

PAGAN PAST AND CHRISTIAN IDENTITY  
IN THE *PRIMARY CHRONICLE*

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The *Povest' vremennykh let* (*Tale of Bygone Years*, otherwise popularly known as the *Primary Chronicle*) is an early twelfth-century Rus' chronicle. It provides a clerical chronicler's virtual past exposition of the early Rus' principalities.<sup>1</sup> Insofar as a chronicler can be understood to be a historian, I took as my task in this chapter to identify what that virtual past was in the chronicler's mind in regard to pagans and in regard to Rus' Christianity's relationship to them. In the process, I found two interlocking emplotments, each representing the outlook of a different narrator.

The *Primary Chronicle* was compiled from various earlier chronicles, treaties, eyewitness accounts, quotations from the Bible, and, in parts, the chronicler's own observations. The chronicler may have incorporated, to an extent, the attitudes of previous chroniclers and authors of sources used with or without editing them to conform to his own views. With that in mind, we can tentatively determine two virtual past attitudes, both of which involve the relationship of Rus' Christianity to paganism. These two attitudes are represented by differing but complementary archetypal emplotments of the narrative. Thus, one emplotment can be detected from the beginning of the narrative (following the biblical Flood) through the reign of Jaroslav (d. 1054) including the appointment of Ilarion as metropolitan of Rus' *s.a.* 1051 but without the 'Tale of the Founding of the Caves Monastery'. The author of this first emplotment we can call 'Narrator A'. Another emplotment begins with placing the 'Tale of the Founding of the Caves Monastery' under 1051,

<sup>1</sup> One can define the 'virtual past' as 'the construct in the mind of the historian'. See Donald Ostrowski, 'The Historian and the Virtual Past', *The Historian*, 51 (1989), 201–20 (p. 201).

then continues from 1054 to the end of the narrative (*s.a.* 1114). The author of this second emplotment we can call ‘Narrator B’. In both emplotments, the pagan Other is embraced as a necessary component of the narrative. Thus, neither of the strategies of ‘early Christian narratives written on the north-eastern periphery’ as described in the ‘Introduction’ to this volume (i.e. ‘glorious Christian present replacing the ignominious heathen past’ and ‘to relegate the “pagan” period to a level of no historical importance or to omit it altogether’)<sup>2</sup> is adopted by either of the narrators in the *Primary Chronicle*. To be sure, they consider the Christian period of the Rus’ to be superior to its pagan period, as they do Christianity to paganism, but one finds little in the manner of denigration or demonizing of the pagan period. Various scholarly views have been expressed regarding when and by whom the *Primary Chronicle* was written. Awareness of these various views helps us to understand better the characteristics and concerns of the compiler/narrator, but first we should look at the manuscript evidence.

### *Manuscript Branches of the Primary Chronicle*

The earliest extant manuscript copy of the *Primary Chronicle* dates to 1377 (the Laurentian copy). Other manuscript copies that attest to the archetype are the Hypatian (c. 1425), Radziwiłł (1490s), Academy (end of 15th c.), and Khlebnikov (16th c.). We also have the pages of a typeset edition of the first few folios (up to the entry for 906) of another manuscript, the Trinity, which was being prepared for publication when the manuscript was lost in the Moscow fire of 1812.<sup>3</sup> Other chronicle copies that contain all or part of the *Primary Chronicle* derive from these six manuscript witnesses. Their readings group them into two branches: the Hypatian-Khlebnikov branch and the Laurentian-Trinity-Radziwiłł-Academy branch, which further subdivides into the Laurentian-Trinity sub-branch and the Radziwiłł-Academy sub-branch. By working back through the readings attested to by the sub-branches and branches, one can reconstruct the archetype. In addition, three copies (the Commission, Novgorod-Academy, and Tolstoi) of the *First Novgorod Chronicle* of the *Younger Redaction* contain text of the *Primary Chronicle* that derives from the hyparchetype of the Hypatian-Khlebnikov branch.<sup>4</sup> Thus, its

<sup>2</sup> See Ildar Garipzanov’s Introduction to this volume, pp. 1–2.

<sup>3</sup> M. D. Priselkov, *Troitskaia letopis’: Rekonstruktsiia teksta* (Moscow: Akademiia nauk SSSR, 1950), pp. 51–65.

<sup>4</sup> On the *First Novgorod Chronicle*, see the following chapter by Timofey Guimon.

readings are useful for determining the textual archetype of the *Primary Chronicle* only when they agree with Laurentian-Trinity-Radziwiłł-Academy branch against the Hypatian-Khlebnikov branch.<sup>5</sup>

The last entry in the Laurentian-Trinity-Radziwiłł-Academy branch of the *Primary Chronicle* is *s.a.* 1110, but in that entry we find reference to an event that occurred ‘in the following year’ (i.e. 1111). The Hypatian-Khlebnikov branch describes fully that subsequent event. It is likely that the Hypatian-Khlebnikov branch better represents the conclusion of the *Primary Chronicle* and that, as Cross suggested, that ending was ‘also present in the prototype of the Laurentian redaction, but that several leaves were lost at the conclusion, while the colophon of Sylvester was on a separate leaf or on the binding, and was thus preserved’.<sup>6</sup> Further modifications occurred in the Hypatian-Khlebnikov line between the first copying of its hyparchetype (probably by 1118) and the time of the earliest extant copy (*c.* 1425).

The standard view, which is based on A. A. Shakhmatov’s conjectures, sees three redactions of the *Primary Chronicle* being composed between 1111 and 1118<sup>7</sup> and a pre-*Primary Chronicle* redaction, the ‘Initial Compilation’ (*Nachal’nyi svod*), being composed between 1093 and 1096.<sup>8</sup> Cross questioned that intense redaction

<sup>5</sup> See Donald Ostrowski, ‘Introduction’, in *PVL*, I, pp. xvii–lxxiii (pp. xxxviii–xlv); and Donald Ostrowski, ‘Scribal Practices and Copying Probabilities in the Transmission of the Text of the *Povest’ vremennykh let*’, *Palaeoslavica*, 13. 2 (2005), 48–77 (pp. 51–58).

<sup>6</sup> Samuel Hazzard Cross, ‘Introduction’, in *The Russian Primary Chronicle: Laurentian Text*, trans. and ed. Samuel Hazzard Cross and Olgerd P. Sherbowitz-Wetzor (Cambridge, MA: Medieval Academy of America, 1953), p. 284, n. 387. Although Cross seems to have ascribed to the lost folia idea, he ended his translation with the ending and colophon found in the Laurentian-Trinity-Radziwiłł-Academy branch. Previously I accepted the view that the entry for 1110 was the end of the *Primary Chronicle*, but as a result of the research for this chapter, I have come to a different conclusion. Timberlake has suggested that Sylvester may have made a conscious decision to omit certain passages in the *Primary Chronicle*. Alan Timberlake, ‘Redactions of the Primary Chronicle’, *Russkii iazyk v nauchnom osveshchenii*, 1 (2001), 196–218 (p. 201).

<sup>7</sup> For the first redaction, Shakhmatov proposed variously 1111 (A. A. Shakhmatov, *Povest’ vremennykh let. Vvodnaia chast’: Tekst. Primechaniia* (Petrograd: A. V. Orlov, 1916), pp. xv and xviii), 1112 (Shakhmatov, *Povest’ vremennykh let*, pp. xxi and xxxvi), and 1113 (Aleksandr A. Shakhmatov, *Razyskaniia o drevneishikh russkikh letopisnykh svodakh* (St Petersburg: M. A. Aleksandrov, 1908), p. 2) as composition dates. For the second redaction, he proposed 1116 and for the third, 1118.

<sup>8</sup> A. A. Shakhmatov, ‘Predislovie k Nachal’nomu Kievskomu svodu i Nestorova letopis’, *Izvestiia Otdeleniia russkogo iazyka i slovesnosti Imperatorskoi Akademii nauk*, 13. 1 (1908), 213–70 (p. 226); cf. Shakhmatov, *Razyskaniia*, p. 11; and Shakhmatov, *Povest’ vremennykh let*, p. xxiii: ‘around 1095’.

activity in a short period of time.<sup>9</sup> But it may not have been an intense creation of three *Primary Chronicle* redactions in relatively rapid succession. Instead, one must give serious consideration to Alan Timberlake's proposal that the Laurentian and Hypatian branches represent traditions rather than redactions.<sup>10</sup> The *Primary Chronicle* was probably composed sometime between 1114 and 1116, when Sylvester made his copy. The most likely place of its composition was in the Kievan Caves Monastery.<sup>11</sup> The chronicler displays concern about the Polovtsians, especially in regard to the safety of the Caves Monastery. From this concern and his continual return to matters related to that monastery,<sup>12</sup> one can surmise that the chronicler was a monk at the Caves Monastery. Then it was copied at least twice, once in 1116 by Hegumen Sylvester in St Michael's Monastery in Vyduhichi, and a second time by an unknown copyist of the hyparchetype of the Hypatian-Khlebnikov branch probably also in the Caves Monastery by 1118. Thus, two copies, each leading to a different developmental line, were made of the *Primary Chronicle* within two to four years of its initial composition. Neither of these copyings created what we can call a different redaction since there is insufficient evidence to justify the claim of an intentional, systematic effort to redact the chronicle in either copying.

