



ARTYKUŁY NAUKOWE

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Rus'–Byzantine Elite Contacts and the Arrival in Rus' of Newly Elected Metropolitans of Kyiv in the Eleventh and Twelfth Centuries: A Preliminary Study

Abstract

This paper analyzes the connections between the travels of the metropolitans of Kyiv and Rus'–Byzantine diplomatic contacts in the eleventh and twelfth centuries. The study is based on Rus' sources, namely the *Primary Chronicle* and the *Kyivan Chronicle* in Laurentian and Hypatian redactions. In some cases, the appointments of metropolitans coincided with the dispatch of Rus' princesses to Constantinople or the exile of political opponents from Rus' to Byzantium. The article highlights the interconnections between the dynastic, religious, and diplomatic policies of Kyivan Rus' and Byzantium.

Keywords: Kyivan Rus', Byzantine Empire, Rus'–Byzantine relations, metropolitans of Kyiv

Słowa kluczowe: Ruś Kijowska, Cesarstwo Bizantyńskie, relacje rusko-bizantyńskie, metropolicie kijowscy

Introduction

This study investigates a recurrent pattern in Rus'–Byzantine diplomacy: the synchronization of high-level ecclesiastical arrivals with significant political interactions. Its primary objective is to demonstrate that these were not random coincidences, but that specific Rus'–Byzantine interactions were coordinated with the arrivals of the heads of the Rus' Church. A close examination of Rus' sources reveals a striking pattern: in several instances, the departure of a Rus' princess to Byzantium or another major diplomatic development appears in the chronicles under the same date as the arrival of a newly appointed metropolitan of Kyiv from Constantinople. The article does not attempt to analyze all

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diplomatic contacts between Kyivan Rus' and the Byzantine Empire in the eleventh and twelfth centuries, but is limited to those cases in which the sources mention the arrival of the metropolitan of Kyiv in Rus'. The examples discussed here encompass all recorded instances in which the arrival of a metropolitan of Kyiv coincided with significant Rus'–Byzantine interactions. These include the visit of Yanka Vsevolodovna (d. c. 1112) to Constantinople in 1090; the 1104 marriage of Volodar Rostislavich's (d. 1124) daughter to Isaac Komnenos (1093–after 1152), son of Alexios I Komnenos (1048–1118); the 1122 marriage of Irene (d. 1131),¹ daughter of Mstislav Vladimirovich (1076–1132), to Alexios Komnenos (1106–1142), son of John II Komnenos (1087–1143); and, finally, the exile of the Polotsk branch of the Rurikid dynasty to the Byzantine Empire in 1129.

The study relies mainly on Rus' sources because Byzantine authors did not mention these contacts. To Byzantine historians, Rus'–Byzantine dynastic marriages do not appear to have formed a significant part of high diplomacy in the eleventh and twelfth centuries.² The Rus' sources used in this study are the *Primary Chronicle* and its continuation, the *Kyivan Chronicle*. These works survive in different codices, and the versions used here are preserved in the *Laurentian* and *Hypatian* chronicles, dating respectively from the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. These codices were chosen because they are among the oldest surviving Rus' sources for this period.³ The narratives of the *Laurentian* and *Hypatian* codices are not always consistent. A notable discrepancy concerns the marriage of Irene to Alexios Komnenos (1106–1142) in 1122, an event recorded in the *Hypatian Chronicle* but absent from the *Laurentian Chronicle*. The remaining passages from both chronicles used here, however, largely correspond to one another. The citations presented in this article were selected for their informational value.

The Construction of Ecclesiastical Structures in Rus'

The development of church structures in Rus' was closely intertwined with the Byzantine Empire from the very beginning. Evidence of this connection pre-

¹ D. Dąbrowski has argued against the attribution of the name “Dobrodeia” to the daughter of Mstislav Vladimirovich because it appears exclusively in the second redaction of Tatishchev's *Istoriya Rossiyskaya*. Tatishchev was notorious for supplementing historical records with his own fabrications, and the name is entirely absent from the verified Rurikid anthroponomastic corpus. D. Dąbrowski, *Genealogia Mściśławowiczów. Pierwsze pokolenia (do początku XIV wieku)*, Avalon, Kraków 2008, pp. 137–140.

² A. Kazhdan, *Rus'–Byzantine Princely Marriages in the Eleventh and Twelfth Centuries*, “Harvard Ukrainian Studies” 1988/1989, vol. 12/13, p. 428.

