the case of the brothers Boris and Gleb, there is a mini-corpus of texts.⁴³² Aside from the long entry *sub anno* 1015 describing their death, the translation of their relics to Vyšgorod is further described under the year 1072 and, finally, under the year 1115, the consecration of the stone church in Vyšgorod where the relics were finally placed.

Another text, known as the *Lesson on the Life and Murder of the Blessed Passion-Sufferers Boris and Gleb* (*Chtenie o zhitii i pogublenii blazhennuiu strastoterptsu Borisa i Gleba*) was undoubtedly written earlier than this entries in the PVL by a monk of the Kyivan Caves monastery called Nestor, roughly between 1075 and 1085.⁴³³ This is probably the most Byzantine of all the texts, as it is evident from its structure, contents and style, and it is clearly similar to the *vitae* contained in the *Metaphrastic Menologion*. It narrates the life of the brothers from childhood to death, unlike the next text, which focuses on the martyrdom. The *Tale and Passion and Encomium of the Holy Martyrs Boris and Gleb* (*Skazaniie i strast' i pokhvala svjatuuiu muchenikou Borisa i Gleba*) is, by far, the most known account of their martyrdom, having been copied in more than 180 manuscripts, the earliest of which is a menologion for the month of May, known as the *Uspenskii sbornik*, traditionally dated to the twelfth or early thirteenth centuries.⁴³⁴ Finally, there is another text, the *Tale of the Miracles of the Holy Passion-Sufferers of Christ Roman and David* (*S'kazaniie chiudes' svjatoiu strastot'rp'tsiu Khristovou Romana i Davida*), whose oldest copy in the same *Uspenskii sbornik*. Nothing much is known about the possible author

432 The best study of the written tradition of these two saints remains, in my understanding, Gail Lenhof, *The Martyred Princes Boris and Gleb: a Socio-Cultural Study of the Cult and the Texts*, (Columbus, Ohio: Slavica Publishers, 1989).

433 Hollingsworth, *Hagiography*, xxxiv–xxxvii.

434 A fragmentary form of this text, however, is inserted, as mentioned earlier, in an earlier manuscript, a collection of homilies and hagiography under the name of *Zlatousty* (Shmidt #74).

of this piece, except that he was well-versed in Byzantine hagiography and that it must have been composed after the last translation of the relics, i.e., 1115.

The brothers were sacrificed by another brother in the struggle for power that ensued after the death of Volodymyr, whose main beneficiary, in the long run, was Iaroslav, nicknamed The Wise, brother of the martyrs and their assassin.⁴³⁵ It was precisely Iaroslav who initiated the campaign of artistic and literary development that really inaugurated Kyivan Rus' cultural Golden Age. The parallels of his figure with that of the biblical Solomon did not escape his contemporaries, and so it is underlined by the first panegyrist of Rus', the monk Ilarion, in the last part of his *Sermon on Law and Grace* dedicated as an encomium to Volodymyr:

(59) Your devotion is well witnessed and faithfully proved by Georgij [Iaroslav's baptismal name], your son, whom God made heir to your rule after you; who does not demolish what you established, but rather strengthens it; who does not diminish your deeds of devotion, but rather embellishes them; who does not impair, but repairs; for he finished your unfinished works, as Solomon David's: for he built the great temple of God's Holy Wisdom, to sanctify and consecrate your city; and he adorned it with every adornment: with gold and silver and precious stones, and with holy vessels.⁴³⁶

If his father was often equaled to Constantine, as Olga was paralleled to Helena, Iaroslav was compared to Solomon, and not only for his cultural and building endeavors. Like his biblical prototype, it was understood he descended from the founder of a dynastic line whose main aspiration was to receive protection from God in the establishment of the polity of God's new people. Interestingly, given the often inexact and contested rules of inheritance in Kyivan Rus', one of the problems that contesting candidates from opposing branches of the dynasty faced regularly when they managed to secure the throne in Kyiv was how to legitimize their newly acquired position.⁴³⁷ The system was based on lateral

435 Some scholars have suggested that, contrary to what is stated in most of the sources for the martyrdom of these two princes, in regards to the fact that it was his brother Sviatopolk who ordered their deaths, it was actually Iaroslav the one who would have instructed them to be killed in order to clear his own path to the Kyivan throne and that blaming Sviatopolk (who could not defend himself as he had also died) for the fratricide was a strategy to clean his own name. See a summary of the question in Gábor Klaniczay, *Holy Rulers and Blessed Princesses: Dynastic Cults in Medieval Central Europe*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 109–13.