### *Authorship of the Primary Chronicle*

The *Primary Chronicle* begins with this statement:

<sup>9</sup> Cross, 'Introduction', p. 15: 'it would appear something of a *tour de force* to explain this appearance of three versions of the same monument within seven years'.

<sup>10</sup> Timberlake, 'Redactions of the Primary Chronicle', pp. 201–03.

<sup>11</sup> Cf. the preceding chapter by Oleksiy Tolochko.

<sup>12</sup> There are at least seventeen separate mentions of the Caves Monastery or one of its monks in the narrative between 1051 and 1111: *PVL*, 155,29–160,24 (1051) description of its founding; 181,23 (1072) Feodosii as hegumen of; 183,16 (1073) founding of Caves Church; 183,21 (1074) passing of Hegumen Feodosii; 198,16 (1075) completion of Caves Church; 207,23 (1088) passing of Hegumen Nikon; 207,25 (1089) consecration of Caves Church; 226,23–226,27 (1094) Bishop Stefan, former hegumen of the monastery, died; 232,16 (1096) Polovtsian attack on the monastery; 281,14 (1106) Elder Ian's tomb in the monastery's chapel; 282,15 (1107) brethren of monastery rejoice because Polovtsian siege raised; 283,8 (1108) refectory of monastery completed; 283,12 (1108) Feodosii's name inscribed in synodikon; 283,22 (1108) mention of Stefan, former hegumen of the monastery; 283,25 (1109) body of Eupraksia Vsevolodovna laid in monastery; 284,6 (1110) fiery pillar over monastery; Hypatian 268,20–24 (1111) reference to fiery pillar seen previous year.

Повѣсть временныхъ лѣтъ черноризца Феодосіева манастиря печерьскаго, отъкуду  
 есть пошла русьская земля и кто въ ней почаль первѣ княжити, и отъкуду  
 Русьская земля стала есть. (0,1–0,4)<sup>13</sup>

[The Tale of bygone years of a monk of Feodosii's Caves Monastery, from where came the  
 Rus' land and who in it first began to rule, and from where the Rus' land began.]

Two points can be drawn from this introduction: (1) what ensues was intended as a narrative, a tale (*povest'*) explaining the origins and development of the Rus' land; and (2) the author of this narrative was a monk of the Kievan Caves Monastery.

A possible contradiction to authorship claimed in the introduction occurs in a colophon extant in the Laurentian-Trinity-Radziwiłł-Academy branch, which states that Sylvester (*Sil'vestr*), the hegumen of St Michael's Monastery, wrote or copied the text and asks to be remembered in people's prayers:

Игумень Силивестръ свягата Михаила написахъ кѣнигы си Лѣтописецъ, надѣя ся отъ  
 Бога милость пріяти, при кѣнзѣ Володимирѣ, кѣнзѣящю ему Кыевѣ, а мѣнѣ  
 игуменящю у свягата Михаила въ 6624, индикта 9 лѣта; и иже чѣтеть кѣнигы сия, тѣ  
 буди ми въ молитвахъ. (286,1–286,7)<sup>14</sup>

<sup>13</sup> All citations from the *Primary Chronicle*, as are all the column and line numbers, are given according to *PVL*. These column and line numbers are based, in turn, on the column and line division in E. F. Karskii's 1926 edition of the Laurentian Chronicle for the Full Collection of Russian Chronicles series, *PSRL*, 1 (1926). Karskii's column numbers are indicated in Cross's translation of the *Primary Chronicle* into English and in Ludolf Müller's translation of the *Primary Chronicle* into German. Cross's translation first appeared in print in 1930: Samuel H. Cross, 'The Russian Primary Chronicle', *Harvard Studies and Notes in Philology and Literature*, 12 (1930), 75–320. The translation was reissued by Sherbowitz-Wetzor in 1953 with additional notes by Cross as *The Russian Primary Chronicle: Laurentian Text*. Müller's translation appears as the last volume of a four-volume manual for the *Primary Chronicle. Die Nestorchronik*, trans. by Ludolf Müller, in *Handbuch zur Nestorchronik*, ed. by Ludolf Müller, 4 vols (Munich: Wilhelm Fink, 1977–2001), vol. IV. See Ludolf Müller, 'Die Überschrift de "Povest' vremennykh let"', *Trudy Otdela drevnerusskoi literatury*, 55 (2004), 3–8. For an analysis of Müller's translation, see Aleksei Gippius, 'O kritike teksta i novom perevode-rekonstruktsii "Povesti vremennykh let"', *Russian Linguistics*, 26 (2002), 63–126. For Müller's response, see Ludolf Müller, 'K kritike teksta, k tekstu i perevodu Povesti vremennykh let', *Russian Linguistics*, 30 (2006), 401–36. For a response to both articles, see Donald Ostrowski, 'The Načal'nyj Svod Theory and the Povest' vremennykh let', *Russian Linguistics*, 31 (2007), 269–308. For a discussion of the title of the *Primary Chronicle*, see Donald Ostrowski, 'The Text of the Povest' vremennykh let: Some Theoretical Considerations', *Harvard Ukrainian Studies*, 5 (1981), 28–29; Ostrowski, 'Introduction', pp. lx–lxi; and Donald Ostrowski, 'The Title of the Povest' vremennykh let Redux', *Ruthenica*, 6 (2007), 316–21.

<sup>14</sup> Priselkov proposed in his reconstruction that the wording of this colophon also appeared in the Trinity copy. Priselkov, *Troitskaia letopis'*, p. 205.

[Hegumen Sylvester of Saint Michael's wrote down this chronicle book, hoping to receive mercy from God, during the time of Prince Volodimer who reigns in Kiev, and to me hegumen at Saint Michael's in 1116, in the ninth year of the indiction; may whosoever reads this book remember me in prayers.]

The ambiguity comes with the word 'написахъ', which can be either 'I wrote' or 'I copied' (literally, 'wrote down'). Previously, as Oleksiy Tolochko does in this volume, I accepted the former meaning and attributed the authorship of the *Primary Chronicle* to Sylvester.<sup>15</sup> If, however, we take the second meaning of 'написати' and accept that Sylvester copied an already existing text, then we have to look elsewhere for the author/compiler. Since the Hypatian-Khlebnikov branch does not derive from the Sylvestrian version (in which case, if it did, one could argue the colophon was omitted in it), but derives from an exemplar earlier than the Sylvestrian, one has to conclude that Sylvester copied from an exemplar — the archetype of the *Primary Chronicle* — the same exemplar from which the Hypatian-Khlebnikov branch derives.

The Khlebnikov manuscript claims that the monk Nestor, who is also credited with writing *The Tale and Passion and Eulogy to the Holy Martyrs Boris and Gleb* (*Skazanie i strast' i pokhvala sviatuiu mucheniku Borisa i Gleba*) and the *Life of the Venerable Feodosii* (*Zhitie sviatogo Feodosiia*), was the author of the *Primary Chronicle*. A number of scholars, including Shakhmatov, have accepted this statement as correct.<sup>16</sup> Although that attribution would provide a name for the monk of the Caves Monastery otherwise unidentified in the title of the other five main manuscript witnesses of the *Primary Chronicle*, accepting it is problematic. Stemmatics requires that we reject any *lectiones singulares* unless we have positive justification to accept it. Here not only is that positive justification absent, we have positive justification not to accept it. As Cross has pointed out, other texts attributed to Nestor differ in style from the *Primary Chronicle* and provide details that contradict those of the *Primary Chronicle*.<sup>17</sup> The nature of the stylistic differences and contradictory details makes it highly unlikely the Nestor who is credited with composing the *Tale of Boris and Gleb* or the *Life of Feodosii* was the author/compiler of the *Primary Chronicle*. It is probable that the inclusion of the name *Nestor* in the Khlebnikov copy was merely a conjecture on the part of the manuscript's

<sup>15</sup> Ostrowski, 'Introduction', p. xvii.

<sup>16</sup> Shakhmatov, *Razyskanie*, p. 2; and L. V. Milov and others, 'Kto byl avtorom "Povesti vremennykh let"?', in *Ot Nestora do Fonvizina: Novye metody opredeleniia avtorstva*, ed. by L. V. Milov (Moscow: Progress, 1994), pp. 40–69.

<sup>17</sup> Cross, 'Introduction', pp. 6–11.

sixteenth-century scribe as to which monk of the Caves Monastery was the author of the *Primary Chronicle*.

Another proposal was made in 1954 by the French scholar André Vaillant that a certain Vasilii, who is mentioned in the text, was the author of the *Primary Chronicle*. Vaillant identified Vasilii with Hegumen Sylvester and saw him as being responsible for the narrative section from 1051 to 1110.<sup>18</sup> The idea that Vasilii was the author was renewed apparently independently in 2003 by the Russian scholar V. N. Rusinov. Unlike Vaillant, he did not identify Vasilii with Sylvester, but he did see Vasilii as responsible for the narrative from 1051 to 1117.<sup>19</sup> A. A. Gippius expressed objections to this proposed attribution,<sup>20</sup> so we need to look closer at the claim. Rusinov derived his evidence for the attribution from fifty-four passages in the text,<sup>21</sup> but two are of particular significance for our concerns. First, *s.a.* 1051, in the description of the founding of the Kievan Caves Monastery, the narrator uses the first person but does not identify himself by name:

Феодосиеви же живушю въ монастыри, [...] къ нему же и азъ придохъ, худыи и недостойныи рабъ, и приять мя, лѣтъ ми сущю 17 отъ рожения моего. Се же написахъ и положихъ, въ кое лѣто почаль быти монастырь, и чѣто ради зоветь ся Печерьскыи. (160,16–160,24)

[While Feodosii lived in the monastery, [...] I, a poor and unworthy servant, came to him, and he accepted me in my seventeenth year. Hence I wrote down and certified in what year the monastery was founded and for what reason it is called 'Caves'.]

