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## **Varangians in Europe's Eastern and Northern Periphery The Christianization of North- and Eastern Europe c. 950-1050 – A Plea for a Comparative Study**

### **Introduction**

The original stimulus for this paper was the almost simultaneous reading of three project proposals that all had as a central theme the Christianization of one or more countries in what in the 10<sup>th</sup>-11<sup>th</sup> century could be labelled as the periphery of Christian Europe.

However, let us start by taking a longer and, perhaps, simplified view of the Christianization of Europe. Basically we may operate with at least three methods or ways in which Christianity spread:

1) by diffusion, either intentionally by missionary work or, less intentionally, from individual to individual in something we could call cultural mission. This method was operative from the very beginning of Christianity;

2) the “caesaropapistic” spread of Christianity, which was introduced when Constantine the Great in 325 made Christianity the state religion of the Roman Empire. A method that was later operative at several stages, both before and after the Reformation;

3) later came mission by the sword, where conquest was accompanied by forced baptism. Here the wish to spread the Christian faith could be the moving factor or the forced conversion could primarily be intended as a mean to secure conquest.

At the beginning of the Middle Ages Christian Europe consisted of the countries and peoples that had formed part of the Roman Empire. By the end of the Middle Ages, however, almost all peoples of what we geographically consider Europe had become Christian. This period in the Christianization of Europe may be divided into a number of distinct stages. Relevant for the

process of Christianization, as far as it concerns Europe's northern and eastern periphery, are three such stages, in which one or another of the above-mentioned methods dominated,

1) the more or less forced Christianization from the end of the 8th century to the end of the 9th century of the immediate neighbours of the Carolingian Empire by the Empire, involving both Germanic and Slavonic tribes/nations;

2) the more or less voluntary Christianization from the second half of the 10<sup>th</sup> to the beginning of the 11<sup>th</sup> century of almost all tribes/nations in the periphery surrounding what now constituted Christian Europe: (Kievan-)Rus', Hungary, Bohemia, Poland, Denmark, Norway and Sweden;

3) the third stage was to a large extent shaped by the appearance of the crusading movement and its implementation in the periphery. This led either to the conquest and forced Christianization of the remaining nations by existing Christian states, turned crusader states, and by newly founded military order state(s), or, in the case of Lithuania, to the rise of a pagan-led empire.

With these preliminary remarks I shall turn to the three projects or project proposals, mentioned above. The first one I got acquainted with was a "Proposal for a Centre for the Christianization of Denmark, c.700-1300" that a group of scholars with Professor Brian Patrick McGuire as initiator submitted to the Danish National Research Foundation, which, unfortunately, decided not to support the proposal. Because I was intended to take part in the project I got to read an early sketch of the proposal. This, however, I found inadequate in certain conceptual respects. Inadequacies often shared by scholars with a background in the study of Western Europe, especially when they approach earlier stages of medieval European history.

Reading the proposal I was first of all struck by the fact that it hardly took into consideration that a number of emerging states in what could be called the eastern and northern periphery of the then Christian Europe adopted Christianity under much the same conditions as Denmark and more or less simultaneous with Denmark. In addition to Denmark, that, as we saw, concerns Rus', Hungary, Bohemia, Poland, Norway, and Sweden. Therefore, in order fully to understand what took place in Denmark, the entire process of Christianization in this periphery has to be studied on a comparative basis.

While working with the Danish proposal I also got acquainted with two other recently created Centres and their projects or project proposals, in which the Christianization of the European periphery, during what I above labelled the 2d stage, plays a major part.

The Centres in question are the Centre for Medieval Studies (CMS), established at the University of Bergen (Norway) under the auspices of Sverre Bagge and Lars Boje Mortensen, and a project “Christianization and State-formation in Northern and Central Europe, c.900-c.1200” at the Centre for Research in the Arts, Social Sciences and Humanities (CRASSH), based at Cambridge University (UK) and led by Nora Berend. Both Centres are so far best known through their respective internet presentations.<sup>1</sup>

Of these the Cambridge project according to its internet presentation does explicitly involve

a comparative study of the spread of Christianity and the emergence of polities in Scandinavia and Central Europe. The underlying causes of the success of the Latin form of Christianity will be analysed, as will the link between conversion and consolidation of power, *‘imported’ institutions from Western Europe*, adaptation, and local specificities (*italics*, JHL).<sup>2</sup>

and further in a detailed project description the scope of the comparison is spelled out,

Scandinavia and central Europe, including Denmark, Norway, Sweden, Bohemia, Hungary and Poland, have much in common. Christianity took hold in the same period, roughly the tenth and eleventh centuries; and this period was also the one during which princes consolidated their power over these areas.”<sup>3</sup>