436 The translation of Ilarion's *Sermon* is taken from the Franklin's *Sermons*, 23–4. Georgij was the baptismal name of Iaroslav, and the cathedral of St. Sophia (Holy Wisdom) was built by Iaroslav between 1037 and 1045.

437 The very idea of the contemporary awareness of a dynasty descending from Riurik has been recently discussed by Don Ostrowski, concluding that it might be a mo-

inheritance, by which all members of a given generation had to be deceased before the throne passed to the next generation. Mainly, it stipulated that, for a son to enter into the contest, his own father must have been prince of Kyiv himself. This partial solution excluded many cousins (children of non-ruling princes in Kyiv) from the fight and, at the same time, narrowed the idea of the chosen dynasty, increasingly applied only to a chosen branch of said dynasty. Nevertheless, it took decades for the “rota” system of lateral inheritance to be acknowledged by all and applied properly, if it really ever was. Iaroslav himself, or those around him, purportedly wrote a set of injunctions, a so-called “Testament,” in which he indicated a few rules of inheritance that would avoid the carnage that killed all his siblings.⁴³⁸ The attempt to legitimization that Iaroslav intended was based on the legitimization that the Church had already granted to the dynasty of Volodymyr’s descendants, as if it were a new House of David. In this context of seemingly unavoidable conflict, one of the first steps taken by the Kyivan church in order to guarantee the special relation of the new dynasty with the new God was to count with the special protection that the dynasty’s own saints will bestow, theoretically, upon the members of their own family. It has traditionally been understood, and often repeated in secondary literature, that Boris and Gleb inaugurated a specifically Russian typology of saints, the *strastoterpetsy* or “passion-sufferers.”⁴³⁹ There is nothing particularly Russian or even East Slavic in the model of passion-sufferer martyrs that Boris and Gleb represented.⁴⁴⁰ From Jesus Christ himself to all the protomartyrs of the first centuries, all of them accepted their ineluctable fate in the conviction they were incarnating the sacrificial lamb that circumstances required. The fact that another of his brothers, after all the others had conveniently died or been killed, inherited the Kyivan throne and promoted their cult was probably not a coincidence.

den construct imposed anachronistically on the historiographic evidence given the very few mentions to the theoretical founder in early sources; see Donald Ostrowski, “Was there a Rurikid Dynasty in Early Rus’?,” *Canadian-American Slavic Studies* 52 (2018), 30–49. I would propose, however, that even if Rurik did not play the role that subsequent historiography attributes to him, there was nevertheless among the members of the ruling family a sense of being connected through their ancestors, whether Volodymyr Svatoslavich or, later, Vladimir Monomakh.

438 About the problems surrounding the text known as Iaroslav’s *Testament*, see Franklin and Shepard, *The Emergence*, 246–9.

439 The idea of the uniqueness of the early Russian saints was very much the invention of G. Fedotov, which he transmitted in several of his works, see, for example, George P. Fedotov, *The Russian religious mind*. (New York: Harper, 1960). See a critique of his position, unfortunately still widely held, in Hollingsworth, *Hagiography*, xx–xxi.

