

**Charles University
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Bachelor Thesis

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Viking Age Russia and Czech-Russian Contacts in the Early Middle Ages

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I declare that I have prepared my bachelor thesis myself and I have listed all the used sources and literature.

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Abstract

Currently, comprehensive coverage of the medieval period in ancient Russia and contacts with Bohemia present considerable interest. My research practice is based on the analysis of various sources, and the previous historiography, covering more than a century. Many outstanding historians of the 18-21st century such as N.M. Karamzin, V.I. Tatischev, N.I. Kostomarov, P.G. Vinogradov, S. Gedeonov, D. Karlsson, Rand, Cook made a great contribution to the study of the Vikings on the territory of Russia and their economic and cultural influence on the local people. The methodological basis consists of the most important principles of historicism and consistency and ideas about the interdisciplinary nature of humanitarian knowledge. The analytical part involves the analysis of dynastic, cultural, and trade relations between Russians and Czechs. An important research perspective is an extensive analysis of the interrelationships between two ethnicities based on studying practical archaeological sources.

Keywords: Vikings, Russia, Czech, medieval period, interrelations, historiography

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1. Introduction

Currently, comprehensive coverage of the medieval period in ancient Russia and contacts with Bohemia present considerable interest. Vikings played a significant role in the formation and early history of Russia, and the disputes on the Viking influence have been going on for several centuries among historical circles, government, and in broader public circles. Few topics are comparable to this one in terms of interest, number of works, and polemics. At various periods, historians evaluated differently Vikings, and their impact on Russia led to the formation of Norman theory, with its supporters and opponents.

Thus, my bachelor thesis endeavors to clarify the role of Vikings in the establishment of Kievan Rus and its evaluation from the historiographic perspective. Furthermore, it aims to analyze and summarize subsequent connections between Russia and Bohemia in more detail. Hence, it is necessary to study and review the earliest Russian sources on the Vikings dated back to the 10-12th centuries and further historical accounts to elucidate the long-term impact of the Vikings in Russia. The main focus here is the chronicles and narratives published in the 18-19th century that shaped the development of historiography on the Vikings.

The methodological basis of the present paper is determined by its historiographic nature with the application of the principle of historicism that is the scholar's achievements are assessed according to the degree of scientific knowledge in a particular period of time. Critical analysis is the main constituent of any study and is done from the historical-comparative and chronological perspective.

The present paper analyzes several chronicles including Czech, Russian, West-European, and Byzantium chronicles, Scandinavian sagas, and Arabian accounts of traveling to Russia and Europe. The essential principle of consistency, as well as an understanding of the interdisciplinary nature of human knowledge, is a methodological fundamental of my research.

In the first section, we study the Russian primary chronicle in its two main texts, Laurentian and Hypatian, as well as Byzantium and Arab chronicles, old Scandinavian sagas, and runic inscriptions. The presence of Vikings in Russia, the time and reasons for their arrival, as well as the impact and further integration into the Russian state, are important questions to consider. The research's second part is devoted to Czech-Russian contacts in politics, trade, and religion and is based on the analysis of Czech and Latin chronicles and a number of archaeological findings. An important research perspective is an extensive analysis of the

interrelationships between Czechia and Kievan Rus based on studying archaeological sources and Czech, Russian, and West-European chronicles.

Studying the arrival of Vikings in Russia, the research faced several important points: the origin of Kievan Rus and Russian people; the reasons for the Vikings' coming and expanding their presence; the time of their arrival; and the evidence, i.e. archaeological findings, chronicles, letters and other documents that prove their hypothesis. Besides, the different evaluations and interpretations of historical events related to the arrival of Vikings on the Ancient Russian land historians led to the emergence of two directions: Normanists and Anti-Normanists. The research will analyze the key arguments of both theories and reasons for these debates, political motivation, and biases that influenced the acceptance of these theories.

As for contacts between Bohemia and Russia, the research will look into various aspects of connections between countries including the reasons for tight political and trade ties, the impact of Bohemia on Ancient Russia, analyzing the role of religious and spiritual links on the interrelations of both societies and cultural practices. In this paper, we are going to consider these problems from a historiographical perspective.

2. Primary Sources Overview

The present study examines numerous chronicles, written by Russian monks, Scandinavian sagas, Byzantium accounts, and trade treaties with Kievan Rus, as also archaeological findings that were interpreted differently at various times. As it is known Russian Primary Chronicle was the document that was studied by Western and Russian historians, and its biased interpretation became the ground of the debates that have not finished today.

Thus, the document that presents a great interest is the Russian Primary Chronicle, also called “The Tale of Bygone Years” according to the initial words of the text. It describes the events from the establishment of Kievan Rus till the 12th century, describing various ethnicities that inhabited Russian lands. Traditionally, it is believed to be written by Nestor, a Kievan monk, at the end of the 11th-beginning of the 12th century¹. However, since the 19th century, historians have doubted his authorship and chronicle’s homogeneity and started considering the text as a compilation from various chronicles that had been written before Nestor started his writing². The Primary Chronicle is preserved in two main editions: the Laurentian version, dated to 1377 and attributed to the monk Lavrentiy, and the Hypatian version named after the monastery in Kostroma where it was founded in the 15th century.

Further Russian chronicles have their roots in the above-mentioned writings, they were written in minor principalities with diminishing influence of the Kievan princes. However, few such chronicles survived as an independent composition, the Primary Chronicle, being the only significant source of the establishment of Russia, was to become the writing that caused severe debates among historians about the ethnicity of the Rus giving rise to the Normanist theory. Written by monks who witnessed the events, it was thought to provide trustworthy information about Vikings’ arrival and their activities and rule over the Russian lands. Nevertheless, only by analyzing the problem from various sides, studying documents written by Scandinavians, Greeks, and Arabs, and examining archaeological discoveries it is possible to have an objective picture and restore the events that took place in Kievan Rus.

Religious writings constitute another very important group, consisting of Archangel Gospel, Tales of Saint Boris and Gleb, and the Great Menaion Reader, and Tales of Saint Boris and Gleb. The Great Menaion Reader, compiled by Metropolitan Makarius of All Russia in the 16th century. The latter is an especially valuable example of old Russian literature, as it

1 Samuel Hazzard Cross, Olgerd P. Sherbowitz-Wetzor, *Russian Primary Chronicle. Laurentian Text* [translated and edited], (Medieval Academy of America, Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1953), 6.