Here the omission of Rus’ in the territory that is to be included in the comparative study is striking. Not only was Rus’ Christianized during the same period and experienced a similar consolidation of princely power, but during the same period and up through the eleventh century it formed numerous and close commercial, political and dynastic links with each and every of the other countries in the periphery in addition to some of the “old” Christian powers in the West. It was, in fact, at the time a totally integrated part of Christian Europe.<sup>4</sup>

An additional quotation further down the project description will emphasize the problem and, at the same time together with a notion in the first quotation, highlight another problem,

What was the role of local rulers? How was conversion and the consolidation of power in internal and external power-struggles linked? What can we find out about the relative importance of native rulers and elites in *importing Christianity*, and that of *German Emperors and the papacy in exporting it?* (*italics*, JHL).

In talking about importing “institutions from Western Europe” and singling out the “German

Emperors and the papacy” as agents who exported Christianity to the periphery, the author of the project has already from the start excluded other sources of Christian influence and made it into a project not really about Christianization at the time that took place, but rather about Europeanization understood as Westernization. But is that really a relevant proposition for the period, when these countries turned Christian during the above-mentioned 2d stage?<sup>5</sup>

The Bergen project is less explicit both on comparativity and its scope, but a reading of its Internet presentation reveals that it does hold similar views to those expressed in the Cambridge project. This applies to the notion of viewing the Christianization process in the periphery as part of the ‘The Europeanization of Europe’ or ‘The Formation of Western Christendom’, two themes the Centre sees as “an appropriate headline for the period between the 9th and the 14th century.” It also applies to the notion of exporting/importing from a centre to a periphery. Thus the Bergen Centre asks whether “the new regions of Europe” received “wholesale ‘cultural packages’? Or did they import selected items.” Likewise the Centre talks of “Europeanization in the sense of export from the centre to the periphery.”

Furthermore, when the Bergen Centre maintains that faced with the “clear evidence of the superiority of the centre”

the countries bordering the German Empire were from the 10th century onwards faced with the alternatives: adapt or perish,<sup>6</sup>

it does seem clear that the Centre does not intend to include Rus’ in its area of study. Besides this claim is hardly tenable at least as regards the decision of these countries to adopt Christianity – and that was, after all, what mainly took place in the 10<sup>th</sup> and early 11<sup>th</sup> centuries. Although pressure from the Empire was, at times, definitely felt among the neighbouring countries, that did not stop the once Christianized Slavonic Wends from reverting to paganism in the revolt of 983 and stay pagan until they were once more incorporated into Christianity during the 3d stage of the Crusades. And if they could choose in the 10<sup>th</sup> century not to “adapt” without “perishing,” so could presumably both Poland and Denmark. – Returning for a moment to Rus’, it could, of course, be maintained that, even if it did not experience any sort of political or religious pressure from the German Empire, it had been exposed to a comparable pressure from another empire, the Byzantine Empire, when it underwent a similar process as its neighbours in the west. Such a claim would, however, be just another reason to include Rus’ in a genuine comparative study.

In its presentation the Bergen Centre also expresses the wish “to challenge the more or less implicit assumption of most medievalists that medieval Europe for most purposes was confined to the area south of Jutland and west of the Oder.” That is commendable. However, both Centres would have done well by further challenging some assumptions implicit in their own presentations. Since both Centres wish to extend their study back to the ninth century and beyond, what exactly in their view constituted Europe in the 9<sup>th</sup>-11<sup>th</sup> century; and, in case they do operate with a border within Europe between the Oder and the Urals, where exactly is it located and by which criteria is it characterized? Another assumption that needs to be challenged is the notion that all influence, especially when it comes to Christianization in the periphery, necessarily came from a centre and that this centre was located in the West.

In what follows I will discuss some of these notions, using Varangian<sup>7</sup> activity as an example.

## **Varangians and Christianity**

In the huge literature on the activity of Scandinavians during the Viking Age it has long been almost axiomatically accepted that, while Scandinavians in large numbers settled on the British Isles and elsewhere in the west, there was no corresponding settlement or colonization in the East. As result there was an apparent gap between that fact and the ostensibly omnipresent Scandinavians in the East, according to written sources, – at least according to interpretations generally accepted by Western scholars of terms like Rus’ and its subsequent replacement as a designation for Scandinavians, Varangians. This gap is, however, now being bridged. Thus, according to one of the foremost authorities on Russo-Scandinavian archaeology, Ingmar Jansson, early Scandinavian activity in the territory that came to be Rus’ was indeed followed by a significant Scandinavian colonization.<sup>8</sup> Archaeological excavations, therefore, now fully confirm the picture suggested by the written sources of a mobile group of migrating Scandinavians in the eastern and northern periphery, who during a period extending from the 8<sup>th</sup> to the 11<sup>th</sup> or even 12<sup>th</sup> century in varying degrees linked all the countries in the periphery.