Feodosii died in the year 1074, so the narrator had to be born before 1057 (1074 – 17 = 1057). Second, *s.a.* 1097, the narrator identifies himself by name,

<sup>18</sup> André Vaillant, 'La Chronique de Kiev et son auteur', *Prilozi za Knjizhevost, jezik istorijy i folklor*, 20 (1954), 169–83 (pp. 178–83).

<sup>19</sup> V. N. Rusinov, 'Letopisnye stat'i 1051–1117 gg. v sviazi s problemoi avtorstva i redaktsii "Povesti vremennykh let"', *Vestnik Nizhegorodskogo universiteta im. N. I. Lobachevskogo. Seriiia Istoriiia*, 1. 2 (2003), 111–47.

<sup>20</sup> A. A. Gippius, 'K voprosu o redaktsiakh Povesti vremennykh let. I', *Slavianovedenie*, 2007.5, 20–44 (pp. 20–22); and A. A. Gippius, 'K voprosu o redaktsiakh Povesti vremennykh let. II', *Slavianovedenie*, 2008.2, 3–24 (p. 9).

<sup>21</sup> Rusinov identifies nine passages in the narrative between 1051 and 1114 where the narrator refers to himself in the first person, fourteen passages between 1068 and 1115 that refer to personal Christian characteristics, seventeen passages between 1051 and 1114 where the course of the narrative is referred to, seven passages between 1051 and 1115 where he refers to the time of the chronicler, and seven passages between 1068 and 1111 where the narrative describes military clashes between the Rus' and the Polovtsians. Rusinov, 'Letopisnye stat'i', pp. 123–38.

и мѣнѣ ту сущю, въ Володимири, въ едину ношь присѣла по мя кнѣзь Давыдъ. И приидохъ къ нему, и посадивъ мя и рече ми: '[...] Да се, Василию, шлю ты, иди къ Василькови, съ сима отрокома.' (265,7–265,17)

[while I was myself there at Volodimir [-Volynsk], Prince David [Igor'evich] sent for me during a certain evening. I came to him, and after seating me, he said to me, '[...] I choose you, Vasilii, as my messenger. Go to your namesake Vasil'ko.']

Shakhmatov proposed that the *Primary Chronicle* author/compiler was quoting a priest named Vasilii in this passage or had incorporated Vasilii's written account of the event.<sup>22</sup> But there is no marker or indicator that another person is being quoted as elsewhere in the text when the narrator quotes other eyewitness accounts, such as those of Ian, son of Vyshata (1071 (175,17–175,19)) and Giuriata Rogovich of Novgorod (1096 (234,23–234,25)). One needs to seriously consider the likelihood that when the narrator writes, 'while I was myself there at Volodimir' and 'I entered his presence', he is referring to himself. The subsequent words of Prince David, 'I choose you, Vasilii, as my messenger', would seem to be a clear and direct identification of the name of the monk who is our Narrator B, but he is probably not the 'monk of Feodosii's Caves Monastery' referred to in the introduction to the text.

### *The Narrative Evidence*

The narrative begins after the biblical Flood with the dividing up of the earth among Shem, Ham, and Japheth, the sons of Noah. This first part of the *Primary Chronicle* is without year markers (1,2–17,24) and contains two lengthy excerpts from the Greek *Chronicle* of George Hamartolus.<sup>23</sup> In the annalistic part of the *Primary Chronicle* (i.e. entries arranged according to years), four shorter excerpts from the *Chronicle* of Hamartolus appear.<sup>24</sup>

<sup>22</sup> A. A. Shakhmatov, "Povest' vremennykh let" i ee istochniki', *Trudy Otdela drevnerusskoi literatury*, 4 (1940), 9–150 (pp. 27–28); Shakhmatov, *Povest' vremennykh let*, pp. xxxi–xxxvi.

<sup>23</sup> For the standard edition of the translation of the *Chronicle* of George Hamartolus into Slavonic, see V. M. Istrin, *Knigy vremen'nyia i obraznyia Georgiia mnikha: Khronika Georgiia Amartola v drevnem slavianorusskom perevode*, 3 vols (Petrograd: Izdatel'stvo Otdeleniia Russkogo iazyka i slovesnosti Rossiiskogo Akademii nauk, 1920–30), vol. 1 [hereafter *GA*]. The excerpt that appears in *PVL*, 1,2–3,15 corresponds to *GA* 58.20/25–59.20, and the excerpt in *PVL*, 14,15–16,11 corresponds to *GA* 49.25–50.22.

<sup>24</sup> These are *PVL*, 21,12–22,2/3 = *GA* 511.7–511.21; *PVL*, 29,7–29,11 = *GA* 530.4–530.7; *PVL*, 32,22–32,23 = *GA* 541.12; *PVL*, 39,18–42,2 = *GA* 305.9–306.23.



The annalistic part of his narrative begins *s.a.* 852, which the chronicler considered to be the beginning of the reign of the Byzantine emperor Michael. He starts with Michael, he says, because the Rus' are first mentioned 'in the Greek Chronicle' ('въ лѣтописани Гръцьскомъ') during his reign when they attacked Constantinople (17,25–17,29). Here the chronicler made a mistake of ten years in that Michael began his reign in 842, not 852.<sup>25</sup> V. M. Istrin and Timberlake used the accompanying princely chronology, which ends with the death of Sviatopolk Iziaslavich (1113), in conjunction with references to the death of David Igor'evich (1112) in the entries for 1097 and 1100, as evidence that the 'editorial event', as Timberlake calls it, that was the compilation of the *Primary Chronicle* occurred not earlier than 1113.<sup>26</sup> The original version of the chronology, however, probably ended with the death of Jaroslav (1054):

а отъ първаго лѣта Святославля до първаго лѣта Яропѣлча лѣтъ 28. Яропѣлкъ кнѣжи лѣтъ 8; а Володимеръ кнѣжи лѣтъ 37; а Ярославъ кнѣжи лѣтъ 40. Тѣмъ же отъ сѣмърти Святославля до сѣмърти Ярославля лѣтъ 85. (18,16–18,20)

[From the first year of Sviatoslav to the first year of Jaropolk, twenty-eight years [passed]. Jaropolk ruled eight years, Volodimer ruled thirty-seven years, and Jaroslav ruled forty years. Thus, from the death of Sviatoslav to the death of Jaroslav eighty-five years [passed].]

The phrase that follows, 'while from the death of Jaroslav to the death of Sviatopolk sixty years [passed]' ('а отъ сѣмърти Ярославля до сѣмърти Сятопѣлчи лѣтъ 60'; 18,20–18,21) was most likely added later since Sviatopolk Iziaslavich's name does

<sup>25</sup> Shakhmatov provided an explanation that indicates where the calculation that appears in the *Primary Chronicle* went astray. A. A. Shakhmatov, 'Iskhodnaia tochka letochisleniia *Povesti vremennykh let*', *Zhurnal Ministerstva narodnogo prosveshcheniia*, 310 (1897), 217–22. Cf. Cross, 'Introduction', p. 30.

<sup>26</sup> V. M. Istrin, 'Zamechaniia o nachale russkogo letopisaniia: Po povodu issledovaniia A. A. Shakhmatova v oblasti drevnerusskoi letopisi', *Izvestiia Otdeleniia russkogo iazyka i slovenosti Rossiiskoi akademii nauk*, 27 (1922 [1924]), 207–51 (p. 220): 'after 1112; probably [...] before the death of Sviatopolk (1113)'; and Timberlake, 'Redactions of the Primary Chronicle', pp. 201–03. Priselkov first dated the composition of *Primary Chronicle* to the period 1114–16, then to 1113. See M. D. Priselkov, *Nestor letopisets: Opyt istoriko-literaturnoi kharakteristiki* (Petrograd: Brokgauz-Efron, 1923), p. 89; and M. D. Priselkov, *Istoriia russkogo letopisaniia XI–XV vv.* (Leningrad: Leningradskii gosudarstvennyi universitet, 1940), p. 16. Cherepnin proposed 1115 when the relics of Boris and Gleb were translated. L. V. Cherepnin, 'Povest' vremennykh let, ee redaktsii i predshestvuiushchie ei letopisnye svody', *Istoricheskie zapiski*, 25 (1948), 293–333 (p. 309). Aleshkovskii also proposed 1115 as the year of composition of the *Primary Chronicle*. M. Kh. Aleshkovskii, 'Pervaia redaktsiia Povesti vremennykh let', in *Arkheograficheskii ezhegodnik za 1967 g.* (Moscow: Nauka, 1969), pp. 13–40.