440 See the analysis, for example, of St. Wenceslas in Klaniczay, *Holy Rulers*, 99–108.

In this respect, the Kyivan princes broke with the tradition they had imported from Constantinople, where sainthood was rarely bestowed on members of the imperial dynasties. The concept of royal blood had been much more used in the Latin church, and by the time Volodymyr became a Christian, several royal households in Western and Northern Europe had protecting saints among the members of their ruling dynasties. It was supposed that, in their role as intercessors before God to obtain favor for their descendants, a dynasty with many saints was a dynasty well-protected. This nationalization of the cults was something that the Christian *oikoumene* of Byzantium and its Patriarchate never really contemplated in their aspiration to universalism. The phenomenon of dynastic saints, often understood as “national” saints, was, nevertheless, a much-spread phenomenon in Latin Christianity, as Klaniczay managed to prove. His understanding is that the cult of dynastic saints was a medieval Christian variant of the ruler cult, in which Christianity reinterpreted and actually incorporated several aspects of the pagan ruler cult.⁴⁴¹ Thus, according to him, dynastic saints were only a natural “heir to the sacral attributes proper to the imperial cult,” in the new Christian scenario where the sacral authority of the emperor had come to be conditional on the approval of the Church.⁴⁴² While this might be true in some cases in the Latin Christian lands, it certainly did not become the norm in Orthodox Eastern Christianity. Not only because, as mentioned previously, Byzantine emperors or their family members were rarely canonized, but also because there was a clear preference of *martyria* over *vita*, as exemplified by the menologion of Symeon Metaphrastes, where the former constituted the majority.⁴⁴³ The *martyrion*, which underlined the relevance of passive resistance rather than actually engaging in choosing the right and moral path of action, moreover, could hardly be understood as a ruler’s attribute, pagan or not.⁴⁴⁴

The case for the sainthood of Volodymyr is clearly stated in the frequent parallels between Volodymyr and Constantine, or sometimes David, present from the first liturgical texts and further developed in all the texts linked to him as

441 Klaniczay, *Holy Rulers*, 43. A much more enriching and in-depth study of the process in the European peripheries, particularly focused on the interrelations between religion and power, is presented in Nora Berend (ed.), *Christianization and the Rise of Christian Monarchy. Scandinavia, Central Europe and Rus’ c. 900–1200* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007).

442 Klaniczay, *Holy Rulers*, 60.

443 C. Høgel, *Symeon Metaphrastes*, 10–1.

444 The life of Volodymyr narrates how he himself was healed miraculously, but not that he could perform any miracles in his lifetime.

the baptizer of Rus'.⁴⁴⁵ The political implications of the comparisons can hardly be overlooked. The choice of the typology of deeds chosen reveals a particular understanding of sainthood in newly converted Orthodox lands. The idea of elevating the baptizer of the new polity to sainthood was an honor shared by Boris I of Bulgaria (853–89) and Stephan Nemanja of Serbia (1168–95), the other two strong new Slavic Orthodox polities. In neither case, martyrs or passion-sufferers were added to the dynastic cults. In truth, none of them had such a complicated system of dynastic inheritance and, most importantly, none of the newly established Orthodox churches in Bulgaria or Serbia sought from the very beginning any degree of independence from Constantinople.⁴⁴⁶

So the phenomenon of the cult of Boris and Gleb is, indeed, almost an anomaly in Orthodox Christianity, and, in that sense, a very particular Rus' development within Orthodoxy, not for the typology (martyr), which was clearly well known, but for the people chosen to perform it, if compared with the Byzantine model. Such anomaly was fully justified, however, if the intention was the establishment of a more autonomous or national church in Kyivan Rus', institutionally independent from the Patriarchate of Constantinople, but fully aligned, nevertheless, with the doctrine of the Eastern Fathers on sainthood and the tradition and tastes of hagiography in Byzantium. Although parallels have been drawn with St. Wenceslas (Václav) in Bohemia, and importation from Western Slavic lands has been suggested, it remains a mystery why this model of martyr was chosen for the two brothers. The model of passive suffering is of course completely in line with the Orthodox understanding of sainthood, that depended more on the presence of God's grace than in the active deeds. As usually happens, it was probably a combination of several factors: an unresolved double crime, the convenience of having some saint in the ruling family to bring protection to dynasty, the Orthodox clear preference for martyrs, and the fact that they both died young and without issue, and could thus be appropriated by the remaining member of that generation, Iaroslav. Be that as it may, they were extremely useful in settling down the disputes. By the time they were probably canonized in 1072 and their relics translated to Vyšgorod, the three brothers of the next generation were taking an oath to seal their "triumvirate" upon their relics.