The extreme mobility of these Varangians from one end of the periphery to the other, extending as it did into such Christian centres as the Byzantine Empire in the south-east and England in the north-west is, in the higher social stratum, personified by Harald Hårdråde. That this

mobility, however, must have been shared by numerous lesser Scandinavians is evident. Otherwise literary themes soaked up in oral tradition in Byzantium would never have travelled through Rus' to Scandinavia, where they in related form were dropped in literary works such as Russian Chronicles and Norse sagas. A theme that was later to be extensively studied in Ad. Stender-Petersen's now almost forgotten dissertation.<sup>9</sup> The Varangian mobility was so outspoken a feature that the early 12<sup>th</sup>-century the compiler of the "The Tale of the Bygone Years" (*Povest' vremennykh let*, c. 1110)<sup>10</sup> could still see his country essentially as having functioned as "The Passage from the Varangians to the Greeks" (*Put' iz Variag v Greki*). What's more, the same compiler was just as aware of the Varangians' Anglo-Saxon links as he was of their links to Byzantium. Therefore, when, in the "Tale of the Invitation of Riurik and his Brothers to Rule in Rus'", he wished to explain who these Varangians were, he explicitly wrote that the Finnic-Baltic-Slavonic confederates behind the invitation,

went overseas to the Varangian Rus': these particular Varangians were known as Rus', just as some are called Swedes, and others Normans, English, and Gotlanders, for they were thus named.<sup>11</sup>

While the process of Christianization is difficult to monitor elsewhere because of the scarcity of sources, the same compiler of "The Tale of the Bygone Years" incorporated in his Chronicle a corpus of texts, which allows us to do just that with regard to the Varangians. The texts in question are three or four treaties that were concluded between princes of Rus' and the Byzantine Empire between 907 and 971. Originally the texts must have been written in Greek but they were recorded in the chronicle in Russian translation.

The text representing the 907 Treaty is very brief. It mentions the five envoys from the Kievan prince, Oleg, whose names despite being channelled through Greek and Russian all clearly appear to be Scandinavian – "Karl, Farulf, Vermund, Hrollaf, and Steinvith." Obviously they are also pagan, because while the Greeks take their oath on the treaties by kissing the cross, these Rus' envoys swear by their weapons<sup>12</sup> or by their gods Perun and Volos (presumably Fenno-Balto-Slavic renditions of Scandinavian gods in connection with the translation from Greek).<sup>13</sup>

The 911 Treaty is quoted at greater length than its predecessor. It is reciprocal in nature and can be divided into 15 articles in addition to an introduction and a note on its ratification. The copy translated in the chronicle seems to be the one issued by the Russian part.<sup>14</sup> Again all envoys sent by Prince Oleg, now 15 in number, appear to be Scandinavians – "Karl, Ingjald, Farulf, Vermund, Hrollaf, Gunnar, Harold, Kami, Frithleif, Hroarr, Angantyr, Throand, Leithulf, Fast,

and Steinwith.” The text contains a number of stipulations where the Byzantine part is referred to as either Greeks or Christians almost as if the two words were synonymous, whereas the Russians are simply referred to as Rus’.<sup>15</sup> Once more the Russians are presented as exclusively pagan, which is clearly reflected both in the opening article, where the “firm oath sworn upon our weapons according to our religion and our law” is mentioned and in the note on the ratification,

As a convention and an inviolable pledge binding equally upon you Greeks and upon us Rus’, we have caused the present treaty to be transcribed in vermillion script upon parchment in duplicate. In the name of the Holy Cross and the Holy and Indivisible Trinity *of your one true God*, your Emperor has confirmed it by his signature and handed it to our envoys. *According to our own faith and the custom of our nation*, we have sworn to your Emperor, who rules over you by the grace of God, that we will neither violate ourselves, nor allow any of our subjects to violate the peace and amity assured by the articles thus concluded between us. ... thus concluded between us this second of September, in the year of Creation 6420 (911), fifteenth of the indiction (*italics*, JHL).<sup>16</sup>

The next treaty, containing 16 articles, was concluded in 944. This time the text appears to be the version issued in name of the Byzantine part, but now the chronicle text reveals that another copy was issued in the name of the Russian part. The treaty names 49 or 50 Rus’ envoys. The first 23 are said each to represent one Kievan potentate from Prince Igor downwards thus providing us with 23 additional names.<sup>17</sup> The remaining 26 or 27 envoys are said to be merchants. Thus the treaty altogether contains 72 or 73 names by whom or on whose behalf it is concluded on the part of the Russians. Again almost all names are clearly Scandinavian with only a few that may be interpreted on the basis of alternative ethnicity.<sup>18</sup> In contrast to the previous treaties, the 944 treaty, whenever it’s relevant, distinguishes between Russians that are still pagan and Russians who have become Christian, starting with the first article,