2 Cross & Sherbowitz-Wetzor, *Russian Primary Chronicle. Laurentian Text*, 3.

contains hagiographies, religious writings, and historical texts. This source enables us to analyze the religious links between Bohemia and Russia.

Scandinavian sagas and runic writings present a considerable interest as they describe how the Vikings penetrated northern Russia, and expanded their influence and rule. Another source worth mentioning is Skaldic poetry, primarily praise songs that were passed orally from one generation to the other, describing historical events and Viking victories.

As for Byzantium texts, the writings of Constantine VII Porphyrogenitus stand out, as the author was a contemporary of the described events. Besides, Byzantium treaties signed between the years 907 and 971 are of historical significance as they show the political and economic situation in Russia. Another valuable primary source written by the witness of the studied historical events is Ibn Fadlan's account, where a famous Arabian traveler and the writer describe Rus's appearance, habits, and rituals.

European chronicles include such important writings as the Chronicle of the Czechs, Annales de Saint-Bertin, writing of Regino of Prum, and Raffelstellen Customs regulations that narrate about the contacts of the Russian, trade, and religious ties, which connected Ancient Russia with Europe, and namely with Bohemia.

The research examines a considerable number of chronicles' anthologies translated into Russian and edited by Djakson due to a good translation into a researcher's native language and convenient classification into West-European, Byzantium, Scandinavian, and Eastern chronicles. Russian Primary Chronicle in Laurentian version is used both in the Russian and English languages, whereas other important chronicles including the Annals of Saint-Bertin and writings of Constantine Porphyrogenitus are cited in their English translation.

As for archaeological findings, they constitute a very important layer, though not many were found so far. The most significant archaeological objects are described in the articles of Hornichkova and Sláma. On the territory of Bohemia, archaeologists found pectoral crosses that were probably made by craftsmen in Russia during the period between 11-12th centuries. Besides, Czech jewelers and artisans might be inspired by Eastern traditions, as their works have elements of crosses of the Kievan Russia origin. Also, in Prague and Olomouc, there were objects supposedly produced from the slate which was mined near Kyiv. Additionally, some pieces of Russian jewelry made of silver, including a necklace, pearls, and a buckle were found in Czechia. These are the evidence of interconnectedness between Czechia and Russia.

Another essential part of the findings relates to examinations of burial, and excavation conducted in Izborsk and the surroundings of Malaren Lake, described in the articles of Noonan, Sedov, and Kylberg. Izborsk findings mostly include primitive handmade pottery and some glass, bronze, and copper plaques that gives evidence about the economic activities and ties with Scandinavia. On the contrary, Malaren's findings are very rich, many artifacts are brought from distant parts of the world, including India and Egypt, indicating that the route from Asia to Scandinavia was going via Russia, and it was prosperous and secure. Other archaeological findings are Scandinavian vessels found in Russian towns along the major trade water route and are described by Sorokin. These discoveries of vessels confirm that the boats were of Scandinavian origin.

3. Secondary Sources Overview

Providing the analysis and interpretation of primary sources, secondary sources constitute a very important part, as well, and can be divided into two large parts. The first group includes works of Russian historians of the 18-20th century who raised the discussion of the Viking problem to a qualitative level. From the 18th century, Russian historians were adherents of either Normanist theory of the establishment of Russia, including such outstanding scholars as Karamzin and Soloviev, and those who had an opposite view, forming a school of Anti-Normanists, started by Lomonosov and followed by Gedeonov, Ilovaisky, and Kostomarov. Considering both positions, the research analyses the interpretation of historical events that were due to political conjuncture.

The second group comprises the works of contemporary Czech scholars among which Sláma and Hornichkova take a special place as they made a huge contribution to archaeological sources related to contacts between Czechs and Russians. Moreover, both countries influenced each other not only in the commercial and political sphere but also spiritually.

Other important Czech authors are Huna

ek and Kolafa who studies Czech-Russian ties and paid special attention to religious contacts. The period of Christianization in Russia and the role of the Czech in this process are clarified in the works of these scholars. Significant research was conducted by Merhautová who studied a Wenceslas helmet, which can help to find ties between Vikings and Czech, as it has elements of Scandinavian origin. Furthermore, the ties between Scandinavian and Czech culture were established by Trestik, who described how Saint Ludmila was assassinated. That essential observation helps to study the connection and inter-influence of Viking Age Russia with Czechia.

The political and dynastic contacts are noteworthy, as they influence spiritual closeness between countries, and this issue was studied by the above-mentioned scholars Sláma, Kolafa, and Huna

ek. One more key study was conducted by Krzemienska whose article clarified the connections between Russian and Czech royal families strengthened by dynastic marriages.

4. Vikings in the History of Russia

4.1 Origin of Ancient Russia. Normanist and Anti-Normanist Schools

The role of Vikings in the unification and establishment of the Russian state has been a topical issue for historians. The explanation of the origin and initial development of the country correlates with the Primary Chronicle but has provoked protests among many scholars.

Mueller-Vollmer and Wolf claim that eastern Sweden was inhabited by the Rus which is proved by the fact that the Finnish name for Sweden is “Ruotsi” which means “those who row”³. However, there is a disagreement between historians about the origin of Ancient Russia which has been going on for more than three hundred years. Adherents of the Normanist school claim that the Rus originated in Scandinavia and later Vikings adopted the Slavic culture. On the contrary, Anti-Normanists argue Russia was founded by Slavic people, and Vikings did not contribute to its historical development. Later, a new idea appeared that it was a multiethnic collection of warrior clans that consisted of Scandinavian, Slavic, Baltic, and Finnic people⁴.

All schools used various archaeological evidence to support their positions and nationalistic views. Most archaeological findings of Scandinavian material culture in Russia were found in Old Ladoga which referred to the 8-9th centuries and in other places from the 10th century, though the earliest finding referred to the 7th century, almost 200 years before Rurik’s arrival.

The primary resources related to the 9-10th centuries demonstrate that the word “Rus” or “Ros” was related to Scandinavians. The first most important manuscript is the Annals of Saint Bertin, considered the oldest document that mentions Russia. It describes the arrival of the Russian emissaries to the Frankish emperor of Franks, Louis I. The chronicle consists of three parts, the second of which narrates about the Russians, and was written by a court chaplain and later bishop Prudentius of Troyes. He was a theologian, but also a knowledgeable and well-informed witness of many events that took place at the royal court⁵. Thus, it is the first trustworthy source of information about the Russians. The annals describe

³Tristan Mueller-Vollmer and Kristen Wolf, *Viking: An Encyclopedia of Conflict, Invasion, and Raids* (ABC-CLIO, 2022), 203.