Aside from these three princely saints, whose lives in various forms were included in liturgy, homiletics and historiography, chronicle writers in Rus'

445 The textual corpus and the subsequent image of Volodimir in Russian culture were analyzed by Francis Butler, *Enlightener of Rus': the image of Vladimir Sviatoslavich across the centuries* (Bloomington, Ind.: Slavica, 2002).

446 On the relevance, maybe, of the appointment of Ilarion by Iaroslav as indicative of this thirst for independence, see Franklin, *Sermons and Rhetoric*, xvi–xxxvii.

developed a particular form of princely life, almost in the form of a funerary lament, that would describe the life and deeds of every prince whose death was recounted in the PVL.⁴⁴⁷ Unlike the texts written for Volodymyr, Boris and Gleb, or indeed any of the monks and abbots considered saints, they are not a posterior justification of their merits to sainthood, but rather an *a priori* granting of their sacral status as members of the ruling dynasty. They all share the same compositional model void of real positivist justification of merits and abundant in *loci communes*. Unlike abbots, whose deeds described in their *vitae* were visible to the very scribes composing the chronicles, the repetitiveness of their deeds (“builder of churches,” “lover of the faith,” “defender of the land”) seemed to conform to a well-known model whose accuracy is increasingly hard to believe. These terse accounts of princely lives also differ from those of the martyrs, whose merits were justified after death as miracle workers because, as Peter Brown pointed out in the case of holy persons, they had “achieved, usually through prolonged ascetic labor, an exceptional degree of closeness to God [who] would answer their prayers on behalf of the majority of believers, whose own sins kept them at a distance from Him.”⁴⁴⁸

In conclusion, it seems clear that Kyivan Rus’ inherited the Byzantine models both in terms of literary conventions and uses, as well as in their most relevant theological points. It was precisely this theological background what allowed the Rus’ scribes to compose their own particular form of godly sanctioned dynastic historiography when needed, by adopting models previously received from Byzantium. Thus, new *martyria* (Boris and Gleb) and *vitae* (Volodymyr) were created and adapted to their particular needs, either in order to create the idea of God-chosen dynasty, or in order establish the cult of national saints to reinforce their newly established church. In both cases, they achieved what Olga had pursued: legitimation and legitimization for the descendants of her son.

Bibliography

Abulafa, David, “Asia, Africa and the Trade of Medieval Europe,” in Cynthia Postan, Edward Miller and M. M. Postan, eds., *The Cambridge Economic History of Europe from the Decline of the Roman Empire: Volume 2: Trade and Industry in the Middle Ages* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), 402–473.

447 See Oleksiy Tolochko, “Pokhvala ili Zhitie? (Mezhdu tekstologiei i ideologiei kniazheskikh panegirikov v drevnerusskom letopisanii),” 1999. *Palaeoslavica* VII:26–38, and Susana Torres Prieto, “Old Models for New Princes: Biblical Kingship in Kyivan Rus’,” 2021, *Harvard Ukrainian Studies* 38 (1–2):1–20.