If any inhabitant of the land of Rus’ thinks to violate this amity, may such of these transgressors as have adopted the Christian faith incur condign punishment from Almighty God in the shape of damnation and destruction both in this world and the next. If any of these transgressors be not baptized, may they receive help neither from God nor from Perun: may they not be protected by their own shields, but may they rather be slain by their own swords, laid low by their own arrows or by any of their own weapons, and may they be in bondage forever.

And where necessary the treaty stipulates in separate articles “the Christian Rus’ shall so swear according to their faith, and the non-Christians after their custom”. The treaty text itself ends by stating that,

Upon receipt of this document, they [the Russians] shall then bind themselves by oath to observe the truth as agreed upon between us and inscribed upon this parchment, wherein our names are written.

Then, quoting the treaty copy issued in the name of the Russians, the text stipulates that the ratification was to consist of two separate, parallel acts. First, one performed by the Christian Rus',

Those of us who are baptized have sworn in the Cathedral, by the church of St. Elias, upon the Holy Cross set before us, and upon this parchment, to abide by all that is written herein, and not to violate any of its stipulations. May whosoever of our compatriots, Prince or common, baptized or un-baptized, who does so violate them, have no succour from God, but may he be slave in this life and in the life to come, and may he perish by his own arms."

Next follows an act performed by their pagan compatriots,

"The un-baptized Rus' shall lay down their shields, their naked swords, their armlets, and their other weapons, and shall swear to all that is inscribed upon this parchment, to be faithfully observed forever by Igor', all his boyars, and all the people from the land of Rus'. If any of the princes or any Russian subject, whether Christian or non-Christian, violates the terms of this instrument, he shall merit death by his own weapons, and be accursed of God and of Perun because he violated his oath.

The chronicler then describes how the Russian envoys return to Kiev together with their Greek counterparts. These reported to Prince Igor' that his envoys had received the pledge of the Greek emperors, who had now "sent us to receive your oath and that of your followers." Accordingly,

in the morning, Igor' summoned the envoys, and went to a hill on which there was a statue of Perun. The Rus' laid down their weapons, their shields, and their gold ornaments, and Igor' and his people took oath (at least, such as were pagans), while the Christian Rus' took oath in the church of St. Elias, which is above the creek, in the vicinity of the Pasyncha square and the quarter of the Khazars. This was, in fact, the cathedral church, since many of the Varangians were Christians.<sup>19</sup>

It is obvious that a significant number of Varangians in Rus' between 911 and 944 must have chosen to be baptized and that Christianity by the time, when the 944 Treaty was concluded, had already obtained a semi-official status. To some extent this is reminiscent of Birka and Hedeby in Ansgar's time. But in contrast to Birka and Hedeby we know that in Kiev Christianity continued to exist until the official adoption of Christianity in 988/89. Thus a decade after the conclusion of the treaty, the widow of Prince Igor', Princess Olga, at the time still ruling in the name of her young son, Sviatoslav, agreed to be baptised in Constantinople. Soon after Olga, presumably in order to lessen Byzantine influence, invited missionaries from the Western Church, to Kiev. This brought the later archbishop of Magdeburg, Adalbert, to Kiev



approximately in 960,<sup>20</sup> Despite the pagan backlash under Sviatoslav, Christianity continued to develop after his early death. Already before Vladimir Sviatoslavich decided to adopt Christianity, his older brother Iaropolk Sviatoslavich had begun to build on the links Olga had formed, expanding relations to the West.<sup>21</sup> It is against this background we have to see the figure of 400 churches in Kiev only a generation after Vladimir's official baptism, as reported by Thietmar of Merseburg (†1018). No doubt the figure is inflated. Still, it is based on an eyewitness report.<sup>22</sup> In the same context Thietmar refer to the seemingly abundant presence of Danes in Kiev, here presumably used as a *collective noun* for Scandinavians.

### **Varangians as carriers of Christian influences**

The Russo-Byzantine treaties show that Varangians in considerable numbers adopted the Christian faith long before any of the rulers of the countries in the periphery decided to follow suit. Therefore the Varangians were also potential carriers of Christian influences. But did they in fact function as such?

On this question we do not have sources on par with the treaties. But we may well ask if it is not exactly as a result of the Varangian activity that we see a significant Anglo-Saxon influence on the early Scandinavian churches, despite the influence from the German Empire and despite the fact that the Scandinavian churches after the adoption of Christianity became subordinated to the Hamburg-Bremen Church. And is it not also this activity that is reflected in the early influence from the east we find in both Finland and perhaps even in Sweden?