⁴Mueller-Vollmer and Kristen Wolf, *Viking: An Encyclopedia of Conflict, Invasion, and Raids*, 204.

the events that took place in the year 839, when Greek emissaries, sent by Emperor Theophilus, arrived and were received in Ingulenheim. Among Greek emissaries were Russians, which are described in the chronicle in the following words “some men who said they meaning their whole people [gens]-were called Russians (Rhos) and had been sent to him by their king whose name was the Khagan for the sake of friendship, so they claimed...When the Emperor investigated the reason for their coming here, he discovered that they belonged to the people of the Swedes (Sueones)”⁶. Thus, the annals clearly say that “Rhos” emissaries were “Sueones”, one of the ethnicities that lived in eastern Scandinavia.

The second significant evidence of the Scandinavian presence in Russia is related to Byzantium chronicles and trade treaties since Russian Princes signed several treaties with Constantinople. Many writings are associated with the name of Constantine VII Porphyrogenitus, some of which he inspired or initiated, others he edited or composed. His description of Princes Oleg and Igor’s campaign to Constantinople with further her signing of Russian-Byzantium treaties is very valuable.

The Laurentian Text of the Primary Chronicle describes the events related to the agreement signing with the following words: “We of the Rus’ nation: Karl, Ingjald, Farulf, Vermund, Hrollaf, Gunnar, Harold, Karni, Frithleif, Hroarr, Angantyr, Throand, Leithulf, Fast, and Stenvith, are sent by Oleg, Great Prince of Rus’, and by all the serene and great princes and the great boyars under his sway, unto you, Leo and Alexander and Constantine, great Autocrats in God, Emperors of the Greek, for the maintenance and proclamation of the long-standing amity which joins Greeks and Russes, by the desires of our Great Princes and at their command, and in behalf of all those Russes who are subject to the hand of our Prince”⁷.

The extract includes only Scandinavian names demonstrating that Vikings went to Constantinople, and Greeks they were Russians.

Another significant primary source that contains some essential information about Russia and its people is “Administrando Imperii”, written by Constantine VII Porphyrogenitus in 945. From the historical perspective, it is one of the most important writings, describing the system of relations of the empire with the surrounding peoples with their origin, customs, and natural

⁵*Древняя Русь в свете зарубежных источников. Хрестоматия. Западно-европейские источники. [Ancient Russia in the light of foreign sources. Anthology. West-Europeans sources]*, ed. T.N. Djakson et al., vol. IV, (Moscow, 2010), 17.

⁶*The Annals of Saint-Bertin. Ninth-Century Histories*, translated and annotated by Janet L.Nelson, Vol. 1, (Manchester & New York: Manchester University Press, 1991), 44.

⁷Cross & Sherbowitz-Wetzor, *Russian Primary Chronicle. Laurentian Text*, 65-66.

conditions. The ninth chapter is devoted to Russia giving the overview of traveling from the Varangians to the Greeks with the enumeration of Russian cities, including Novgorod, Smolensk, Chernihiv, Vyshgorod, Kyiv, and Russian Princes Igor and Svyatoslav. The author of the treatise mentions the Dnieper Rapids using both Scandinavian and Slavic names, “At first they come to the first barrage, called Essoupi, which means in Russian and Slavonic “Do not sleep”...When they have passed this barrage. They re-embark the others from the dry land and sail away, and come down to the second barrage, called in Russian Oulvorski, and in Slavonic Ostrovouniprach, which means “the Island of the Barrage”....Similarly they pass the third barrage also, called Gelandri, which means in Slavonic “Noise of the Barrage”, and then the fourth barrage, the big one, called in Russian Aeifor, and in Slavonic Neasit, because the pelican’s nest in the stones of the barrage⁸.

This extract shows that Russian names of the Dnieper Rapids have a Scandinavian origin: the second rapid’s name is “Oulvorski” and consists of two words of the old Scandinavian origin, where “oul” is “island” and “vorski” is “rapids, or waterfall”; the third one is “Gelandri” means “thundering” in the old Swedish, and the fourth one is “Aeifors” is “always impetuous”⁹. Thus, the Greeks perceived Russia and Russian people as Scandinavians, as they used old Swedish words on official documents and important writings intended to be understood by the inhabitants of Russia. Usage of both Slavic and Swedish languages shows that Slavic and Scandinavian people lived in one country, they spoke different languages that were equally used, at least for official writings. Also, the origin of rulers in Russia leaves no doubt.

Furthermore, the main source that was used by historians to have a better understanding of the events was the Russian Primary Chronicle, describing the earliest Rus history. It has several versions, depending on the monasteries where it was written. However, it was compiled much later than the events took place and written not by one person, and rewritten later in many altered versions, often depending on the desires of the ruling Princes.

Besides, major sources include Byzantine chronicles and Arabic writings about encountering the Russians or traveling through Russia, one of the important of which is Ibn Fadlan’s “Journal”, which describes his meeting with the Rus people in the Bulgar Area in Risala. These sources on par with other archaeological evidence inform not only about the time of

⁸Constantine Porphyrogenitus “*De Administrando Imperio*”, translated by R.J. H. Jenkins, 2nd edition, (Washington D.C.: Center for Byzantium Studies, 1985), 59.

⁹*Древняя Русь в свете зарубежных источников. Хрестоматия. Византийские источники [Ancient Russia in the light of foreign sources. Anthology. Byzantium sources]*, 162.

certain events but give an overall picture of the interconnection of the Slavic and Scandinavian cultures.

In the Russian Primary Chronicle Varagians appeared in 859 on Russian land where they demanded tribute from Slavic and Finnic tribes. In the year 862, Rurik took over Old Ladoga and built Novgorod. However, some historians, for instance, Tatischev, argued that chronicles were not sufficient to have full research. He started gathering letters, archives, and chronicles from monasteries and Old Believers, even making his classification into “local” and “general” chronicles¹⁰.

Hence, studying various sources, it was Lomonosov, the first Russian scholar, who argued that Varagians were Slavs who lived on the Baltic coast and along the bank of the Neman River, which part is called Russe¹¹. He made a famous speech at the Academy of Science where he opposed followers of the Scandinavian theory by German academicians Muller and Baer, arguing that eastern Slavs are the true founders of the Russian state.