not appear in the earlier part of the chronology. This circumstance suggests two narrators at work here: Narrator A, who wrote the original form of the chronology, and Narrator B, who added the last line. The pre-existing chronology, that of Narrator A, was probably written sometime during the reigns of Iziaslav Jaroslavich (1054–68, 1069–73, 1076–78). Fitting this timeframe is Shakhmatov's proposal of a hypothetical compilation of 1073 that he attributed to the Caves monk Nikon.<sup>27</sup>

The account of the calling of the Rus' by the Chuds, Krivichians, Ves', and Slovenians and their choosing of three brothers, Riurik, Truvor, and Sineus, to rule over them appears *s.a.* 862. Narrator A understood the Rus' at this time to be pagans, for he does not identify them here as Christians and later in the narrative refers to them as pagans (83,10 (*s.a.* 983)). One of the ongoing controversies in Eastern Slavic studies is whether the Riurik of the *Primary Chronicle* can be identified with the Rorik of Dorestad (or Jutland) in Western medieval sources.<sup>28</sup> According to two letters written by Hincmar of Reims in 863, Rorik of Dorstad was a Christian.<sup>29</sup> Simon Coupland supposed that he must have 'recently been converted and baptized'.<sup>30</sup> If so and if the Riurik of the *Primary Chronicle* is Rorik of Dorestad, then the Riurik of the *Primary Chronicle* may have been a Christian by the time he and his brothers were chosen. In any case, that possibility is not mentioned by the chronicler.

The *Primary Chronicle* and its sources are dealing with three categories of pagans: (1) Scandinavians, mostly Vikings/Varangians; (2) the Slavs before Christianization and those Slavs who engage in pagan or pagan-like practices often along with their Christianity, and (3) steppe people, usually of Turkic origin.

### Scandinavians, Mostly Vikings/Varangians

Inclusion in part or in the whole of four treaties (*s.a.* 907, 912, 945, and 971) between the pagan Rus' and the Byzantine Greeks would not have been necessary

<sup>27</sup> Shakhmatov, *Raszyskanie*, pp. 420–60.

<sup>28</sup> See, e.g., N. Beliaev, 'Rorik Iutlandskii i Riurik Nachal'noi letopisi', *Seminarium Kondakovianum*, 3 (1929), 215–70; and Norman W. Ingham and Christian Raffensperger, 'Ryurik and the First Ryurikids: Context, Problems, Sources', *American Genealogist*, 82 (2007), 1–13 (pp. 11–13).

<sup>29</sup> Flodoard of Reims, *Historia Remensis ecclesiae*, ed. by J. Heller and G. Waitz, MGH SS, 13 (Hannover: Hahn, 1881), pp. 529 and 541.

<sup>30</sup> Simon Coupland, 'From Poachers to Gamekeepers: Scandinavian Warlords and Carolingian Kings', *Early Medieval Europe*, 7 (1998), 85–114 (pp. 98–99).

or even desirable if Narrator A had been trying to denigrate the pagan past. Instead, the recounting of the contents of the treaties, in two cases (*s.a.* 912 and 945) article by article, indicates the equal level on which the pagan Rus' negotiated with Christian Byzantine emperors. It contributes to the chronicler's effort to explain how the Rus' land came about, in particular in its relationship to Byzantium. The treaties with the Greeks provide an insight into the paganism of the Rus'.

In the treaty *s.a.* 907, we find only two categories of individuals mentioned, Greeks and Rus'. In the subsequent three treaties, we find a third category added: Christians. These categorizations imply that some of the Rus' may already have been Christian and that there was an attempt to extend the protection of Byzantium to Rus' Christians. For example, the treaty of 912 states:

аще украдетъ Русинъ чѣто любо у хръстіяна, или паки хръстіянинъ у Русина, и ятъ  
будеть томъ часѣ тать, егда татьбу сътворить, отъ погубившаго чѣто любо, аще  
приготовить ся татьбы творяи, и убиень будетъ, да не възищеть ся съмърть его ни отъ  
хръстіянь, ни отъ Руси. (34,29–35,5)

[If a Rus' steals something from a Christian, or if a Christian from a Rus', and he is caught red-handed or when about to perform the theft, and is killed, then neither the Christian nor the Rus' may exact [compensation] for the death.]

Similarly, one of the articles of the treaty of 945 begins: 'If a Christian kills a Rus' or a Rus' a Christian' ('Аще убиеть хръстъянинъ Русина или Русинъ хръстъянина'; 51,22–51,23), but another article begins, 'if a Rus' assault a Greek with a sword, spear, or using another weapon, or a Greek a Rus'' ('аще ударить мечемъ или копиемъ, или кацѣмъ инымъ съсудомъ Русинъ Гръчина или Гръчинъ Русина'; 52,2–52,4) seemingly to imply a distinction between Rus' who remained pagan and those who had converted to Christianity.

No names of the Rus' are given in the parts of the treaties reported *s.a.* 907 and 971. The names of the Rus' given in the treaty of 912 are predominantly Scandinavian.<sup>31</sup> Likewise, in the treaty of 945, the names of the Rus' envoys and merchants are predominantly Scandinavian.<sup>32</sup> Although we may have no other

<sup>31</sup> *PVL*, 32,28–33,4: 'Мы отъ рода Русьскаго, Карлы, Ингелдъ, Фарлофъ, Верьмудъ, Рулавъ, Гуды, Руалдъ, Карнь, Фрелавъ, Рюаръ, Актеву, Труанъ, Лидуль, Фостъ, Стемидъ, иже послани отъ Ольга, великаго князя Русьскаго' ('We from the Rus' clan, Karl, Ingjald, Farulf, Vermund, Hrollaf, Gunnar, Harold, Karni, Frithleif, Hroarr, Angantyr, Throand, Leithulf, Fast, and Steinvith, are sent from Oleg, great prince of Rus'). For the Latin alphabet equivalents of the names rendered in Cyrillic in the treaties of 912 and 945, I am following *The Russian Primary Chronicle: Laurentian Text*, ed. by Cross and Sherbowitz-Wetzor, pp. 65–66 and 73.

<sup>32</sup> *PVL*, 46,20–47,12: 'Мы отъ рода Русьскаго росъли и гостие: Иворъ, съль Игоревъ, великаго князя Русьскаго, и обьщии посъли: Вусѣастъ Святославль, сына Игорева; Искусеви

evidence of these deities by these names in Scandinavian sources, one can surmise that the deities they swear by are at least in part or mostly Scandinavian in origin. The alternative, that individuals with Scandinavian names are swearing by Slavic deities that are otherwise unattested in Slavic sources, is possible but less likely. A combination of Scandinavian and Slavic deities may, however, be possible.

The *Primary Chronicle* mentions the names of seven pagan deities — Perun, Volos, Khors, Dazh'bog, Stribog, Semar'gl, and Mokosh — but does not say much about them. Topping the list is Perun, who is mentioned seven times.

- In regard to the treaty *s.a.* 912, 'Oleg and his men, making an oath by the Rus' law, swore by their weapons and by Perun, their god, and by Volos, the god of tribute, and affirmed the peace'.<sup>33</sup>
- In the treaty inserted *s.a.* 945, the stipulation in regard to anyone who violates the treaty states, 'if any of them are not baptized, may they receive help neither from God nor from Perun'.<sup>34</sup>

Ольги княгыня; Слуды Игоревъ, нетия Игорева; Улѣбъ Володиславль; Каницаръ Предъславинъ; шигъбернъ Сфандръ, жены Улѣбовы; Прастѣнъ Турѣдуви; Либи Арѣфастовъ; Гримъ Сфирковъ; Прастѣнъ Якунь, нетия Игоревъ; Кары Тудковъ; Каршевъ Тудоровъ; Егри Ерлисковъ; Воистъ Иковъ; Истръ Яминъдовъ; Ятвягъ Гунаревъ; Шибридъ Алданъ; Коль Клековъ; Стегги Етоновъ; Сфирка; Алвадь Гудовъ; Фудри Тулбовъ; Муторъ Утинъ; купьць Адунъ, Адолбъ, Ангивладъ, Улѣбъ, Фрутанъ, Гомоль, Куци, Емигъ, Турбрить, Фуръ, Стѣнъ, Бруны, Роалдъ, Гунастръ, Фрастѣнъ, Ингелдъ, Турбернъ и другыи Турбернъ, Улѣбъ, Турбенъ, Моны, Руалдъ, Свѣнъ, Стиръ, Алданъ, Тилии, Арубкаръ, Свѣнъ, Вузелѣвъ Исинко Биричь, посылании отъ Игоря, великаго князя Русьскаго, и отъ всѣя княжия и отъ всѣхъ людии Русьския земля' ('We from the Rus' clan envoys and merchants, Ivar, envoy of Igor', great prince of Rus', and the general envoys: Vefast representing Sviatoslav, son of Igor'; Isgaut for the Princess Ol'ga; Slothi for Igor', nephew of Igor'; Oleif for Vladislav; Kanitzar for Predslava; Sigbjorn for Svahild, wife of Oleif; Freystein for Thorth; Leif for Arfast; Grim for Sverki; Freystein for Haakon, nephew of Igor'; Kari for Stoething; Karlsefni for Thorth; Hegri for Egfling; Voist for Voik; Eistr for Amund; Iatving for Gunnar; Sigfrid for Halfdan; Kill for Klakki; Steggi for Jotun; Sverki; Hallvarth for Guthi; Frothi for Throand; Munthor for Ut; the merchants Authun, Authulf, Ingivald, Oleif, Frutan, Gal, Kussi, Heming, Thorfrid, Thor, Stein, Bruni, Hroald, Gunnfast, Freystein, Ingjald, Thorbjorn, and the other Thorbjorn, Oleif, Thorbjon, Manni, Hroald, Svein Styr, Halfdan Tirr, Aksbrand, Svein, Visleif, Sveinki Borich, sent by Igor' great prince of Rus' and from each prince and all the people of the Rus' land').