In Finland this is most noticeable in the adoption of a number of central Christian concepts in the Finnish language of Church-Slavonic origin: the Finnish words for cross, priest, pagan, bible (*risti, pappi, pakana, raamattu*) and perhaps a few others. This can only be seen as an early Christian presence in the region, significantly predating the so-called Age of the Crusades, with which conversion of the Finns to Christianity and their integration into Sweden and the Western Church is otherwise linked.<sup>23</sup>

In Sweden possible influence from the east is linked to two controversial persons or perhaps rather controversial theories concerning two persons that may show influences from the Eastern Church in the 11<sup>th</sup> century.

One concerns the mysterious bishop Osmund who plays such a prominent, if negative, role in Adam of Bremen's history of the Hamburg-Bremen Church. Adam presents Osmund as a vagrant, self-promoted and more or less illegitimate bishop, who had presumably in the 1050-60s functioned as bishop at the royal court in Sweden, thus violating the postulated exclusive right of the Archbishop of Hamburg-Bremen to appoint and consecrate bishops in Sweden.

According to Adam Osmund had found it difficult to find anyone who would consecrate him as bishop, before he finally managed to be consecrated by a "certain *Archiepiscopus of Polania*." This expression has given rise to much speculation as to who the Archbishop was and where Polania was located. As to the location there seems to be two possibilities. Polania could be Poland, as for instance Henrik Janson has argued.<sup>24</sup> Osmund is, however, just as likely to have been consecrated in Kiev. There the Swedish-linked prince, Jaroslav the Wise, had without the consent of Constantinople managed in 1051 to have the first Russian-born, one Ilarion, appointed to the metropolitan see. And Kiev was after all the centre of the Slavonic tribe the *Polianians*. Furthermore the position the two bishops had at their respective courts was to a large extent similar and could in both places be seen as an expression of similar princely aspirations towards creating independent church provinces – independent of Constantinople and Hamburg-Bremen respectively.

Judged on the basis of his later career, Osmund was probably an Anglo-Saxon,<sup>25</sup> and as such his presence in Sweden can be seen as part of the Anglo-Saxon influence in the Scandinavian churches. Considering further that England was located at the north western end of what we can call the Varangian axis, where Scandinavia and Rus' were in the middle and Byzantium at the south-eastern end, Osmund would as an Anglo-Saxon also be more likely to be associated with the Varangian entourage of Swedish-linked Kiev than Poland.

The other "controversial" theory concerns the possible identification of a priest, present in Novgorod in 1047, when Prince Jaroslav's Swedish queen with their son, Vladimir, as Prince of Novgorod, held court there. In that year the priest entered a colophon in a manuscript of the Book of Psalms he had transcribed, presumably from Glagolitic into Cyrillic. In the colophon he gave his name as Pop (Priest) Upir likhyi.<sup>26</sup> The name is unusual not least for a priest because in Russian it could mean something like "the Foul Vampire." Therefore this name, according to the Swedish Slavicist, Anders Sjöberg, could hardly have been his real name.

Consequently Sjöberg tried to find an alternative explanation for the name. Considering the presence of a Swedish court in Novgorod at the time, Sjöberg suggested that Upir was not in fact a Russian name but a Russian transcription of the Swedish name, Öpir. Furthermore the second part of Upir's name, likhyi, could semantically correspond to the Swedish word "ofeigr". Precisely Öpir Ofeigr is the name with which one of Sweden's most prolific rune-carvers in the second half of the 11<sup>th</sup> century, Öpir, signed his stones, of which there are perhaps 100. That led Sjöberg to suggest that the two, Upir in Novgorod and Öpir in Sweden, had in fact been one and the same person.

The reason for this priest Upir, to move to Sweden and become the rune-carver (and perhaps priest) Öpir was not difficult to find. In 1050 Queen Ingegerd died in Novgorod followed two years later by her son, Vladimir. The Swedish court must soon after have been dissolved, when Prince Iaroslav instead of his dead son placed the Byzantine-linked Ostromir<sup>27</sup> as governor in Novgorod. This could be the reason for Upir-Öpir, presumably with a number of other members of the Swedish colony in Novgorod, to move back to Sweden.<sup>28</sup> If Sjöberg's theory is correct it is easily explained how Christian elements from both East and West could interchange and influence one another in the region.

However, even if we do not accept Sjöberg's theory,<sup>29</sup> the evidence of the Runic stones in eleventh-century Sweden are in themselves of great interest in connection with the spread of Christian impulses to and from Sweden.