³ Literature on Rus' sources: *The Russian Primary Chronicle Laurentian Text*, transl. S.H. Cross, O.P. Sherbowitz-Wetzor, Mediaeval Academy of America, Cambridge, MA 1953, pp. 3–35; J. Børtnes, *The Literature of Old Russia, 988–1730*, [in:] *The Cambridge History of Russian Literature*, ed. C. Moser, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 1992, pp. 1–18; A. Timberlake, *Redactions of the Primary Chronicle*, “Russkii yazyk v nauchnom osveshchenii” 2001, vol. 1, no. 1, pp. 196–218.

dates the rule of the Rurikid dynasty along the Dnieper.⁴ In July 860, a group of Rus' warriors attacked Constantinople and succeeded in pillaging the city's suburbs. Five years later, the Rus' sent an embassy to the Byzantine capital and requested baptism. Photios I (d. 891), then patriarch of Constantinople, reported in 867 that the Rus' had become Christians and friends of the Empire and had received a bishop.⁵ According to Andrzej Poppe, the absence of textual evidence in diocese lists from the period suggests that this bishopric was short-lived, if it existed at all.⁶

At the beginning of the tenth century, the Rurikid prince Oleg conquered Kyiv and established it as his capital. Oleg and his successor Igor (d. 945) attacked Constantinople with the intention of plundering the city. These attacks resulted in Rus'-Byzantine treaties⁷ concerning trade and peaceful relations between the two states. The text of the 945 treaty also mentions the existence of a church of St. Elias in Kyiv during Igor's reign.⁸

Igor's death in 945 left his son Sviatoslav Igorevich (d. 972) under the regency of his mother Olga (d. 969). Her reign saw another attempt to establish an ecclesiastical structure in Rus'. Olga was baptized in Constantinople between 954 and 956, receiving the Christian name "Helena" and probably also securing a renewed trade treaty with the Byzantines.⁹ She also succeeded in obtaining support for the Christianization of her realm from the king of Germany, Otto I (912–973).¹⁰ When Sviatoslav assumed power in 963, he did not embrace his mother's Christian faith.

After Sviatoslav's death, his sons Yaropolk (d. 978), Oleg (d. 977), and Vladimir (c. 960–1015) became princes in the most important cities of Rus'.¹¹

⁴ The Rurikid dynasty had conquered Kyiv by the beginning of the tenth century. Before that, the city had been ruled by Askold and Dir, who were Scandinavians but were not related to Rurik as the *Primary Chronicle* states. *The Primary Chronicle, Polnoe sobranie russkich letopisej*, vol. 2: *Ipat'evskaja letopis'*, Imperatorskaia Arkheograficheskaia Komissiiia, Sankt-Peterburg 1908, pp. 11–12, https://imwerden.de/pdf/psrl_tom02_ipatjevskaya_letopis_1908.pdf (access: 21.03.2026); *Polnoe sobranie russkich letopisej*, vol. 1: *Lavrentiivskii letopis'*, Izdatelstvo Akademii Nauk SSSR, Leningrad 1926, pp. 14–15, https://imwerden.de/pdf/psrl_tom01_lavrentjevskaya_letopis_1926.pdf (access: 21.03.2026).

⁵ A. Poppe, *The Christianization and Ecclesiastical Structure of Kyivan Rus' to 1300*, "Harvard Ukrainian Studies" 1997, vol. 21, no. 3/4, p. 312; W. Duczko, *Viking Rus*, Brill, Boston 2004, p. 83; M. Featherstone, J.S. Codoñer, *Chronographiae quae Theophanis Continuati nomine feruntur Libri I–IV*, Corpus fontium historiae Byzantinae, Series Berolinensis, vol. 53, De Gruyter, Boston–Berlin 2015, pp. 278–279.

⁶ A. Poppe, *The Christianization...*, p. 312.

⁷ On the treaties, see also S. Franklin, J. Shepard, *The Emergence of Rus 750–1200*, Routledge, New York 2013, pp. 103–108, 117–121.

⁸ *The Primary Chronicle, Polnoe sobranie russkich letopisej*, vol. 1..., p. 38, https://imwerden.de/pdf/psrl_tom01_lavrentjevskaya_letopis_1926.pdf (access: 21.03.2026).

⁹ G. Majeska, *Rus' and the Byzantine Empire*, [in:] *A Companion to Russian History*, ed. A. Gleason, Blackwell Publishing, Singapore 2009, p. 53.

¹⁰ O.Y. Pritsak, *When and Where Was Ol'ga Baptized?*, "Harvard Ukrainian Studies" 1985, vol. 9, pp. 8, 21.