<sup>33</sup> *PVL*, 32,4–32,7: 'Ольга водивъше и мужа его на роту по Русьскому закону, кляша ся оружиемъ своимъ, и Перунъмъ, богъмъ своимъ, и Волосъмъ, скотиемъ богъмъ, и утвърдиша миръ.'

<sup>34</sup> *PVL*, 47,27–47,28: 'елико ихъ не крщено есть, да не имуть помощи отъ Бога, ни отъ Перуна'.

- In the same treaty we find a statement in regard to ‘whoever of the princes or people of Rus’, whether Christian or non-Christian, who violates what was written on this parchment, they will merit death with their own weapons and will be cursed by God and by Perun’.<sup>35</sup> The formulation of this article of the treaty is further evidence that some of the Rus’ had become Christian.
- In the treaty *s.a.* 971 concluded between the Rus’ prince Sviatoslav and the Byzantine emperor John Tzimiskes, Sviatoslav swears that ‘if we do not maintain any of these stipulations I and those under me will be cursed by the gods in whom we believe, in Perun and in Volos, the god of tribute, and we will be yellow like gold, and slain with our own weapons’.<sup>36</sup>
- The report *s.a.* 980 states that ‘when Volodimer began to rule alone in Kiev, he set up idols on the hill outside the towered court: a wooden Perun but a silver head and gold mustache, and others of Khors, Dazh’bog, Stribog, Semar’gl, and Mokosh’.<sup>37</sup>
- After Volodimer was baptized, he returned to Kiev *s.a.* 988 and had the idols destroyed, but

ordered that Perun should be tied to the tail of a horse and dragged down from the hill along the Borichev to the Ruchai. He designated twelve men to beat it with branches not because he thought the wood felt it, but to insult the demon who had deceived man in this guise that he might receive retribution from man. [...] While the idol was being dragged along the Ruchai to the Dnepr, the unbelievers wept over it, for they had not yet accepted baptism. After dragging it, they cast it into the Dnepr. Volodimer said, ‘If it halts anywhere, then push it out from the bank, until it goes over the falls, then let it loose’. They obeyed his order. When the men let it go, it passed through the rapids and the wind cast it out on the bank, which to this day is called Perun’s Bank.<sup>38</sup>

<sup>35</sup> *PVL*, 53,11–53,15: ‘Аще ли же кѣто отъ кнѣзѣ и отъ людѣи Русьскыхъ, или хръстѣянъ или не хръстѣянъ, преступитъ се, еже написано на харатѣи сеи, и будеть достоинъ своимъ оружьемъ умрети, и да будеть клять отъ Бога и отъ Перуна.’

<sup>36</sup> *PVL*, 73,11–73,16: ‘Аще ли отъ тѣхъ самѣхъ прежереченухъ не хранимъ, азъ же и съ мѣною и подъ мѣною, да имѣемъ клятву отъ бога, въ негоже вѣруемъ, въ Перуна и въ Волоса, бога скотѣя, да будемъ злати, яко злато се, и своимъ оружьемъ да исѣчени будемъ.’

<sup>37</sup> *PVL*, 79,11–79,15: ‘И нача кнѣжѣти Володимиръ въ Киевѣ единъ, и постави кумиры на хълму, вѣнѣ двора теремнаго: Перуна древяна, а главу его сѣребряну, а усь златъ, и Хърса и Дажьбога и Стрибога и Сѣмаггла и Мокошь.’

<sup>38</sup> *PVL*, 116,22–117,13: ‘Перуна же повелѣ привязати коневѣ къ хвосту и влещи съ горы по Боричеву на Ручаи, 12 мужа пристави бити жьзльемъ. Се же не яко древу чююще, нъ на поругание бѣсу, иже прельщаше симъ образьмъ чловѣкы, да възмѣстие приметь отъ чловѣкъ. “Велии еси, Господи, чюдъна дѣла твоя!” Вѣчера чѣстимъ отъ чловѣкъ, дньсь

- Again *s.a.* 988, when Volodimer ordered that churches be built where the idols had been, ‘he founded the Church of St Basil on the hill where the idol of Perun and the others had stood, and where the Prince and the people had offered their sacrifices’.<sup>39</sup>

From the foregoing, it seems that the *Primary Chronicle* author/compiler is trying to suggest that these gods were imposed on the Slavic people by the pagan Rus’ princes. A few scholars assert that Perun can be identified with Thor.<sup>40</sup> N. K. Chadwick posited that Volos/Veles may be Freyr of Norse origin and that the second component of the phrase *bog skotiiia* should be understood as a Slavonic rendition of Old Norse *skattr* (tribute), Old English *sceatt*, and Gothic *skatts* (*dinarion*). In addition, she glosses the Slavonic *Kb”rs* as Anglo-Saxon *hors*, Old Norwegian *hross* (horse).<sup>41</sup> B. D. Grekov suggested Mokosh may be a Finnish deity.<sup>42</sup> But these are isolated theories. Otherwise, we have widespread speculation and imaginative attempts to claim a Slavic origin for them, although little can be concluded in that regard with any confidence.<sup>43</sup>

### The Slavs before Christianization and those Slavs who Engage in Pagan or Pagan-like Practices Often Along with their Christianity

We find virtually nothing in the *Primary Chronicle* about the paganism of the pre-Christian Slavs. We can, however, identify two chronological phases to the names of princes in the *Primary Chronicle*. In the first chronological phase (to the ascension of Sviatoslav in 945), the princes and princesses have Slavic versions of

поругаемъ. Влекому же ему по Ручаеви къ Днѣпру, плакаху ся его невѣрнии людие, еще бо не бяху прияли крещения. И привлекше, въринуша и въ Днѣпръ. И пристави Володимиръ, рекъ: “Аще кде пристанеть вы то отрѣвайте его отъ берега, дондеже пороги проидеть, тгда охабите ся его”. Они же повелѣное сътвориша. яко пустиша и, проиде сквозъ пороги, извърже и вѣтръ на рѣнь, яко и до сего дъне словеть Перуна Рѣнь.’

<sup>39</sup> *PVL*, 118,20–118,23: ‘и постави църкъвь святаго Василья на хълмѣ, идеже стояше кумиръ Перунъ и прочии, идеже требы творяху князь и людие’.

<sup>40</sup> S. Rozniecki, ‘Perun und Thor’, *Archiv für slavische Philologie*, 23 (1901), 462–520; and Aleksander Brückner, *Mitologia Slava* (Bologna: Zanichelli, 1932), p. 72.

<sup>41</sup> Nora Kershaw Chadwick, *The Beginnings of Russian History: An Enquiry into Sources* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1946), pp. 83–90.

<sup>42</sup> B. D. Grekov, *Kiev Rus* (Moscow: Foreign Languages Publishing House, 1959), p. 516.

<sup>43</sup> For a discussion of the problem, see Myroslava T. Znayenko, *The Gods of the Ancient Slavs: Tatishchev and the Beginnings of Slavic Mythology* (Columbus: Slavica, 1980).

Scandinavian names: Oleg (< Helgi); Igor' (< Ingvar); Ol'ga (< Helga). These names are sometimes used in the second chronological phase. Beginning with Sviatoslav in 945, the names of most of the princes in the *Primary Chronicle* are non-Christian Slavic (perhaps, initially, reign) names: Jaroslav (Fierce Glory), Jaropolk (Fierce Regiment), Iziaslav (Notable Glory), Sviatopolk (Sacred Regiment), Sviatoslav (Sacred Glory), Vseslav (All Glory), Mstislav (Revenge Glory), Vsevolod (Ruler of All), Volodimer (World Ruler). Even after the Christianization in 989 when the princes received Christian names, they are still called by their non-Christian Slavic names in the *Primary Chronicle*, not their Christian names: for example, Volodimer (Sviatoslavich) instead of *Vasilii*; Jaroslav (Volodimerovich) instead of *Iurii*; Vsevolod (Jaroslavich) instead of *Andrei*; Vsevolod (Mstislavich) instead of *Gavril*/Gabriel; and Iziaslav (Mstislavich) instead of *Panteleimon*.<sup>44</sup>

Of significant concern to the *Primary Chronicle* author/compiler are sorcerers (*volkhvy*), who he sees as an indigenous non-Christian threat to the Christianized people of Rus'. The sorcerers are described *s.a.* 1024 as appearing in Suzdal' when Prince Jaroslav had travelled to Novgorod. The *Primary Chronicle* reports, 'they killed old people by satanic inspiration and devil worship, saying that they would spoil the harvest' ('избиваху старую чадь по дияволу научению и бѣсованию, глаголюще, яко си държать гобино'; 147,24–147,25). It looks as though the sorcerers had followed through on their threat because famine forced the people of the region to go to the Bulgars to buy grain. The *Primary Chronicle* tells us,

Слышавъ же Ярославъ вѣлхвы, приде Суждалю; изъима вѣлхвы, расточи, а другыя показни, рекъ сице: 'Богъ наводитъ по грѣхомъ на куюждо землю гладьмь, или морьмь, или ведрьмь, или иною казнию, а чловѣкъ не вѣсть ничьтоже'. (147,29–148,5)

[When Jaroslav heard of the sorcerers, he went to Suzdal', seized the sorcerers and dispersed them, but punished others, saying, 'In proportion to its sins, God inflicts upon every land hunger, pest, drought, or some other punishment, and man has no understanding thereof.].