A significant proportion of the stones mention travels out of Sweden of one kind or another. Early Stones (prior to c. 1030s) are almost equally distributed between journeys to the east, to Rus' and beyond, and journeys to the west, primarily England. In later stones journeys to the East dominate.<sup>30</sup> As such these stones provide further evidence of Varangian mobility. In this particular context, however, it is of greater interest to observe that stones made in commemoration of people who travelled outside Sweden contain more Christian elements than do other stones. In fact the frequency of Christian elements on travellers' stones are nearly twice as high as in non-travellers' stones.<sup>31</sup> This is a fact that suggests that those who travelled did indeed become major carriers of Christianity.

## **Varangians and the schism between the Eastern and Western Churches**

If Varangians, travelling along the axis from Byzantium through Rus' and Scandinavia to England, were indeed significant carriers of Christian influences, it is, of course, unfortunate to exclude their main area of activity, Rus', from a comparative study of the Christianization of the periphery in the 10<sup>th</sup>-11<sup>th</sup> century. That it has been done, just the same, is possibly the result of some of the implicit assumptions mentioned above.

It is a well-known fact that the relations between the churches of Rome and Constantinople in general deteriorated from at least the 9<sup>th</sup> century onwards, with the famous culmination in 1054. And it is also a fact that this eventually led to a divided Europe, when all of Europe had been Christianized by and integrated into one or the other of these churches. What is less clear is the speed with which this division manifested itself in various regions.

We have seen that Russian rulers already in the early stages of Christianization despite the geographically natural links to Byzantium and the Greek Orthodox Church repeatedly sought to establish links to the West and the Western Church. We know that the ruling prince in Kiev, Iaroslav, just before the strife between Rome and Constantinople reached a first climax in 1054, attempted to lessen Greek influence on the Russian church by appointing a Russian-born to the metropolitan see against the wishes of Constantinople.

We also know that the Latin rite in Kiev co-existed with Orthodox Christianity, at least among the Varangians, for a long time. Thus according to the first chapter in the Paterikon of the Kievan Cave Monastery (preserved in a version from the early 13<sup>th</sup> century), this later famous monastery owes its foundation, at least materially, to an event that took place in the late 1060s or early 1070s. At this time a prominent Varangian in Kiev by the name Shimon, said to be a nephew of that Hakon (Iakun), perhaps of the Norwegian *Ladejarl*-dynasty, who in 1024 had led a detachment of Varangians in Prince Iaroslav's army, decided together with his household of no less than 3000 souls, including his priests, to stop being a "Varangian" and instead become a "Christian" by exchanging his Latin rite for the Orthodox. As the Paterikon describes it, this decision was not the result of any external pressure to change rite but the result of a vision Shimon had had, after surviving a defeat at the hands of the Polovtsy.<sup>32</sup> Until then it had obviously been entirely possible for him both to adhere to the Latin rite and at the same time to

occupy a prominent position in Kievan society.

That this should be so is not surprising. After all it was still felt possible in the Russian Church towards the middle of the 12<sup>th</sup> century to adopt the veneration of Scandinavian and Anglo-Saxon (in short Varangian) saints such as Canute, Benedikt (Canute's brother), Alban, Magnus (of Orkney), Olaf and Botulph. These "Varangian" saints were thus included among Orthodox martyrs in the litany of a prayer to the Trinity.<sup>33</sup>

Even as late as c. 1200 recent archaeological finds suggest both that Scandinavians were still active in Russian service and that they could still adhere to the Latin rite. Thus among the finds on a Russian fortress hill in the border region between the Polotsk principality and the new crusader states, in layers dated to the twelfth–thirteenth centuries, were also heaps of gnawed bones from domestic animals. Of these bones more than a hundred turned out to be adorned with various kinds of graffiti and inscriptions. Among the latter were both inscriptions in Cyrillic and what has been characterized as Scandinavian "everyday" – as opposed to monumental – runes. Some of these suggest that adherents of the Latin rite were present among the Orthodox majority.<sup>34</sup>

Seen against this background it would seem that the collaboration between the Byzantine Church and the papacy rather than the Western Church as such, which had characterized the earlier Cyrillo-Methodian mission, was still operating in Rus' at least until c. 1200. In fact it is only in the third of the above mentioned stages, the stage of the crusades, that a rupture between the Eastern and Western Churches can be observed in relations between Rus' and its neighbours.<sup>35</sup>

This leads me to conclude with the following observations pertaining to the East-West schism and the question of export/import between a centre in the west and the periphery.