¹¹ Yaropolk received Kyiv, Oleg became ruler of the Drevlians, and Vladimir received Novgorod.

This division ended with the outbreak of civil war between the brothers in 977. Vladimir Sviatoslavich (d. 1015) ultimately prevailed in this conflict, converted to Christianity in 988, and married Anna Porphyrogenita (963–1011), the sister of emperors Basil II (958–1025) and Constantine VIII (960–1028). As a result, Christian missionaries once again appeared in Rus'.

The exact date of the establishment of the Kyivan metropolitanate remains disputed among scholars.¹² For example, Andrzej Poppe argued in 1997 that it should be dated to 988. His case was based on written sources such as Yahya of Antioch's *History*, a 1008 letter from the missionary bishop Bruno of Querfurt (d. 1009) to King Henry II (973–1024), and Metropolitan Hilarion's *Sermon on Law and Grace*.¹³ These sources indicate that an archbishop was already present in Kyiv by the end of the tenth century and at the beginning of the eleventh century. By contrast, Werner Seibt concluded in 2021 that there is no secure evidence for the existence of a metropolitan of Rus' before the 1030s. His position is based on the absence of seals belonging to metropolitans from the tenth and early eleventh centuries and on the fact that the first Kyivan Metropolitan, Teopempt (d. 1049), is mentioned in the *Primary Chronicle* only in 1039.¹⁴ Nevertheless, the office was in existence from the 1030s onward and therefore falls within the chronological scope of this article.

The patriarch of Constantinople selected the metropolitan from among three candidates nominated by the *Endemousa Synodos*, the standing synod of bishops in Constantinople. The appointment of a metropolitan required both ecclesiastical and political approval. Upon arriving in Kyiv, the new metropolitan was enthroned in the church of St. Sophia. The prince's consent to and participation in the enthronement confirmed the metropolitan's authority.¹⁵ The overwhelming majority of Kyivan metropolitans until 1281 were of Byzantine origin.¹⁶ Their assumption of office therefore required travel from the Byzantine Empire to Kyiv.¹⁷

¹² Scholars have long debated the exact organizational structure of the early missionary church in Rus'. Various interpretations of its jurisdictional affiliation have been proposed: some emphasize the role of Greek bishops, such as Theophylactos, sent from Constantinople, while others argue for a Bulgarian connection on linguistic grounds. A third prominent theory holds that the church was initially administered through the existing Archbishopric of Tmutarakan. G. Majeska, *Rus' and the Byzantine Empire*..., p. 56.

¹³ A. Poppe, *The Christianization*..., pp. 339–340.

¹⁴ W. Seibt, *Byzantium and the Rus' in the Late Tenth and Eleventh Centuries*, [in:] *War in Eleventh-Century Byzantium*, eds. G. Theotokis, M. Meško, Routledge, New York 2021, p. 139; *The Primary Chronicle*, *Polnoe sobranie russkikh letopisej*, vol. 2..., p. 99, https://imwerden.de/pdf/psrl_tom02_ipatjevskaya_letopis_1908.pdf (access: 21.03.2026); *The Primary Chronicle*, *Polnoe sobranie russkikh letopisej*, vol. 1..., p. 108, https://imwerden.de/pdf/psrl_tom01_laurentjevskaya_letopis_1926.pdf (access: 21.03.2026).

¹⁵ A. Poppe, *The Christianization*..., pp. 340–341.

¹⁶ A.E.N. Tachiaos, *The Greek Metropolitans of Kievan Rus': An Evaluation of Their Spiritual and Cultural Activity*, "Harvard Ukrainian Studies" 1988/1989, vol. 12/13, p. 431.

¹⁷ Exceptions occurred when the person chosen as metropolitan was already residing in Rus', as in 1051, when Ilarion, a native of Rus', was appointed metropolitan of Kyiv by a council of Rus'.

Rus'–Byzantine Relations in the First Half of the Eleventh Century: An Overview

Before turning to the main subject, it is necessary to outline the nature of Rus'–Byzantine relations during the eleventh century. Following the baptism of Vladimir Sviatoslavich, relations were generally amicable; however, the reign of his successor, Yaroslav Vladimirovich (c. 978–1054), brought renewed conflict with the Empire. In 1043, echoing the incursions of the tenth century, Rus' forces launched a naval assault on Constantinople, only to be decimated by the Byzantine fleet's use of Greek fire. Although a peace treaty was concluded in 1046,¹⁸ Yaroslav initiated a new confrontation five years later, this time within the ecclesiastical sphere.