Lomonosov had many supporters, the brightest of whom is Gedeonov who continues this theory in his famous book “Varagians and Russe”, proving the Slavic origin of Russia. He argued that Baltic Slavs were dominating at the time much earlier than Normans arrived in Western Europe. They were these eastern Slavs who gave the name Russe to Vikings¹².

Ilovaisky in his research on the origin of Russia, whilst considering Vikings as Normans, regards the Primary Chronicle as a fairy tale, underlining that Vikings had no role in the establishment of the Russian state, which was developed naturally between the Don and the Dnieper. The people who inhabited that area were Slavs, Scythians, and Sarmatians. Their state power and government had no foreign intervention but developed naturally¹³. Ilovaisky refers to the Annals of Saint-Bertin, where the people called “Russes” were also mentioned¹⁴. He sees the primordial existence of Russia in the area of the Azov and Black Seas, hence the Black Sea got the name “Russian”.

¹⁰Matvei Kuzmitch Lyubavsky. *Русская история от древности до конца XVIII века*, [Russian History from Ancient Times to the End of XVIII Century], (Moscow: Academicheskii Proekt, 2015), 104-122.

¹¹Matvei Kuzmitch Lyubavsky, *Лекции по древней русской истории до конца XVI века* (Lectures on the ancient Russian history until the end of the XVI century), (Saint-Petersburg: Lan', 2002), 130.

¹²Stepan Alexandrovich Gedeonov, *Отрывки из исследований о варяжском вопросе* [Extracts from the research of the Varagian question], (Saint-Petersburg, 1862), 2.

¹³Dmitriy Ivanovich Ilovysky, *Становление Руси* [The Establishment of Russia], (Moscow: Astrel, 2003), 44.

¹⁴*Annales de Saint-Berlin*, [23], p. V-XIV; Quellen, [106], 1-4.

Lubavsky summing up the research of Anti-Norman scholars assumes that according to the Annals of Saint Bertin of and Life of Stephan Surozhsky, both written in the IX century, the name “Russe” was mentioned. He interprets this fact as evidence that the Vikings arrived much earlier than the Primary Chronicle states. As another proof of the Norman origin of Russia, Lubavsky mentioned the names of the first Russian princes, Hroerekr, Signiutr, Thorvard, Helgi, and Ingwarr, which are typically Scandinavian names. These are also the names mentioned in the agreements with the Greeks and runic monuments around the lake of Malara in Sweden¹⁵.

The history of Russia cannot be simplified to the fact that Scandinavians arrived in Novgorod which was the beginning of the history of Vikings in Russia. Vernadsky compares Anti-Normanists with Don Quixote’s travelings but admits that they made a great contribution to the study of Russian history, as they rightly assumed that Scandinavians come to Russia much earlier than the Normanists thought¹⁶. Vernadsky argues that there was no ethnicity of Russes in Scandinavia, or no locations with names of Russian origin, except one of the Swedish province, Roslagen. However, it is debatable that this name was brought by Vikings after military campaigns to Russia¹⁷.

4.2 The Primary Chronicle about the Origin of Russia

“The Tale of Bygone Years”, written by a monk of the Kievo-Pechersk monastery Nestor, is the earliest surviving chronicle dating back to the turn of the 11-12th centuries. It is based on Russian songs, oral stories and fragmentary written documents, and observation of Nestor. The exact year is unknown, but there are several speculations about it. Historian Shakhmatov considers that the basic part of the chronicle was created in 1037, and then it was supplemented with new data from different chronicles. He spent much time constructing the original text of the chronicles, suggesting that a certain original text was later rewritten into several versions, but eventually concluded that the alterations in the text were the work of Nestor.

¹⁵Lyubavsky, *Лекции по древней русской истории до конца XVI века [Lectures on the ancient Russian history until the end of the XVI century]*,137.

¹⁶Georgiy Vladimirovich Vernadsky, *История России. Древняя Русь {History of Russia. Ancient Russia}*, (Moscow: Arraf, 1996), 285.

¹⁷Vernadsky, *История России. Древняя Русь {History of Russia. Ancient Russia}*, 285-286.

Platonov argues that the Primary Chronicle is a fusion of legends and extracts from Byzantium chronicles. Though the legend says that Nestor was the first chronicle writer, the text was rewritten many times in different towns, in Kyiv, Novgorod, Pskov, and Suzdol, and the original text was added by the description of local events¹⁸.

Another famous historian Vernadsky argues that without another significant historical document, it is impossible to consider the narrative absolute truth. Indeed, a certain chain of events took place, that were recorded by the monk, but it is impossible to be sure about the precise dates¹⁹.

The chronicle covers the history of the Russian state from the moment of origin of Slavs who were said to be descendants of one of Noah's sons to the beginning of the Rurik dynasty. The chronicle written between 1100-1112 partially did not correspond to the interests of Vladimir Monomakh who ascended the throne in 1113 and was commissioned to compose a new edition of the well-known work.

Thus, appeared the second edition of the chronicle, dated 1116, and the third edition, dated 1118, preserved until today as part of the chronicle of monks Lavrentiy and Ivpatiy. The oldest surviving version, known as Laurentian redaction, was written much later and dates back to 1377, attributed to the monk Lavrentiy, who wrote it for Prince Dmitriy Konstantinovich of Suzdal. In the middle of the 15th century appeared a Hypatian redaction, which was copied at Pskov²⁰.

Soloviev suggested that the chronicle about the Vikings' invocation was first written without the dates and years, which were added later²¹. Laurentian Chronicles says:

They said to themselves, "Let us seek a prince who may rule over us and judge us according to the Law." They accordingly went overseas to the Varagian Russes: these particular Varangians were known as Russes... The Chuds, the Slavs, the Krivichians, and the Ves then said.., "Our land is great and rich, but there is no order in it. Come to rule and reign over us". They thus selected three brothers, with their kinfolk, who took with them all the Russes and

18Sergei Federovich Platonov, *Учебник русской истории [Russian History Textbook]*, (Saint-Petersburg: Nauka, 1993),18.

19Georgiy Vladimirovich Vernadsky, *Начертание русской истории [The Outline of Russian History]*, (Saint-Petersburg: Lan', 2000), 56.

20Cross & Sherbowitz-Wetzor, *Russian Primary Chronicle. Laurentian Text*, 4.