When Christianity towards the end of the ninth century first took hold in Central Europe in what was then Great Moravia, two missionary movements came to compete with one another. An already active Latin mission representing the Frankish or Carolingian Church and a mission for which a new liturgical language had been created, Church Slavonic. This Church Slavonic mission represented a joint effort by Byzantium and Rome. It failed first of all because the Latin mission of the Frankish church, protesting against the use of a new liturgical language, was able

to apply political pressure against this joint venture by the two old European church centres, a pressure these were unable to oppose. Some later popes exposed to the same pressure also occasionally had to line up with the Frankish Church.

Still, at that time the division between the churches was not so much between East and West as it was between North and South, especially in Western Europe. And it is my contention that the later East-West conflict within the churches never came to play a significant part in Europe's northern and eastern periphery during the period, c. 950-1050, on which I have been concentrating. In fact it was only during the reform papacy, which signified a virtual take-over of the papacy by the Frankish Church (Cluny), that the last vestiges of the Cyrillo-Methodian mission was eradicated in the West with the abolition of Church-Slavonic liturgy in the Sazáva Monastery in Bohemia.<sup>36</sup>

Therefore, I think it is true to say that it was only then the schisma between North and South, between the papacy and the Frankish Church, was eliminated, to a certain extent to be replaced by the antagonism between the papacy and the German *Reichskirche*. Until then there was hardly any one centre in the west, which monopolized religious export to the periphery and from which the periphery had to or was even forced to import. During this period Varangians travelled the whole periphery, lifting Christian and other influences on the way and depositing them where they could take root.<sup>37</sup> Therefore any comparative study of Christianization of the periphery has to take Varangian activity into account and, consequently, also include Rus' in the comparison.

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## Notes

<sup>1</sup> After this paper had been given at the *Dies Medievales 2004* (Helsinki, 13th to 15th August), I was informed by Professor Bagge both that the projects of the two centres were now one and the same project and that a specialist in Russian studies had now been linked to the project. On neither point, however, was there any trace in the respective internet presentations, when they were accessed again immediately after the conclusion of the conference.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. <http://www.crassh.cam.ac.uk/projects/christianization.html>, accessed 150804 and preserved in reproducible form.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. <http://www.crassh.cam.ac.uk/projects/christianization/projectdescription.html>, accessed 150804 and preserved in reproducible form.

<sup>4</sup> This particular point has earlier been made in a paper read at one of the seminars of the Swedish-sponsored Baltic project, *Culture, Clash or Compromise*, formed on the basis of similar concepts concerning Christianization and Europeanization as the CRASSH and CMS projects, cf. Lind 2004a, pp. 41-44.



<sup>5</sup> It has of course to be kept in mind both that Christianization was an ongoing process, not limited to the date of a country's official adoption of Christianity, and that it is open to debate what exactly Christianization of a country and its people involved.

<sup>6</sup> Cf. <http://www.uib.no/cms/research/general.htm>, accessed 150804 and preserved in reproducible form.

<sup>7</sup> English Varangian (cf. Greek *Varangos*, Old Rus. *Variag*, Old Norse *Varing*) will be used in the present context, although it seems only to have replaced the older designation of Scandinavians, *Rus'*, during the 10<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> centuries, when *Rus'* had come to signify Russians in general, that is, Slavs and, in the north, their Baltic and Finnic confederates. On the term see e.g. Schramm.

<sup>8</sup> Jansson 1997.

<sup>9</sup> Stender-Petersen 1934. On Varangians in Byzantium, see Benediktz 1969 and Blöndal 1978.

<sup>10</sup> Often unsatisfactorily labelled "The Nestor Chronicle" or, worse, "Primary Chronicle", as in the work referred to in following note. This title, however, ought to be reserved for the predecessor of *Povest' vremennykh let*, *Nachalnyi svod* (literally Primary Chronicle), preserved as part of the First Novgorod Chronicle, Younger Version.

<sup>11</sup> *The Russian Primary Chronicle*, p. 59; the Russian original, *Polnoe sobranie russkikh letopisei* 1, cols 19-20.

<sup>12</sup> On the ancient "Waffeneid" among Germanic peoples, cf. *Lexikon des Mittelalters* Vol 3, col. 1678.

<sup>13</sup> Here and in the other quotations I have used Cross & Sherbowitz-Wetzor's translation but have exchanged their rendition of "Rus'", "Russes," with the by now more familiar original. *The Russian Primary Chronicle*, pp. 64-65; *Polnoe sobranie russkikh letopisei* 1, cols 30-31; also in Russian and English translation in *The Laws of Rus'*, pp. 2-3.

<sup>14</sup> In accordance with Byzantine practice, presumably two versions were issued, one in each party's name.

<sup>15</sup> Compare for instance, "Whatsoever Russ kills a Christian, or whatsoever Christian kills a Russ, shall die" and "no penalty shall be exacted for his death by either Greeks or Rus'."