Yaroslav orchestrated the election of Ilarion, a native of Rus', to the metropolitan see of Kyiv through a council of Rus' bishops, defying the established tradition by which the patriarch of Constantinople selected the metropolitan. Under Yaroslav's patronage, Ilarion administered the Rus' Church in accordance with the prince's will. Together, the prince and the metropolitan promulgated the *Church Statute of Prince Yaroslav*, which instituted a system of fines for violations of canon law and granted bishops greater judicial authority. With the metropolitan's assistance, Yaroslav also consecrated the Church of St. George, dedicated to his patron saint, and established new bishoprics.¹⁹

Constantinople, however, refused to recognize Ilarion's legitimacy and eventually compelled Yaroslav to accept a Byzantine-appointed metropolitan, Ephrem. Nevertheless, the Empire made certain concessions to the Rus' ruler: the newly consecrated bishoprics were recognized, and Yaroslav's youngest son, Vsevolod (1030–1093), was granted a bride from the imperial house of Monomachos.²⁰ Following Yaroslav's death in 1054, the state was partitioned into various principalities ruled by his sons.²¹ From that point onward, Rus'–Byzantine diplomacy shifted from a centralized model to a more complex pattern of interactions between the Empire and the rulers of the individual Rus' lands.²²

bishops. The *Primary Chronicle*, *Polnoe sobranie russkikh letopisej*, vol. 2..., p. 103; The *Primary Chronicle*, *Polnoe sobranie russkikh letopisej*, vol. 1..., p. 109.

¹⁸ A.M. Feldman, *The First Christian Rus' Generation: Contextualizing the Black Sea Events of 1016, 1024 and 1043*, "Rossica Antiqua" 2018, vol. 1/2, pp. 9–18.

¹⁹ Bishoprics were established in the cities where, following Yaroslav's death in 1054, his sons held power: Turov (Izyaslav), Volodymyr-Volynskiy (Sviatoslav), and Pereiaslav and Rostov (Vsevolod). A. Vinogradov, *Metropolitan Ilarion: Old Concepts in the Light of New Sources*, [in:] *Christian Rus in the Making*, vol. 1, eds. A. Jusupović, A. Paroń, A. Vukovich, Brill, Paderborn 2025, pp. 256–257.

²⁰ Ibidem, pp. 254–260.

²¹ According to the *Primary Chronicle*, the Rus' lands were partitioned as follows: Izyaslav, as the eldest, was granted the senior throne of Kyiv and nominal primacy over his brothers; Sviatoslav received Chernihiv; Vsevolod received Pereiaslav, together with the territories of Rostov, Suzdal, and Belozero; Igor was assigned Volhynia; and Viacheslav received Smolensk. The *Primary Chronicle*, *Polnoe sobranie russkikh letopisej*, vol. 2..., pp. 104–106; The *Primary Chronicle*, *Polnoe sobranie russkikh letopisej*, vol. 1..., p. 113.

²² G.G. Litavrin, *Vizantiya i Slavyane*, Aleteia, Sankt-Peterburg 1999, p. 497.

As Yaroslav's actions demonstrated, the metropolitan of Kyiv, when subordinate to the princely will, could serve as a powerful asset to an ambitious Rurikid ruler. This influence was most visible in the formation of the Rus' ecclesiastical hierarchy, since the appointment of bishops fell within the metropolitan's prerogative. Beyond securing his political favor, Rus' princes were also interested in the hierarchy's ability to import sacred texts and liturgical objects essential to the Christianization of the realm. The *Primary Chronicle* offers an example of this. The Rus' source records an instance in which Theodosius of the Caves (d. 1074) received the *Typicon* of the Studite Monastery from a monk named Michael, a member of Metropolitan George's entourage. This text enabled Theodosius to transplant the Byzantine cenobitic rule to Rus'.²³ The acquisition of such texts demonstrates that the presence of a well-connected metropolitan was an important factor in the spread of the Christian faith in Kyivan Rus', a matter of considerable importance to the Rurikid princes.