21Sergei Mikhailovich Soloviev, *История государства Российского [History of the Russian State]* Book 2, volume 3-4, (Moscow, 1993), 118.

migrated. The oldest, Rurik, located himself in Novgorod; the second, Sineus, at Beloozero; the third, Truvor, in Izborsk. On account of these Varagians, the district of Novgorod became known as the land of Rus'. The present inhabitants of Novgorod are descended from the Varagian race²².

Karamzin evaluates these words as simple, brief, and strong, and the desire to invite Vikings as rulers as an unprecedented act, but also reasonable and right. The historian was convinced that Vikings were much more educated than Slavs or Finns due to their sea travel and close connections with Western Europe. Vikings could make the life of slaves better, introducing laws, and ruling fairly without oppression and violence²³. Vikings agreed to rule the people who could fight for freedom but failed to rule themselves.

Karamzin also mentions four candidates for this position, one of whom was Polyany near Kyiv, another a Slav from the Danube, the third from Khazars, and finally, from the Western region of the Baltic²⁴. Vernadsky, on the other hand, proposes that Novgorod Slavs might be desiring to overthrow Vikings and invited other Varagian warriors to fight Vikings who settled in Kyiv.

Soloviev suggests Slavs were weak as they were scattered on a huge territory and unable to unite immediately and defend their territory due to its huge size, absence of big towns, and centralized leadership. Vikings, on their part, were tempted to have an easier trade route via the Dniepr River and the Black Sea and eventually to Greece, where they could trade, rob, or serve the Greek emperor. Besides, southern lands and especially Greece with Constantinople with its magnificent buildings and gardens, palaces, and emperors' court seemed very attractive to them. So, Rurik came with his brave warriors, who could fight with Slav enemies, later joined by some brave and strong Slavs, and settled there²⁵. Lubavsky ascribes Vikings a significant role in uniting the eastern Slavs since they manifested organizational performance and managed to integrate various people under their rule²⁶.

²²Cross & Sherbowitz-Wetzor, *Russian Primary Chronicle. Laurentian Text*, 60.

²³Karamzin, *Предания веков [Tales of the Ages]*, 64-65.

²⁴Karamzin, *Предания веков [Tales of the Ages]*, 83.

²⁵Sergei Mikhailovich Soloviev, *Иллюстрированная история России [An Illustrated History of Russia]*, (Moscow: Russkoe Slovo, 1997), 7-8.

²⁶Lyubavsky, *Лекции по древней русской истории до конца XVI века [Lectures on the Ancient Russian history until the End of the XVI Century]*, 138.

On the other hand, Harris and Ryan argue that the translation of the Chronicle is not very precise and the correct words would be: “Our land is vast and fertile, but we have no ruler”. That means that the Slavs wanted a smart and intelligent governor who knew the local laws, i.e. a Slav, who would defend the country and be a fair judge²⁷. The scholars also point out that Rurik was a Slav, a grandson of their last ruler Gostomysl. Having two brothers, he was also the most suitable as people had three legitimate rulers for important areas.

Further on, Nestor in his Primary Chronicle narrates that two other boyars not from Rurik’s kin were granted permission to go to Tsar’grad with their families, and on their way, they saw a small town, Kyiv, where they settled.²⁸ Yet, the idea of going to Tsar’grad was not leaving them, and eventually, they undertook a military campaign with two hundred boats that appeared to be a complete defeat. Nestor states that the reason for this unsuccessful campaign was a wonder, the Virgin’s sacred vestment was dipped into the sea leading to the storm that confused and broke the boats²⁹.

Karamzin sees this event as an impulse to convert to Christianity, as the storm was seen as Heaven’s fury³⁰. The emperor, unable to fully defeat the Russes, negotiated peace, by giving them expensive gifts, gold, silver, and silk clothes, as well as sending a bishop, who converted them to Christianity. Since Vikings and Slavs have different confessions, Viking princes did not make obstacles to the new faith, understanding its benefits for the state, and closer spiritual ties between Vikings and Slavs. Princes Rostislav, Svyatopol, and Kotsel even asked Emperor Michael to send them teachers to interpret the holy scripture, as Slavs could understand neither Greek nor Latin. So, Methodius and Constantine were commissioned to come, they composed the new Slavic alphabet and translated the Gospels³¹.

Nestor does not describe the further action of Rurik in Novgorod, but in those days, to rule meant to conquer. Karamzin assesses Rurik as the first ruler of Russia, whose name is immortal in history as he managed to annex Finns to Slavs, adopting Slav’s customs,

27Zena Harris and Nonna Ryan, *The Inconsistencies of History: Vikings and Rurik.* New Zealand Slavonic Journal 38 (2004): 105–30. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/40922182>, 113.

28Cross & Sherbowitz-Wetzor, *Russian Primary Chronicle. Laurentian Text*, 60.

29Cross & Sherbowitz-Wetzor, *Russian Primary Chronicle. Laurentian Text*, 60.

30Karamzin, *Предания веков [Tales of the Ages]*, 68.

31Архангельское Евангелие 1092. Исследования. Древне-русский текст. Словоуказатели. [*Archangel Gospel 1092. Researches. Old Russian Text. The word guide*] edited by G.V. Aksenova et al, (Moscow: Skriptorii, 1997), 63.

language, and faith³². Vernadsky calls him “an adventurer and a pirate from the North”³³, who restored the order in the North of Russia, but was not interested in expansion to the South, as the Russians hoped. Being unable to help Russian merchants, he was not against the expedition to the south in Kyiv, which was successfully besieged by Russians. Platonov considers Rurik a semi-fairy since almost no evidence was preserved about him. He also mentions that a certain number of people were against him and an uprising headed by Vadim the Brave took place. It was suppressed and those in opposition escaped to Kiev to Asold and Dir³⁴. Soloviev commends Rurik for his great contribution to the establishment of Russia, as a country, underlining that he had many obstacles, but little help. He emphasizes Rurik’s achievements in founding and building new towns, fair ruling, and defending his people³⁵.

Conquering of new lands was continued by Rurik’s son Igor and especially by his guardian Oleg, who defeated Asold and Dir and proclaimed Kyiv as “the mother of Russian cities”³⁶. Nestor describes also a glorious victory of Oleg over Greek, when the latter had to pay tribute and had several preferences for Russian traders in Tsar’grad. The text of this agreement of 911, kept in Kyiv, was included in the chronicle.