The sorcerers are, thus, placed in the same category as pagans; that is, they are ignorant (which allows them to be deceived by the Devil) and they act unknowingly as agents of God's punishment (see below).

The chronicler describes how Vseslav's mother bore him by enchantment and that sorcerers told her to bind the caul he was born with to him, which he wore 'to this day on himself' ('и до сего дъне на собѣ'; 155,14) (Vseslav died in 1101). The

<sup>44</sup> A. F. Litvina and F. B. Uspenskii, *Vybor imeni u russkikh kniazeei v XI–XVI vv.: Dinasticheskaia istoriia skvoz' prizmu antroponimiki* (Moscow: Indrik, 2006), pp. 461–626.

chronicler explains that ‘for this reason he [Vseslav] is so pitiless in bloodshed’ (‘сега ради немилостивъ есть на кръвопролитие’; 155,14–155,15 (1044)). Of the remaining nine references to sorcerer(s), eight occur *s.a.* 1071: how a sorcerer inspired by the Devil misled the people (174,24); how sorcerers deluded themselves (175,22); how sorcerers deceived the Novgorodians (181,4); in two cases people capture the sorcerers (176,14 and 181,7–181,8); one reference to Simon Magus (180,14); one reference to a sorcerer in Novgorod (180,24); and one reference to a sorcerer who claimed omniscience before Gleb slew him (181,9–181,15). The ninth reference occurs *s.a.* 1091 about a sorcerer in Rostov who died shortly after appearing (214,23). The narrator is clearly interested in any appearance of sorcerers in the land even when he does not report that any harm occurred, but he does not explicitly characterize their activities as pagan, just Devil inspired and self-delusional.

### Steppe People, Usually of Turkic Origin

A method of getting at the attitude expressed in the *Primary Chronicle* towards pagans is to see how the specific terms ‘pagan(s)’, ‘Godless’, and ‘lawless’ are used. There are thirty-two appearances of the term ‘pagan(s)’ in the *Primary Chronicle*.

- Thirteen times it is used as a synonym for the Polovtsians: 172,15 (1068); 219,11 (1093); 219,13 (1093); 226,15 (1094); 228,22 (1095); 228,24 (1095); 230,2 (1096); 230,8 (1096); 230,9 (1096); 263,25 (1097); 264,6 (1097); 264,10 (1097); and 285,7 (1110).<sup>45</sup>
- Seven times it refers to pagan invasions.
  - Six of those times it is used in reference to God’s punishing Christians for their sins through pagan incursions: 167,19 (1068) ‘God let loose the pagans upon us because of our sins’ (‘Грѣхъ же ради нашихъ попусти Богъ на ны поганыхъ’); 167,28–168,1 (1068) ‘When any land has sinned, God punishes them by death or famine or pagan invasion’ (‘Земли же съгрѣшивъши которѣи любо, казнить Богъ съмъртию, ли гладьмъ, ли наведениемъ поганыхъ’); 222,8 (1093); 222,11 (1093) pagans are the ‘scourge of God’ (‘батога Божии’); 223,27–223,28 (1093) ‘May the incursions of pagans with their torments allow us to come to know the Lord’ (‘Да нахожениемъ поганыхъ мучими Владыку познаемъ’); and 233,12 (1096).

<sup>45</sup> In the *Testament of Volodimer Monomakh*, we find an additional two cases where the term ‘pagans’ is a synonym for the Polovtsians (249,19 and 254,26).



- One of those seven is in regard to a portent, a large star, that presaged pagan invasions of the Rus' land: 164,11 (1065).
- Two times the *Primary Chronicle* indicates that the pagans are ignorant because they do not know the light of Christianity — 32,17 (907) and 83,10 (983) — the latter in regard to the pre-Christian Rus'.
- Once God saves the Christians from the pagans, in this case, the Törks: 163,9 (1060).
- Four times it is used to describe particular individuals among the pagan Rus': 54,4 (945), Igor' and his people took an oath (at least such as were pagans); 61,1 (955), Ol'ga says that she is still a pagan; 61,29 (955), Ol'ga says that her people and her son are pagans; and 63,27 (955), Sviatoslav 'followed pagan ways' ('творяше нравы поганьскыя').
- Once it refers to 'the Krivichians and other pagans' ('Кривичи и прочии поганий'; 14,13 (n.d.)).
- Once it stipulates that it is not appropriate for Christians to marry pagans (in reference to Princess Anna's proposed marriage to Volodimer): 110,4 (988).
- Once it appears in an appeal to the martyrs Boris and Gleb to 'subject the pagans to our princes' ('покорита поганья подь нозѣ княземъ нашимъ'; 139,8 (1015)).
- In one reference, the term 'pagan' is used four times where the chronicler admonishes his readers not to 'call ourselves Christians as long as we live like pagans' ('не словѣмъ нарицающе ся хръстияни, а поганьскы живуще'; 170,3; 170,4; 170,7; and 170,15 (1068)).
- Once the *Primary Chronicle* says that two Rus' princes, 'Oleg [Sviatoslavich] and Boris [Viacheslavich] led the pagans to attack the Rus' land' ('приведе Ольгъ и Борисъ поганья на Русьскую землю'; 200,5–200,6 (1078)).

The first part of the *Primary Chronicle* (i.e. through 1054) displays towards the pagans a relatively moderate attitude that is remarkable for a work compiled and written by a Christian monk. If we assume that writing came into Rus' with the conversion to Christianity, then very little, if any, pagan writing should be evident in the *Primary Chronicle*, and that is the case.<sup>46</sup> Thus, the somewhat moderate attitude of Narrator A is unlikely to have derived from any pagan sources.

Another term that one might expect to see associated with pagans is 'Godless'. There is one reference in the *Primary Chronicle* to the Rus' being 'Godless'

<sup>46</sup> Likhachev discusses oral traditions of the pre-Christian Slavic people in the *Primary Chronicle*. D. S. Likhachev, 'Istoriko-literaturnyi ocherk', in *Povest' vremennykh let*, ed. by D. S. Likhachev, 2 vols (Moscow: Akademiia nauk SSSR, 1950), II, 60–63.

(безбожнии) before Christianization (21,24 (866)). Three times it is used as a synonym for the Polovtsians: 163,14–163,15 (1061) ‘This was the first evil from the pagan and Godless foes’ (‘Се бысть първое зъло отъ поганыхъ и безбожьныхъ врагъ’); 232,21 and 234,1 (1096) ‘Godless sons of Ishmael’ (‘Безбожьнии же сынове Измаилеви’ and ‘безбожьнии сынове Измаилеви’).<sup>47</sup> Once it is used in reference to a specific Polovtsian, Boniak: 232,10 (1096) ‘Godless and mangy thief’ (‘безбожьнии, шолудивии, отаи хыщникъ’).

In contrast, the term ‘lawless’, which one might expect to be applied mainly to pagans because they do not have the Christian law, is, instead, applied a majority of times to Christians who transgress the law. It is applied four times to pagans (14,17; 16,1; 224,30; and 233,5), once to Muslims (86,17), three times to Sviatopolk Volodimerovich (the Damned) in 1015 (132,17; 133,2; and 135,22) and once to the murderers of Boris as the ‘lawless wretches’ (‘безаконьници’) (135,2), three times in regard to Christian lawlessness in general (213,21; 222,7; and 223,22), and four times to ancient Israelites (three of those in quotations from the Bible) (98,2; 98,6; 137,6; and 224,9).

In the introductory part, the *Primary Chronicle* quotes Hamartolus: ‘Among all nations, there are some who have a written law, while others observe customs, for, without law, ancestral usage is accepted’ (‘Ибо комуждо языку овѣмъ законъ исписанъ есть, другимъ же обычая, зане безаконьнымъ отъчъствиемъ мнѣть ся’; 14,15–14,18). The quotation goes on to cite examples of nations that follow fixed customs of ancestral usage: the Seres, Bactrians, Chaldeans and Babylonians, Geleans, those in Britain, and the Amazons. Narrator B adds the Polovtsians, a steppe people, to Hamartolus’s list:

якоже се и нынѣ при насъ Половци законъ държать отъць своихъ: кръвь проливати, а хваляще ся о семь, и ядуще мъртъвчину и всю нечистоту, хомѣкы и сусьлы, и поимають мачехы своя и ятрѣви, и ины обычая отъць своихъ. (16,12–16,16)

[Even so, now during our time, the Polovtsians maintain the law of their fathers in the shedding of blood and in glorifying themselves about this, as well as in eating dead and all unclean things, hamsters and marmots. They marry their mother-in-law and their sisters-in-law, and observe other usages of their fathers.]