Correlations Between Metropolitan Journeys to Kyiv and Rurikid Arrivals in Byzantium

In 1090 Yanka (d. 1112) was sent by her father, Vsevolod Yaroslavich (1030–1093), to Constantinople to escort Metropolitan Ioann III to Kyiv. As Talia Zajac has noted,²⁴ Yanka's status as a nun, together with her ancestry, likely played a role in her appointment as an envoy to Byzantium. She was the daughter of Vsevolod and his Byzantine spouse, the so-called "Greek Tsarina,"²⁵ who was related to Emperor Constantine IX Monomachos (d. 1055).²⁶ Rus' sources note that Metropolitan Ioann III was a eunuch, a status that suggests his close ties to the imperial court.²⁷ It nevertheless remains uncertain whether Ioann's tenure brought any substantive political changes, since he died shortly after arriving in Rus'.

An account from 1104 mentions the marriage of an unnamed daughter of Prince Volodar Rostislavich of Przemyśl to Isaac Komnenos (1093–after 1152), the son of Emperor Alexios I Komnenos (1048–1118). This marriage coincided with the wedding of the Byzantine heir to the throne, John II Komnenos (1087–1143), to the Hungarian princess Piroška (d. 1134) in 1104. The formation of a Byzantine–Hungarian alliance was intended to draw Hungary away from its alliance with the Norman prince Bohemond (c. 1080s–1134), who was preparing an expedition against the Empire in 1104.²⁸ The marriage of Vo-

²³ A.E.N. Tachiaos, *The Greek Metropolitans of Kievan Rus'...*, pp. 438–440.

²⁴ T. Zajac, *The Social-Political Roles of the Princess in Kyivan Rus', ca. 945–1240*, [in:] *A Companion to Global Queenship*, ed. E. Woodacre, Arc Humanities Press, Leeds 2018, p. 135.

²⁵ *The Primary Chronicle*, *Polnoe sobranie russkikh letopisej*, vol. 2..., p. 104; *The Primary Chronicle*, *Polnoe sobranie russkikh letopisej*, vol. 1..., p. 112.

²⁶ A. Kazhdan, *Rus'–Byzantine Princely Marriages in the Eleventh and Twelfth Centuries...*, pp. 416–417.

²⁷ A.E.N. Tachiaos, *The Greek Metropolitans of Kievan Rus'...*, p. 433.

²⁸ F. Makk, *The Árpáds and the Comneni: Political Relations between Hungary and Byzantium in the 12th Century*, transl. G. Novák, Akadémiai Kiadó, Budapest 1989, p. 14; P. Stephenson,

Table 1. Examples of the correlations between the arrivals of Kyivan metropolitans in Rus' and Rurikid journeys to Byzantium.

Quotation	English Translation
[6598 (1090)] В се лѣто иде Їнѣка [в Греky дщи] Всеволожа . наре ^а наа пре ^к . [и] приведе Їнѣка митрополита Івана . скопчину югоже [видѣвше] людѣе вси рекоша . се намъ пришесть . ѿ года бо до года пребывъ оумре . бѣ же се мужъ [не] книженъ . но оумомъ простъ . и просто рещи ^a	[6598 (1090)] In this year, Yanka, the above-mentioned daughter of Vsevolod, went to Greece. She brought back the Metropolitan John [Ioann], a eunuch, and when the people saw him, they exclaimed, “A ghost has come.” After staying a year in Kiev, he too died. He was not a learned man, but frank and simple in character. ^b
В лѣтѣ $\overline{x}$ $\overline{s}$. $\overline{x}$ $\overline{v}$. [6612 (1104)] Ведена дщи Володарева за цревичъ за Шлесиничъ . Цѣрюгороду . мѣца июлиа въ . $\overline{k}$ [...] . том же лѣтѣ . приде митрополитъ Никиѳоръ в Русь . мѣца . дека ^б . въ . $\overline{s}$. днѣ . [...] . того ^к . мѣца . въ . и ^и . Никиѳоръ митрополитъ на столѣ посаженъ ^c	[6612 (1104)] The daughter of Volodar' was taken to Tsar'grad on July 20 to become the wife of the son of the Emperor Alexius [...]. In the same year, on December 6, the Metropolitan Nicephorus arrived in Russia. [...] On the eighteenth of this month, the Metropolitan was elevated to the throne. ^d
В лѣто $\overline{x}$ $\overline{s}$ х $\overline{l}$ [6630 (1122)] Ведена Мъстиславна въ Грѣky за црѣ и митрополитъ Никита приде изъ Грѣкы [...] ^e	[6630 (1122)] In the year 6630. Mstislavna was led [in marriage] to the Greeks, to the Tsar [Emperor], and Metropolitan Nikita arrived from the Greeks [...] ^f
В лѣто $\overline{x}$ $\overline{s}$ х $\overline{li}$ [6638 (1130)] [...] Мъстиславъ . Полотський кнзѣ съ женами и с дѣтми . въ Грѣky . еже преступиша хрестъное челоование томъ же лѣтѣ престависа [...] В лѣто $\overline{x}$ $\overline{s}$ х $\overline{lo}$ [6639 (1131)] [...] томъ лѣтѣ приде митрополитъ Михаилъ ^g	[6638 (1130)] [...] Mstislav [sent/exiled] the Polotsk princes with their wives and children to the Greeks, because they had violated the kissing of the cross. In that year [6639 (1131)] Metropolitan Michael arrived. ^h