<sup>16</sup> The treaty in its entirety in *The Russian Primary Chronicle*, pp. 65-69; *Polnoe sobranie russkikh letopisei* 1, cols 32-37; *The Laws of Rus'*, pp. 4-7 (Kaiser inappropriately translates Russian Variag/Variazi with Viking(s)).

<sup>17</sup> Most of these 23 potentates are otherwise not known to us but the fact that they are represented by envoys casts a surprising light on the structure of Kievan society at the time.

<sup>18</sup> The English translation in *The Russian Primary Chronicle* does not simply transcribe the Russian original but attempts to identify a Scandinavian counterpart. Therefore the list of names especially in the 944 Treaty may appear more Scandinavian than it actually is.

<sup>19</sup> *The Russian Primary Chronicle*, pp. 73-77; *Polnoe sobranie russkikh letopisei* 1, cols. 46-54; *The Laws of Rus'*, pp. 8-12.

<sup>20</sup> See the chapter, "Metropolis totius Sclavorum gentis" on his mission in Nazarenko 2001, pp.311-38.

<sup>21</sup> See chapter "Nakanune kreshcheniia: Iaropolk Sviatoslovich i Otton II", in Nazarenko 2001, pp. 339-90.

<sup>22</sup> Thietmar, p. 474. Cf. Mel'nikova (ed.) 1999, pp. 270-74.

<sup>23</sup> This corresponds to the presence of both Christian artefacts and changes in burial customs seen as Christian, which predates the crusades by at least a century.

<sup>24</sup> Janson 1998, pp. 105-75.

<sup>25</sup> Gustafsson 1960.

<sup>26</sup> Franklin 2002, p. 95.

<sup>27</sup> Ostromir was married to the Byzantine Theophana,

<sup>28</sup> Sjöberg 1985. Some prominent second-generation Swedes did, however, stay in Novgorod, where they as *posadniks*, generation after generation, were able to hold the highest civil office in Novgorod after it had become a city-republic, cf. Molchanov 1997.

<sup>29</sup> The runologist Marit Åhlén in her dissertation from 1997 on the rune-carver Öpir rejects Sjöberg's suggestion, Åhlén 1997, pp. 21-23. In contrast, the historian Henrik Janson, in his dissertation from 1999, in the section, "Mälardalen, Novgorod och Bysans vid 1000-talets mitt", largely accepts Sjöberg's identification, supporting it with additional evidence on the basis of the political situation in Novgorod after the deaths of Ingegerd and Vladimir, cf. Janson 1998, pp. 152-62.

<sup>30</sup> Mats G. Larsson 1990, p. 64.

<sup>31</sup> Mats G. Larsson 1990, pp. 89-91

<sup>32</sup> Published with commentary in *Biblioteka*, p. 300.

<sup>33</sup> Lind 1990.

<sup>34</sup> This is further developed in Lind. & al. 2004, pp. 194-98, and Lind 2004b, pp. 123-26. The Runic inscriptions are now published in Mel'nikova 2001, pp. 213-247.

<sup>35</sup> It has to be said that it is not difficult to find polemical treaties against the Latin rite in Russia, mainly emanating from the Greek clergy in Kiev. Still it is noteworthy to observe the wholehearted support for Frederick Barbarossa's crusade expressed in the Hypatian Chronicle's account of his defeat, cf. Lind 2003, 210-11.

<sup>36</sup> See Pope Gregory's refusal in 1080 of the request by Vratislav II of Bohemia for permission to use the Slavonic liturgy, in *The Correspondence of Pope Gregory VII*, p. 148, cf. Lind 2001a, pp. 140-41, and chapters "Slavia Christiana", and "Etrichskom i religioznom samosoznanii Nestora letopistsa" in Zhivov 2002, pp. 116-69, 170-86.

<sup>37</sup> A possible indication of the geographical range of Varangian activity may be provided by various loanwords, compare for instance the sequence: *viking* > Rus. *viiaz* > Hung. *viéaz* with the joint semantic content of *hero* or

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*performer of deeds*, cf. *Etymologisches Wörterbuch des Ungarischen* p. 1647 and Vasmer 1953, pp. 206-07. The distribution of related forms of *vítiaz/vitéz* in Eastern and South-Eastern Europe does make it difficult to establish the exact route the loan took. The fact that this distribution by and large corresponds to the distribution of a word like *nemtsi*, coined for the Latin missionaries, opposing the Slavonic liturgy, suggests that its spread happened during Cyrillo-Methodian times and immediately after, cf. Lind 2001b. On the commercial links that could explain this range, cf. Shepard in Franklin & Shepard 1996, pp. 88-89; Mel'nikova (ed.) 1990, pp. 264-66, 295-97.