Vernadsky assesses this campaign as a final stage of the establishment and consolidation of the Varagian-Russian state, based on the Dniepr trade route, a Viking route to the Greeks. Platonov also mentions that Kyiv became the center of the country and Oleg managed to throw off the yoke of khazars and strengthened his country by erecting towers in the east and building new towns³⁷.

Since that time Kyiv was called “Russian land”, as “Rus” was probably the name of some Viking retinue³⁸. Platonov suggests the word “Rus” denoted Vikings-Swedes, which explains why the chronicler uses the expression “Varagians-Rus”. Though initially only educated Vikings were called Russian, later, as Slavs joined Vikings’ squads, the word “Rus” gradually

32Karamzin, *Предания веков [Tales of the Ages]*, 69.

33Georgii Vladimirovich Vernadsky, *Русская история [Russian History]*, (Moscow: Agraf, 1997), 35.

34Platonov, *Учебник русской истории [Russian History Textbook]*, 20.

35Soloviev, *Иллюстрированная история России [An Illustrated History of Russia]*, 1.

36Cross & Sherbowitz-Wetzor, *Russian Primary Chronicle. Laurentian Text*, 61.

37Platonov, *Учебник русской истории [Russian History Textbook]*, 21.

38Vernadsky, *Начертание русской истории [The Outline of Russia History]*, 55.

meant also Slavs and their country. Similarly, the Russian language was the language of the Normans, but not Slavs³⁹.

The Hypatian Chronicle recounts the same text almost identically to Laurentian, but at the same time contains several discrepancies. The Laurentian text says that the Russians is a member of the multi-tribal entity among which are the Chuds, the Slavs, the Krivichians, and the Ves, who invited the Vikings, although before this it says that the ambassadors “drove back beyond the sea”⁴⁰. According to the Hypatian text, Rurik chose not Novgorod, but Ladoga as his stronghold⁴¹.

Tatishev studies also the Yakimov Chronicle which was later lost, but can be studied through his book “History of Russia”, where he argues that Rurik, in the ninth generation of Russian rulers, was a grandson of the last ruler Gostomysl⁴². This is also confirmed by the Novgorod Chronicle, which was never published, as it contradicts the Russian Primary Chronicle. Harris and Ryan explain that Nestor wrote his Chronicle in Kyiv and described the events there. Besides, though ethnically people from Kyiv and Novgorod were the same, politically, they were different. That is the reason why Nestor did not consider Rurik to be Rus, as Kyiv was Rus, whereas Novgorod people were not⁴³. The scholars continue their search to find that in the XVI century, Grand Prince Basil III compiled a genealogy of the Moscow princes, where Rurik was seen as a descendant of a mythical Prince Pruss, a brother of Emperor Augustus. This legend suited the interests of Ivan the Terrible, who was dreaming of royal status and strengthened the myth. The monks, writing the chronicle at that time would never go against the ruler and added to Nestor’s text that Rurik with his brothers came from Germany and that they were Varagian founders⁴⁴. 200 years later this version of Nestor’s chronicle became the basis for the Normanist theory.

4.3 Recent Discoveries on the Origin of Russia

39Platonov, *Учебник русской истории [Russian History Textbook]*, 20.

40Cross & Sherbowitz-Wetzor, *Russian Primary Chronicle. LaurentianText*, 59.

41Ипатьевская летопись [Hypatian Chronicle]. *The Complete Collection of Russian Chronicles*. Volume 2. (Saint-Petersburg, 1908), 4.

42Vasilii Nikitich Tatishev, *Русь Домосковская. История Российская во всей ее полноте [Pre-Moscow Russia. A Concise History of Russia]*, (Moscow: Algoritm, 2013),177.

43Harris & Ryan. *The Inconsistencies of History: Vikings and Rurik*, 114.

44Полное собрание русских летописей, *Ипатьевская летопись [The Concise collection of Russian Chronicle. Hypatian Chronicle]*, (Moscow, 1998), 9.

Besides, new resources about the origin of Russia and its development are discovered that shed more light on the events that took place in that region. Harris and Ryan argue that some were falsely convinced that Slavs were primitive forest dwellers civilized by Vikings, who have been literate since 1800 BC and had a written history, sophisticated laws, and a democratic form of government⁴⁵. It became known after the discovery of the chronicle, book of Veles, which was written by shamans in Slavic Runes in the IX century, and Hymn of Boyan, written in the IV century. This precious chronicle was accidentally founded by Ali Izenbek, a white army officer, during the Russian civil war in the Prince Donskoy-Zakharzetsky estate library and brought to Belgium where it was studied by historian Mirolubov. During the Nazi occupation of Belgium, these runic tablets were confiscated and might still be in German archives.⁴⁶

Yet, the copies of the runic tablets were kept and published by White Russian general Kurenkov between 1953 and 1959 in the magazine “Fire-Bird” in the USA. That chronicle firmly confirms the opinion of Lomonosov, entirely rejecting the Normanist theory. However, some scholars continue supporting this theory, such as Wooding who published his book “The Viking” saying that Russia was colonized by Vikings, who established new trade routes and got tribute and various goods from the Slavs⁴⁷. Yet, flourishing trade was going on before the arrival of the Vikings.

Hence, it is possible to assume that interpreting historical events may be a tool of political manipulation. Harris and Ryan argue that Slavic history has been distorted over the last 1000 years, depending on who was writing it⁴⁸. Christian monks were the first historians who wanted to erase all pagan rituals, customs, and events. Later, the rulers wanted to add or obliterate the facts to justify or glorify themselves. For instance, Peter the Great’s ambition was to modernize and westernize Russia, so he invited many foreign specialists among whom was a German scholar Schlotzer. He was the one who devised a Normanist theory, though his knowledge of the Russian and Church Slavonic was very limited. In his book “Russische Annalen in ihrer Slawonischen Grundsprache” Schlozer describes the Slavs as “people without leadership, living like beasts and birds”, having no towns and no contacts, wild,

45Harris & Ryan. *The Inconsistencies of History: Vikings and Rurik*, 105.

46Harris & Ryan. *The Inconsistencies of History: Vikings and Rurik*, 107.

47Jonathan Wooding, *The Vikings*, (Lansdowne, 1997), 21.