^a *The Primary Chronicle, Polnoe sobranie russkich letopisej*, vol. 1: *Lavrent'evskaya letopis'*, Izdatel'stvo Akademii Nauk SSSR, Leningrad 1926, p. 146, https://imwerden.de/pdf/psrl_tom01_lavrentjevskaya LETOPIS_1926.pdf (access: 21.03.2026).

^b *The Russian Primary Chronicle Laurentian Text*, transl. S.H. Cross, O.P. Sherbowitz-Wetzor, Mediaeval Academy of America, Cambridge, MA 1953, p. 170.

^c *The Primary Chronicle, Polnoe sobranie russkich letopisej*, vol. 1..., p. 196.

^d *The Russian Primary Chronicle Laurentian Text*..., p. 202.

^e *Kyivan Chronicle, Polnoe sobranie russkich letopisej*, vol. 2: *Ipat'evskaya letopis'*, Imperator'skaya Arkheograficheskaya Komissiya, Sankt-Peterburg 1908, pp. 199, https://imwerden.de/pdf/psrl_tom02_ipatjevskaya LETOPIS_1908.pdf (access: 21.03.2026).

^f My translation. *Kyivan Chronicle, Polnoe sobranie russkich letopisej*, vol. 2..., p. 199.

^g *Kyivan Chronicle, Polnoe sobranie russkich letopisej*, vol. 2..., p. 204.

^h My translation. *Kyivan Chronicle, Polnoe sobranie russkich letopisej*, vol. 2..., p. 204.

Iodar's daughter to Isaac Komnenos therefore formed part of a broader strategy to secure Byzantium's northeastern frontier against the nomadic Cumans

(Polovtsians), who had recently been defeated by Alexios I Komnenos.²⁹ These alliances enabled Byzantium to avoid a two-front war during its conflict with the Normans.

When considering the temporal coincidence between the princess's departure for Constantinople and the metropolitan's arrival in Kyiv, it is essential to note that Volodar did not rule Kyiv; at that time, the city was ruled by Sviatopolk Izyaslavich (1050–1113). The two rulers had recently been adversaries. After 1097, Sviatopolk attempted to seize the domains of Volodar Rostislavich and his brother, Vasilko (d. 1124), but was defeated by them at the Battle of Rozhne Field.³⁰ Although Rus' sources remain silent about the relationship between Volodar and Sviatopolk in 1104, the metropolitan's arrival in Kyiv following the marriage of Volodar's daughter suggests the possibility of a diplomatic consensus between the two Rurikids regarding the negotiations over the appointment of the new prelate. This consensus likely extended to the rulers of other principalities, as suggested by the actions of the new Metropolitan Nikifor, who in 1105 consecrated Bishop Amphiloch in Vladimir-Volhynski, then ruled by Yaroslav Sviatopolkovich (d. 1124), Lazar in Pereyaslav, then ruled by Vladimir Vsevolodovich Monomakh (1053–1125), and Mina in Polotsk, then ruled by Rogvolod Vseslavich (d. 1128).³¹ While Polotsk was a newly established eparchy, the others belonged to the group of bishoprics founded during the reign of Yaroslav Vladimirovich (c. 978–1054) in the 1050s. The simultaneous consecration of these bishops suggests that their sees may have remained vacant for some time. It is therefore plausible that the marriage of 1104 was part of a broader political arrangement concerning the filling of episcopal vacancies and the elevation of the new see in Polotsk.