<sup>47</sup> Chekin uses the appearance of this term in the *Primary Chronicle* to characterize the general Rus’ attitude towards the Tatars from the eleventh through the thirteenth centuries. Leonid S. Chekin, ‘The Godless Ishmaelites: The Image of the Steppe in Eleventh–Thirteenth-Century Rus’’, *Russian History*, 19 (1992), 9–28. But it is used only twice in the *Primary Chronicle*, both *s.a.* 1096 and then only specifically in reference to the Polovtsians.

The chronicler compares this reliance on custom to Christians, who 'have but one law' ('законъ имамъ единъ'; 16,19). The intent of the chronicler is clear even if his use of 'law' is ambiguous. He seems to be contrasting the one written law of the Christians with the separate regional customs and laws of the pagans.<sup>48</sup>

When the Polovtsians first appear in Rus', according to the *Primary Chronicle s.a.* 1061, Narrator B refers to them as 'pagan and Godless foes' (163,14–163,15). In contrast to the description of the Polovtsians, when the *Primary Chronicle* describes the Pechenegs, another steppe people, who first entered the Rus' land *s.a.* 915, no reference to their being Godless or pagan was made. They were simply described as making peace with the Rus' prince Igor' and moving on to the Danube (42,12–42,14). Here Narrator A could not make a distinction between pagan and Christian because at the time the Rus' were also pagan. Yet, he does not make a distinction between the Pechenegs and the Greeks or Bulgarians, who were Christian, when the Greeks wanted to enlist the aid of them against the Bulgarians.

### *Metahistorical Analysis of the Narrative*

To understand better the virtual past of the narrators in the *PVL*, I have undertaken a metahistorical approach, as delineated by Hayden White in his epic *Metahistory* (1973).<sup>49</sup> White asserted that historians prefigure the emplotment of the narrative:<sup>50</sup> they are writing according to their ideological position<sup>51</sup> towards

<sup>48</sup> On the pitfalls of lexicographical analysis of the unstable meanings of *law* (закон) and *custom* (обычай or отечество) specifically in relation to their usage in the *PVL*, see Simon Franklin, 'On Meanings, Functions and Paradigms of Law in Early Rus', *Russian History*, 34 (2007), 63–81 (pp. 63–64).

<sup>49</sup> Hayden White, *Metahistory: The Historical Imagination in Nineteenth-Century Europe* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1973).

<sup>50</sup> Following Northrop Frye's theory of the archetypal Mythos, White identified four master narrative emplotments: Comedy, Romance, Tragedy, and Satire or Irony. See Northrop Frye, 'The Archetypes of Literature', in *Fables of Identity: Studies in Poetic Mythology* (New York: Harcourt Brace, 1963), pp. 7–20; and Northrop Frye, *Anatomy of Criticism: Four Essays* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1971), especially 'Archetypal Criticism: Theory of Myths', pp. 131–239. Each of the four archetypal Mythoi or generic plots, according to Frye, has six possible phases, three of which it shares with the preceding Mythos and three with the succeeding, for a total of twelve phases or, if we were to use White's terminology, narrative sub-emplotments.

<sup>51</sup> White, *Metahistory*, pp. 22–23, defined four ideological positions taken by those committed to a rational defence of their worldview: Conservatism, Anarchism, Radicalism, and Liberalism. He

the subject matter. Each type of emplotment involves an ‘elective affinity’ for a particular mode of argument (explanation)<sup>52</sup> and dominant rhetorical trope.<sup>53</sup> In the resultant ‘quadruple tetrad’<sup>54</sup> typology of historical narrative, White lined up the ideological positions, types of emplotment, modes of argument (or explanation), and dominant rhetorical tropes this way:

Conservative / Comedic / Organicist / Synecdoche  
 Anarchist / Romantic / Formist / Metaphor  
 Radical / Tragic / Mechanistic / Metonymy  
 Liberal / Satirical or Ironic / Contextualist / Irony<sup>55</sup>

Thus, liberals would emplot the narrative of, say, a history of their country in a Satirical or Ironic mode with a Contextualist argument and Irony as the dominant rhetorical trope. Radicals, in contrast, would emplot the same history in a Tragic mode with its accompanying argument and dominant trope. When one does not know a particular historian’s ideological position towards the subject matter, as is the case with the *Primary Chronicle*, then identifying the emplotment, mode of argument, and dominant trope of the narrative may help one discern the ideological position of the narrator. In the *Primary Chronicle*, I found two successive emplotments, which implies either the narrator adopted different ideological

adopted and modified a typology found in Karl Mannheim, *Ideology and Utopia: An Introduction to the Sociology of Knowledge* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1936), especially ‘The Utopian Mentality’, pp. 192–263.

<sup>52</sup> According to White, *Metahistory*, p. 11, ‘in addition to the level of conceptualization on which the historian emplots his narrative account of “what happened”, there is another level on which he may seek to explicate “the point of it all” or “what it all adds up to” in the end’. This level of ‘explanation by formal argument’ adopted Stephen C. Pepper’s four ‘world hypotheses’: Organicist, Formist, Mechanist, and Contextualist. Stephen C. Pepper, *World Hypotheses: A Study in Evidence* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1957), especially ‘Part Two: The Relatively Adequate Hypotheses’, pp. 141–314. Cf. White, *Metahistory*, pp. 14–18.

<sup>53</sup> White identified four master rhetorical tropes: Synecdoche, Metaphor, Metonymy, and Irony. White, *Metahistory*, pp. 31–38.

<sup>54</sup> The term ‘quadruple tetrad’ is Hans Kellner’s. See his ‘A Bedrock of Order: Hayden White’s Linguistic Humanism’, *History and Theory*, 19 (1980), 1–29 (p. 1).

<sup>55</sup> For a discussion of these affinities applied to four narratives other than the ones White used, see Donald Ostrowski, ‘A Metahistorical Analysis: Hayden White and Four Narratives of “Russian” History’, *Clio*, 19 (1990), 215–36. White’s affinities must be understood mainly as heuristic and non-determinative devices. In his *Metahistory*, three of the four historians he uses as examples ‘transcended’ his typology.

positions towards chronologically different subject matter or, as is more likely, we have two narrators.

The beginning of the narrative of the *Primary Chronicle* (i.e. just after the biblical Flood) occurs at a low point in human history, when humankind has barely escaped complete destruction. The *Primary Chronicle* narrative then follows an upward trajectory. The high point of the narrative is the events leading up to the baptism *s.a.* 988 of Volodimer Sviatoslavich (reigned 980–1015) in a chiasmic relation of five story lines,<sup>56</sup> which unfolds, after a succession conflict with Sviatopolk the Damned, into the supreme reign of Volodimer's son Jaroslav the Wise (*Primudryi*). The narrative thus far follows a generally upward direction, from the point of view of the author/compiler, a trajectory leading from the Hebrews to the birth of Christ and from there to the reign of Constantine eventually leading to the baptism of Ol'ga and of her grandson Volodimer. Another high point is reached with the reign of Jaroslav Volodimerovich (1019–54); in particular, the appointment of the first indigenous Slavic metropolitan of Kiev, Ilarion, *s.a.* 1051. We might see the narrative to this point as following the Mythos of an archetypal Comedy. For the most part, it focuses on human agency, not direct intervention by divine or supernatural forces. Oleg, Igor', and Sviatoslav sign treaties with the Greeks. Ol'ga outsmarts the Byzantine Emperor as well as the Derevlans. Princess Anna is the one who brings Volodimer to baptism. Jaroslav makes Kiev a centre of Christian learning. The corresponding Comedic phase or sub-plotment is phase 3: existent society replaced by a happy society (pagan Rus' society replaced by a Christian Rus' society). The 'blocking agent' (in Frye's terminology), which every comedic plotment has and which must be overthrown for the happy ending to occur, can be seen to be the belief in pagan deities. The narrator refers to this residual belief in the description of the carrying of the idol of Perun to the Dnepr River (see above). This Comedic Mythos is typified by *anagorisis*; in this case, the change from pagan ignorance to Christian knowledge. The process results in the realization of a newborn society. See, for example, Volodimer's appeal *s.a.* 988 for God to 'look on this new people' ('призьри на новья люди сия'; 118,13). Although the affinities of the trope of Synecdoche and the Organic mode of explanation are missing in the narrative, the ideological implication of Conservatism is there in terms of the long historical development (from the biblical Flood) to the

<sup>56</sup> Donald Ostrowski, 'The Account of Volodimir's Conversion in the *Povest' vremennykh let*: A Chiasmus of Stories', *Harvard Ukrainian Studies*, 31 (2007), 567–80.

most realistic form of utopia (the reign of Jaroslav the Wise).<sup>57</sup> It is likely that this emplotment was in an earlier chronicle (perhaps the hypothetical compilation of 1073 that Shakhmatov attributed to the monk Nikon) that carried the narrative through the reign of Jaroslav and was incorporated into the *Primary Chronicle*, as we know it, with interpolations by the *Primary Chronicle* author/compiler.