48Harris & Ryan. *The Inconsistencies of History: Vikings and Rurik*, 109.

boorish, and isolated⁴⁹. This position was supported by other scholars, the most famous of whom are Beier and Miller, whose backgrounds and interests correlated with a certain interpretation of history, i.e. that Scandinavians belonged to a Germanic tribe and that the Rus and its culture were created by Germans⁵⁰. All of them ignored the fact that the Viking's word for Novgorod Rus was "Gardariki", which means "Land of Towns"⁵¹.

4.4 Reasons for Vikings' Penetration

Another important and very debatable issue is the reasons for Viking penetration far inland Russia. Apparently, in 800 Russian territory was much poorer than Western European countries such as France or England, for instance. They had prosperous cities and a large number of monasteries full of various treasures. Noonan argues that the high volume of coinage is the indicator of richness, which was very numerous in England⁵². The route that Vikings used was from the Gulf of Finland, river Neva, lake Ladoga, and Ilmen, and further on rivers the Volga and Dniepr to Greece. That part of the land could boast neither a favorable climate nor environment but had only dense forests, marshes, and swamps. Overall, the environment was not hospitable: on the one hand, it was home to insects, beasts, and reptiles; forests were full of predators, and rivers were hard for navigation due to portages, on the other very few people inhabited that land. There was only one town of Old Ladoga around 800 on the bank of the Volchov River.

Noonan states that to assess the economic position of the land, it is necessary to examine burial, which is potential evidence of how the economy functioned. Sedov conducted such a study and found out that 70% of ski, a burial mound, had no artifacts, whereas the remaining 30% contain very poor artifacts, such as handmade primitive pottery, and some glass, bronze, and copper plaques⁵³. On the contrary, Kyhlberg sees on the Swedish land, in the surrounding of Lake Malaren, many much more expensive and unusual artifacts also taken even from

49August Ludwig Schlozer *Russische Annalen in Ihrer Slavonischen Grund-sprach*, (Creative Media Partners, 2018), 22.

50Harris & Ryan. *The Inconsistencies of History: Vikings and Rurik*, 110.

51Harris & Ryan. *The Inconsistencies of History: Vikings and Rurik*, 116.

52Thomas S .Noonan, *the Nature of Medieval Russian-Estonian Relations*, 850-1015, *Baltic History*, (Columbus, Ohio, 1972), 13-20.

some distant parts of the world, such as a statue of Budha from Kashmir, Coptic bronze cup from Egypt, or other artifacts from Europe⁵⁴.

Other important evidence of the Scandinavian activity is sagas, which describe them before the Viking age started: Yngvar, “King of Sweden” raided the Eastlands, and Ivar perished on the Karelian coast. Kendrick argues that Sweden possessed a tax-paying dependency in Kurland⁵⁵. Vernadsky supports this position and says that Swedish kings had possessions in Kurland during the 8th century⁵⁶.

Even though some scholars, such as Jones and Sawyer did not consider sagas as a trustworthy source of information and believed that they were pure fantasy, Noonan sees the truth somewhere in the middle. As archaeological artifacts were unearthed in the southeastern part of the Baltic, it is possible to assume that regular Scandinavian activity was the basis for relations with Northern Russia. Davidan studied excavations in Old Ladoga and found such findings as leather shoes, toy swords, wooden toys, and glass and mosaic beads⁵⁷. All this is the evidence of Scandinavian presence in Old Ladoga and their permanent residency in that city.

Sorokin studies archaeological findings of Scandinavian vessels, and Viking boats in the medieval layers of Russian towns along the main inland water routes connected with the Baltic between the middle of the VIII century to the early XI century, which indicated the development and spread of early boatbuilding tradition.

Constantine VII Porphyrogenitus describes Rus traveling by boat saying “...partly dragging their “monoxyła”, partly portaging them on their shoulders, they convey them to the far side of the barrage; and then, putting them on the river and loading up their baggage, they embark

53Valentin Vasilievich Sedov, *Некоторые итоги раскопок в Изборске [Some Excavation Results in Izborgsk] // Северная Русь и ее соседи в эпоху раннего средневековья [Northern Russia and its Neighbours in the Time of Early Middle Ages]*, Intercollegiate book ed. A. Stolyar (Leningrad, Leningrad University publishing, 1982), 24.

54Ola Kyhlberg, *Chronological and Topographical Analysis of the cemeteries and settlements*, in : Kristina Lamm et al, *Excavations at Helgo: the Ancient Monument*, (Stokholm, 1982), 24-28.

55Thomas Kendrick, *A History of Vikings*, (Dover Publications, 2004), 190.

56George Vernadsky, *Ancient Russia* (New Haven 1943), 266.

57Davidan O. I. *К вопросу о контактах древней Ладоги со Скандинавией (по материалам нижнего слоя Староладожского городища)*, [On the Question of the Contacts of Ancient Ladoga with Scandinavia (based on the materials of the lower layer of the Old Ladoga settlement)] in: *Skandinavskijsbornik 16* (Tallin, 1971) 134.

themselves, and again sail off in them ...”⁵⁸ The description shows how the Rus were sailing through hard Dnieper Rapids and what they were like.

The low-lying areas with fast-flowing rivers linking towns with the sea and lined by wood required flat-bottomed vessels necessary for the transportation of people and cargo to overcome obstacles on rivers and lakes. Iron rivets from the middle of the VIII century were found in Old Ladoga and bast ropes of the X century were discovered in Novgorod⁵⁹.

Furthermore, Price et al argue that Old Ladoga was a trading center and melting point of local Russians, Slavs, and Scandinavians. The authors examined such archaeological evidence as isotopic analysis of strontium in human tooth enamel that matched the Malaren region of east-central Sweden⁶⁰. Undoubtedly, DNA provides reliable information compared to archaeological evidence which can be exchanged, copied, or stolen.

Noonan argues that Vikings persisted in penetrating deeper inland due to the search for Islamic silver coins that were used for trade between Arabs and Khazars. Also, the tribute to Khazars was paid in dirhams by eastern Slavs on the Dniepr. They exchanged fur and forest products in dirhams to Islamic merchants with the center in Novgorod which was the concentration of early dirham hoards. Hence, Old Ladoga played a key role in the movement of Islamic dirhams from Russia to the Baltic states. Besides, Baltic Slavs were also attracted by Islamic silver and traveled to the interior of Russia to find the source of silver⁶¹. Finally, by 839 the Vikings reached Constantinople, and the route between Eastern Europe to Greece was eventually found.