In 1122, Irene, the daughter of Mstislav Vladimirovich (1076–1132), was married to Alexios Komnenos (1106–1142), the son of John II Komnenos (1087–1143). This marriage was likely part of the peace settlement that concluded the Rus'–Byzantine war, during which the Kyivan ruler Vladimir Vsevolodovich Monomakh, the grandfather of the princess sent to Constantinople, had attempted to seize the Byzantine cities along the Danube.³² According to Gennady Litavrin, the Rus'–Byzantine conflict of 1116–1122 resulted from Rus' having lost Tmutarakan, an important trading port on the Black Sea, by the end of the eleventh century.³³ Having lost his foothold in Crimea and the

²⁹ M. Meško, *Alexios I Komnenos in the Balkans, 1081–1095*, Palgrave Macmillan, Cham 2023, pp. 347–350; L. Voytovych, *Ruś Halicka a Bizancjum od XI do XIV wieku. Wybrane problemy*, "Prace Historyczne" 2011, no. 138, pp. 42–43.

³⁰ *The Primary Chronicle, Polnoe sobranie russkikh letopisej*, vol. 2..., pp. 169–170; *The Primary Chronicle, Polnoe sobranie russkikh letopisej*, vol. 1..., pp. 188–189.

³¹ *Kyivan Chronicle, Polnoe sobranie russkikh letopisej*, vol. 2..., p. 178; *The Primary Chronicle, Polnoe sobranie russkikh letopisej*, vol. 1..., p. 196.

³² *The Primary Chronicle, Polnoe sobranie russkikh letopisej*, vol. 2..., pp. 196–197.

³³ Tmutarakan' is last mentioned in the Rus' sources under the year 1094, when Oleg Sviatoslavich (d. 1115) departed from this city for Chernihiv. For further discussion of the strategic importance of Tmutarakan' for both Rus' and Byzantium, see J. Shepard, *Closer Encounters with the Byzantine World: The Rus at the Straits of Kerch*, [in:] *Pre-Modern Russia and Its World: Es-*

Sea of Azov, Vladimir Vsevolodovich Monomakh redirected his expansionist efforts toward the Danube delta. As Gennady Litavrin rightly observed, the war was not merely a frontier dispute, but had a significant political dimension. Specifically, Monomakh, who was of imperial descent through his mother, initially supported a pretender claiming to be Leo Diogenes (d. 1087), the son of Emperor Romanos IV Diogenes (d. 1072). His opponent in the conflict was Alexios I Komnenos, who had himself ascended the throne as a usurper in 1081.³⁴

Unlike the circumstances of 1104, when the initiative originated with the prince of Przemyśl, the events of 1122 directly involved the Kyivan ruling elite, represented by Vladimir Vsevolodovich Monomakh and his son Mstislav. The fact that a Byzantine metropolitan arrived in Rus' in the same year the Rus' princess departed for Constantinople suggests that his selection and arrival were components of the peace negotiations between the two parties.

The final example concerns exile to Byzantium. In 1129, the prince of Kyiv, Mstislav Vladimirovich, launched an invasion of the Principality of Polotsk, whose rulers had refused to support him in his campaign against the Cumans (Polovtsians). As a result of the incursion, Mstislav captured David Vseslavich (d. after 1129), Rostislav Vseslavich (d. after 1129), and Sviatoslav Vseslavich (d. after 1129), together with their families, as well as the kinsmen of Gleb Vseslavich (d. 1119) and Rogvolod Vseslavich (d. 1128). These Polotsk Rurikids were subsequently exiled to Constantinople by the Kyivan prince. Irene, Mstislav's daughter and the wife of Alexios Komnenos (1106–1142), was already present in the capital. As a living embodiment of Kyiv's interests in Constantinople, the princess may have influenced the continued detention of the exiles and may have hindered any attempt by the emperor to use the Polotsk princes as political leverage against Kyiv. Eight years after Mstislav's death, in 1140, only the sons of Rogvolod Vseslavich, Vasilko and Ivan, returned to Rus'.³⁵

Rus' primary sources attest three separate instances of exile to Byzantium. In 1079, Oleg Svyatoslavich (d. 1115) was banished to the Byzantine Empire during the reign of Nikephoros III Botaniates (d. 1082). Following the accession of Alexios I Komnenos in 1081, the new emperor facilitated Oleg's return to Rus'. By 1083, the prince had returned to Tmutarakan', where, with Polovtsian support, he waged war against Vladimir Vsevolodovich Monomakh.³⁶ A second instance occurred in 1129, with the exile of the aforementioned Rurikids of Polotsk. Finally, in 1161, the stepmother of Prince Andrei Yuryevich of Vladimir (d. 1174), together with his half-brothers, was exiled to Byzantium. These half-brothers were Mstislav (d. after 1161), Vasilko (d. after 1161),

says in *Honor of Thomas S. Noonan*, ed. K.L. Reyerson, Harrassowitz Verlag, Wiesbaden 2006, pp. 15–78; A. Siwko, *Between Rus', Byzantium, and the Nomads: Tmutarakan' in the Narrative of the Russian Primary Chronicle*, "Studia Ceranea" 2023, vol. 13, pp. 75–96.