Then things begin to get more difficult with the coming of the Polovtsians *s.a.* 1061. While the narrative for the next fifty years or so has its ups and downs, the trajectory is generally even. The lack of unity among the princes that the chronicler describes is one of the major causes of the pagan/Polovtsian depredations, and thus must be counted high among ‘our sins’. In that sense, this second emplotment corresponds rather neatly with one of the common plots of Romance wherein a dragon lays waste to a land ruled by a helpless old king. The Romantic phase, or sub-emplotment, it corresponds to is phase 4: happy society resists change (in this case, the threat from the pagan Polovtsians to overrun Christian Rus’). The Romantic Mythos represents conflict (*agon*, in ancient Greek drama as the scripted struggle between characters underlying the action of the play). The hero of the romance in this case is Volodimer Monomakh, who is mentioned almost at the beginning of the second narrative *s.a.* 1053 as being born ‘from the Greek princess’ (‘отъ цъсарицѣ Гръкынѣ’; 160,30–160,31),<sup>58</sup> but who ascends the throne of Kiev almost at the end of the narrative *s.a.* 1113. Among other indications that he is the hero of the romance is the appeal of the people of Kiev to him *s.a.* 1097 through Vsevolod’s widow and Metropolitan Nikola ‘to guard the Rus’ land and to have battle with the pagans’ (‘блюсти земли Русьской и брань имѣти съ погаными’; 264,5–264,6).

The chronicler does not hold out much optimism for overcoming the pagans/Polovtsians without divine intervention. A case in point is the entry *s.a.* 1110. The princes Sviatopolk Iziaslavich, David Sviatoslavich, and Volodimer Vsevolodovich set forth to go against the Polovtsians but return after they reach the Voin’ about thirteen kilometres south of Pereiaslavl’ on the left bank of the Dnepr, not far into the steppe. The narrative ends with a description of a Polovtsian campaign that resulted in their taking a settlement near Pereiaslavl’.

The chronicler then describes ‘a sign’ (‘знамение’) at the Caves Monastery:

<sup>57</sup> White, *Metahistory*, p. 25.

<sup>58</sup> On this ‘Greek princess’, see Alexander Kazhdan, ‘Rus’-Byzantine Princely Marriages in the Eleventh and Twelfth Centuries’, *Harvard Ukrainian Studies*, 12–13 (1988/89), 414–29 (pp. 416–17).

яви ся стълпъ огньнъ отъ земля до небесе, а мълния освѣтиша всюю землю, и на небеси погръмѣ въ часъ I нощи; въсь миръ видѣ. Съ же стълпъ ста на трапезьници камянѣи, яко не видѣти кръста бяша, и стоя мало, съступи на църкъвь, и ста надъ гробъмъ Феодосиевымъ, и по томъ ступи на върхъ, акы къ вѣстоку лицъмъ, и по томъ невидимъ бысть. (284,7–284,15)

[A pillar of fire appeared that reached from the land to the sky; lightning illumined the whole countryside, and thunder was heard in the sky at the first hour of the night. The whole populace beheld the miracle. The pillar first stood over the stone refectory, so that its cross could not be seen. Then it moved a little, reached the church, and halted over the tomb of Feodosii. Then it rose, as if facing to the eastward, and soon after became invisible.]

The chronicler asserts that ‘this portent was not an actual pillar but an angelic manifestation’ (‘Се же бяше не огнь стълпъ, нъ видѣ ангельскъ’; 284,15–284,16). Since humans cannot see angels directly, these ‘servants’ (‘служы’) of God are sent forth as ‘a flaming fire’ (‘огнь палящъ’). The chronicler then contends that this sign was an omen:

Тако и се явление которое показываше, емуже бѣ быти, еже и бысть: на вѣторое бо лѣто не съ ли ангель вожъ бысть на иноплеменьники супостаты, якоже рече: ‘Ангель предъ тобою предъидеть’, и: ‘Ангель твои буди съ тобою’? (285,2–285,7)

[This apparition indicated an event that was destined to take place, and its presage was later realized. For in the following year, was not an angel the guide of our princes against the foreigners, even as it is said, ‘An angel will go before you’ (Exodus 23. 23) and ‘Your angel be with you’?]

Thus, the fiery pillar is a metaphor for an angel, and Metaphor is the dominant trope of Romance in White’s typology.

So we might see the post-1054 narrative as following the archetypal employment of Romance, with the various elective affinities that implies: Anarchist ideological implication (the lack of central authority in the early Rus’ principalities); Formist mode of explanation (the author’s Christian Neo-Platonic theology); and the trope of Metaphor (an angel manifested as a fiery pillar). In keeping with the fairy-tale motif of Romance, utopia is on a non-temporal plan and could be realized at any time<sup>59</sup> as soon as the pagans are defeated. We see interest in the post-1054 narration in unusual natural phenomena, such as the Volkhov River flowing backwards, any large stars that shine brightly for several days then disappear, or unusual births, that might be manifesting themselves as portents, and supernatural occurrences, such as a demon riding on a pig or invisible demons riding horses. Between

<sup>59</sup> White, *Metahistory*, p. 25.

*s.a.* 1063 and *s.a.* 1114, we find nineteen of these phenomena and occurrences described in the *Primary Chronicle*.<sup>60</sup> In contrast, the pre-1054 narrative mentions no portents at all (i.e. the primary focus is on human agency).<sup>61</sup>

The two emplotments are complementary, which is particularly significant even if one does not accept the contention that the two narratives were written by two separate chroniclers — the narration to 1054 by Nikon; the narration from 1054 to the end by Vasilii. Within Frye’s typology, each of the four master Mythoi — Comedy, Romance, Tragedy and Irony/Satire — corresponds respectively to times of day (morning, afternoon, evening, and night), seasons of the year (spring, summer, autumn, and winter), and passages of a human life (youth, maturity, old age, and death), so the Mythos of Romance follows that of Comedy as afternoon follows morning, summer follows spring, and maturity follows youth, which is what we would expect when two adjacent emplotments are found combined in chronological succession.

### Conclusion

To sum up, the *Primary Chronicle* was most likely compiled/composed in the Kievan Caves Monastery between 1114 and 1116. The author was a monk of that monastery who is identified in the text as Vasilii. At least two copies were made, one in 1116 by Hegumen Sylvester of St Michael’s Monastery in Vyduhichi, and another by an unknown scribe probably in the Kievan Caves Monastery by 1118. These two copies became the respective hyparchetypes of the two extant branches

<sup>60</sup> *PVL*, 163,21 (1063) Volkhov flowed backward; 164,6–11 (1065) large star as though made of blood; 164,14–18 (1065) malformed child; 164,19–20 (1065) sun like the moon; 190,13–14 (1074) demon in the guise of a Pole; 191,2–5 (1074) demon riding on a pig; 192,21–27 (1074) demons in the guise of two youths with radiant faces; 214,14 (1091) solar eclipse; 215,7 (1091) demons in Polotsk running about like men; 215,8 (1091) same demons invisible on horseback; 215,12 (1091) large circle in middle of the sky; 276,10 (1102) fiery ray shining day and night; 276,14–15 (1102) portent in the moon; 276,15–18 (1102) rainbows surrounding the sun; 280,21 (1104) sun in a circle in middle of a cross; 280,24 (1104) portent in the sun and moon for three days; 284,15–16 (1110) pillar of fire; *PSRL*, II, col. 268 (1111) pillar of fire; and *PSRL*, II, col. 274 (1113) sign in the sun.

<sup>61</sup> The Laurentian branch does indicate an unusual astronomical phenomenon *s.a.* 1028: ‘a sign [Radziwiłł and Academy copies: of a snake] appeared in the sky for all the land to see’ (‘Знамение [Radziwiłł and Academy copies: ‘змиево’] явился на небеси, яко видѣти въсеи земли’ [149,21]), but this appears to be an interpolation most likely made by Sylvester.



or traditions (not redactions) of the *Primary Chronicle* copies. The *Primary Chronicle* author/compiler also included a great deal of material from previous chronicle writing and other sources to narrate his virtual past understanding of Rus' history.

A metahistorical analysis allows us to determine two emplotments of that narrative. The first emplotment, a Mythos of Comedy, begins with the ending of the biblical Flood and the dividing of the world among the sons of Noah and culminates with the appointment of Ilarion as Metropolitan of Rus' by Jaroslav and a coda to the end of Jaroslav's reign. This emplotment was most likely that of an earlier chronicler made during the reign of Iziaslav Jaroslavich (between 1054 and 1078). The second emplotment, a Mythos of Romance, begins *s.a.* 1051 with description of the founding of the Caves Monastery, then jumps to 1054, and extends through the entry for 1114 in the Hypatian-Khlebnikov branch/tradition. In both emplotments the pagans are embraced as an integral part of the narrative. In the part emplotted as Comedy, the pagans are included in the narrative to help Narrator A (possibly the monk Nikon) fulfill the task he set for himself in the title of the work; that is, to explain 'from where the Rus' land began'. He then describes the rise of the Rus' from pagan ignorance and custom to Christian knowledge and law. In the part emplotted as Romance, the pagans, in the form of the Polovtsians, represent to Narrator B (probably the monk Vasili) a supernatural threat as divine agents to punish the Rus' Christians for their sins. Only another divine agent, an angel sent by God and manifesting itself as a fiery pillar, can save the Rus' land and the Caves Monastery and lead the Rus' princes to victory over the pagan Other.