448 Brown, *Authority and the Sacred*, 58.

- Behr, John, *The Nicene Faith. Part One, True God of True God* (Crestwood, New York: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2004)
- Berend, Nora, ed., *Christianization and the Rise of Christian Monarchy. Scandinavia, Central Europe and Rus' c. 900–1200* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007)
- Biermann, Felix, and Marek Jankowiak, eds., *The Archaeology of Slavery in Early Medieval Northern Europe: the Invisible Commodity* (Cham, Switzerland: Springer, 2021)
- Brown, Peter, *The Cult of the Saints: its Rise and Function in Latin Christianity*, Haskell Lectures on History of Religions (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1981)
- _____, *Authority and the Sacred: Aspects of the Christianisation of the Roman World* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995)
- Butler, Francis, *Enlightener of Rus': the Image of Vladimir Sviatoslavich across the Centuries* (Bloomington, IN: Slavica, 2002)
- Cunningham, Mary B., and Elizabeth Theokritof, eds., *The Cambridge Companion to Orthodox Christian Theology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008)
- Efthymiadis, Stephanos, ed., *The Ashgate research companion to Byzantine hagiography* (Farnham, Surrey: Ashgate, 2011)
- _____, "Rewriting," in Stratis Papaioannou, ed., *The Oxford Handbook of Byzantine Literature*, (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2021), 348–364.
- Franklin, Simon, *Sermons and Rhetoric of Kievan Rus'* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1991)
- Franklin, Simon and Jonathan Shepard, *The Emergence of Rus, 750–1200* (London: Longman, 1996)
- Grifn, Sean, *The Liturgical Past in Byzantium, and early Rus* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019)
- Hepell, Muriel, *The Paterik of the Kievan Caves Monastery* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1989).
- Høgel, Christian, *Symeon Metaphrastes: Rewriting and Canonization* (Copenhagen: Museum Tusulanum Press, University of Copenhagen, 2002).
- Hollingsworth, Paul, *The Hagiography of Kievan Rus'* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1992)
- Ivanov, Sergey, and Anatolii Turilov, "Slavic," in Stratis Papaioannou, ed., *The Oxford Handbook of Byzantine Literature* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press. 2021), 662–681.
- Lenhof, Gail, *The Martyred Princes Boris and Gleb: a Socio-cultural Study of the Cult and the Texts* (Columbus, OH: Slavica, 1989)
- McGuckin, John Anthony, *The Orthodox Church. An Introduction to its History, Doctrine, and Spiritual Culture* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2011)
- Ostrowski, Donald., "Was there a Riurikid Dynasty in Early Rus'?" *Canadian-American Slavic Studies* 52 (2018), 30–49.
- Papaioannou, Stratis, *The Oxford Handbook of Byzantine Literature*, (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2021)

- Shepard, Jonathan, "Rus'," in Nora Berend, ed., *Christianization and the Rise of Christian Monarchy. Scandinavia, Central Europe and Rus' c. 900–1200* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 369–416.
- Shmidt, S. O. *Сводный каталог славяно-русских рукописных книг, хранящихся в СССР XI–XIII вв.* (Moscow: Nauka, 1984)
- Tolochko, Oleksiy P., "Pokhvala ili Zhitie? (Mezhdru tekstologii i ideologii kniazheskikh panegirikov v drevnerusskom letopisanii).," *Palaeoslavica* VII (1999), 26–38.
- _____, "Christian Chronology, Universal History and the Origin of Chronicle Writing in Rus'," in Ildar H. Garipzanov, ed., *Historical Narratives and Christian Identity on a European Periphery: Early History Writing in Northern, East-Central, and Eastern Europe (c. 1070.1200)*, (Turnhout: Brepols, 2011), 207–228.
- Torres Prieto, Susana "A Godly Regiment in the Heavens Came to Help Aleksandr: Sanctity of Heroic Princes in Medieval Russia' in Russel E. Martin, Brian Boeck, and Daniel Rowland, eds., *Dubitando: Studies in Early Slavic History and Culture in Honor of Donald Ostrowski*, (Ohio: Slavica, 2012), 67–83.
- _____, "Old Models for New Princes: Biblical Kingship in Kyivan Rus'," *Harvard Ukrainian Studies* 38 (1–2) (2021) 1–20.
- _____, "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, 2023), forthcoming.
- Vodof, Vladimir, *Naissance de la chrétienté russe : la conversion du prince Vladimir de Kiev (988) et ses conséquences (XIe–XIIIe siècles)* (Paris: Fayard, 1988).
- White, Monica, *Military Saints in Byzantium and Rus, 900–1200* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016).
- Young, Frances M., *From Nicaea to Chalcedon: a Guide to the Literature and its Background* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 2010)