³⁴ G.G. Litavrin, *Vizantiya i Slavyane...*, pp. 505–506.

³⁵ *Kyivan Chronicle*, *Polnoe sobranie russkikh letopisej*, vol. 2..., p. 211.

³⁶ *Ibidem*, p. 136; *The Primary Chronicle*, *Polnoe sobranie russkikh letopisej*, vol. 1..., pp. 142–143; G.G. Litavrin, *Vizantiya i Slavyane...*, pp. 500–503.

and Vsevolod Yuryevichi (d. 1212). Emperor Manuel I (1118–1180) reportedly granted Vasilko rule over four towns along the Danube, while Mstislav received the realm of “Ускалана.”³⁷ Of these exiled princes, only Vsevolod eventually returned to Rus', where, following Andrei's death, he contested the succession in the Principality of Vladimir-Suzdal.³⁸

Conclusion

Several factors help explain why the arrival of the metropolitans of Kyiv in Rus' frequently coincided with broader Rus'–Byzantine diplomatic exchanges. Foremost among these were the logistical constraints and security risks posed by the Cumans (Polovtsians). Any journey between Rus' and the Byzantine Empire required traversing the western Pontic steppe, specifically the regions surrounding the mouths of the Danube and Dnieper, which were controlled by various Cuman factions. Although these nomads occasionally allied with regional Rurikid princes, they remained a persistent threat, as evidenced by the devastating raid of 1096, when Khan Boniak sacked Kyiv. Throughout the twelfth century, Rus' rulers launched numerous military campaigns against the Cumans in an effort to weaken their nomadic enemies. To reduce the risk of diplomatic missions falling prey to the Cumans, religious, matrimonial, and political affairs were probably combined into a single, well-protected embassy. Such arrangements were also shaped by practical considerations: Rurikid princesses probably did not travel alone, but with servants, clergymen, and baggage trains. A military escort was therefore required for the journey to Constantinople,³⁹ and the same retinue could then be used to conduct a new metropolitan safely to Kyiv.

An examination of Rus'–Byzantine relations in the eleventh and twelfth centuries reveals that negotiations concerning dynastic marriages in some cases overlapped with other important matters, such as ecclesiastical appointments. A Rurikid princess at the Byzantine court served not only as a means of securing peace and consolidating alliances, but also as an instrument of internal political maneuvering, facilitating, for instance, the exile of inconvenient relatives. This is exemplified by the events of 1129, when Mstislav Vladimirovich banished the Polotsk Rurikids to Byzantium, then ruled by co-emperor Alexios Komnenos (1106–1142), the husband of Irene, Mstislav's daughter.

The instances of exile from Rus' to Byzantium outlined in this paper represent a promising subject for further scholarly inquiry. While the banishment of Oleg Svyatoslavich in 1079 has been discussed in the existing literature, it has seldom been analyzed together with the subsequent exiles of 1129 and 1161. A comparative study of these cases could help determine whether unwritten

³⁷ *Kyivan Chronicle, Polnoe sobranie russkikh letopisej*, vol. 2..., p. 358.

³⁸ S. Franklin, J. Shepard, *The Emergence of Rus 750–1200...*, p. 348.

³⁹ C. Raffensperger, *Reimagining Europe: Kievan Rus' in the Medieval World, 988–1146*, Harvard Historical Studies, Cambridge, MA 2012, p. 64.

rules existed between Kyiv and Constantinople regarding the political exile of troublesome pretenders to the throne. Did Byzantium serve as a place of political isolation that allowed Rus' princes to avoid the fratricide strictly condemned by the Church while effectively neutralizing their rivals? Such research could also reveal how Emperors Nikephoros III Botaniates, Alexios I Komnenos, and Manuel I Komnenos used these exiles as leverage against the ruling princes of Rus', maintaining pretenders as a latent threat of "restoration" should Kyiv prove disobedient. Furthermore, the example of 1161 shows Vasilko receiving towns along the Danube and Mstislav being granted the realm of "Ŭскалана." Future analysis should clarify whether these exiled Rurikids were actively integrated into the Byzantine provincial administration or subjected to Byzantine rule on some other basis. Finally, the journeys of Kyivan metropolitans to Rus' emerge not only as religious events, but also as significant moments in diplomatic relations between Rus' and Byzantium.

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