Ambrosiani adds that Russia was a mediator of Islamic objects to Western Europe. Since most of the silver coins were found on the island of Gotland, it is possible to assume that merchants from that area were especially active in trade with Khazars and Arabs. Raw materials, such as fur and amber from the Baltic Sea and Taiga region, and walrus tusks from the Arctic Sea were going to the east. Besides, around the year 900, Rurik and his successors expanded the area of control towards the south and east, taking over the Khazar taxation area. According to Ibn Fadlan’s description, the burial of a Nordic merchant was found at Bulghar,

58 Constantine Porphyrogenitus “*De Administrando Imperio*”, translated by R.J. H. Jenkins, 61.

59 Pavel Sorokin, *Viking Boats in Medieval Russia from Written and Archaeological Evidence*. *Archaeonautica*, (21), 2021, 375.

60 T.D. Price, V. Moiseyev, & N. Grigoreva, *Vikings in Russia: Origins of the Medieval Inhabitants of Staraya Ladoga*. *Archaeological and Anthropological Sciences*, 11(11), 2019, 6095.

61 Thomas Noonan, *Why the Vikings First Came to Russia*. *Jahrbücher für Geschichte Osteuropas*, 34(3), 1986. 323.

and Greek chronicles mention Russian merchants in Baghdad from the mid-800-s and the Russian assault of Constantinople in 860⁶². This evidence indicates that the trade connection between Vikings, Greeks, and Arabs was built and developed.

4.5 Eastern Primary Sources of Russian-Viking Contacts

It is also necessary to study Middle-Eastern sources that may illuminate many historical events in Eastern Europe. Hraundal argues that in medieval Arab historical and geographical literature there were numerous speculations about whether Rus people were Scandinavians or Slavs, suggesting that though the Rus in Kyiv were mostly Slavic people with a Scandinavian element, which diminished by the end of the 10th century, the majority of the Rus people who lived in the Volga Caspian region were Vikings, traders, and warriors, who integrated with locals by the beginning of the 11th century⁶³.

Seippel, Fraehn, and Kmosko collected, translated, and published several Arabic sources related to Vikings in the XIX beginning of the XX century. Arab sources portray the Rus as groups of people engaged in fur and slave trade and raid, having military and martial skills, highly unlikely to aspire to establish a unified political entity, as the Russian Primary Chronicle suggests.

Ibn Fadlan describes Slav culture as well-advanced in the early 8th century, having well-organized trade⁶⁴. This source is very reliable as it was written at the time when the events took place, though could be biased in the description of the non-muslim lands. In his “Journal,” Ibn Fadlan describes the appearance of the Bulghar Rus same as Vikings including their clothes, weapons, jewelry, religious beliefs, funeral rites, and their addiction to drink. He describes the Rus merchants as “perfect physical specimen-tall as date palms, blond and ruddy, carrying an axe, a Frankish-Type sword, and a knife, having tattoos, and drinking wine

62 Bjorn Ambrosiani, and Phyllis Anderson Ambrosiani. *Birka and Scandinavia's Trade with the East* Russian History, vol. 32, no. 3/4, 2005, pp. 287–96. JSTOR, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/24663264>. Accessed 30 Mar. 2023, 290-291.

63 Thorir Jonsson Hraundal, *New Perspectives on Eastern Vikings/Rus in Arabic Sources*. Viking and Medieval Scandinavia 10 (2014): 65–98. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/48501881>, 66.

64 *Путешествие Ибн-Фадлана на Волгу, [Ibn-Fadlan's journey to the Volga]* ed I.Y. Krachkovsky (Moscow; Leningrad: Publishing House of the Academy of Sciences of the USSR, 1939, 62-65.

excessively day and night”⁶⁵. His accounts are among the most well-studied, as he witnesses many various aspects of the Rus life, but also open for further interpretation.

One of the most well-known episodes that shows the religious practices of the Rus is the so-called “Angel of Death” when a slave woman was sacrificed at the funeral of her owner. Various scholars offer different interpretations of this ritual, and it is still quite ambiguous. Hraundal argues that Ibn Fadlan’s account of a Rus funeral has some similarity to the “Ynglinga Saga”⁶⁶, dated to the 13th century, which says that the dead is burned together with their possessions to enjoy wealth in the afterlife⁶⁷. “Kjalnesinga Saga” describes human sacrifices, when men and animals were sacrificed for people’s gratification⁶⁸. Another example of human sacrifices can be found in Price’s account of two women who were burnt with other burial offerings in southern Norway⁶⁹. There is some similarity between this Scandinavian ritual and the funeral account described by Ibn Fadlan. However, Sass and Warmind argue that the name “angel of death” is never found in the Old Norse literature, but is either Ibn Fadlan’s interpretation of what he saw or the name used by the Rus⁷⁰. On the other hand, Schjodt states that the Rus lived in the Volga region for several generations and already assimilated and spoke the language of the Rus and acquired the Slavonic traditions⁷¹. So, even though there is some resemblance to Scandinavian customs, such as the incineration of the ship during the funeral, other details refute it. For instance, the herb basil was used for embalming, but it was never used in Scandinavia, as it was known in Europe only in the 16th century⁷². Also, the strangling of the slave girl may be related to the burials of Scythian kings, described by Herodotus, and the special treatment of the slave girl in the ritual passage to become a master’s official wife, can be traced to similar rituals in ancient Greece⁷³.

65Amin Tibi, *The Vikings in Arabic Sources*, Islamic Studies 35, no. 2 (1996): 211–17.
<http://www.jstor.org/stable/20836943>, 215-216.

66 Hraundal, *New Perspectives on Eastern Vikings/Rus in Arabic Sources*, 81.

67 Lee M. Hollander, *Heimskringla: History of the Kings of Norway* (Austin, University of Texas Press for the American-Scandinavian Foundation, 1964), 11-12.

68 Johannes Halldorsson, *Kjalnesinga saga*, (Reykjavik, 1959), 9.

69 Neil Price, *Dying and the Dead*, in the *Viking World* ed. Stefan Brick (London: Routledge, 2008), 266.

70 Tina Sass, and Morten Lund Warmind, *Mission Saqaliba*, Chaos 11, 1989, 159.

71 Jens Schjodt, *Ibn Fadlan’s Account of a Rus Funeral: To What Degree Does It Reflect Nordic Myths?* In *Reflections on Old Norse Myths*, ed. Pernille Hermann, Jens P. Schjodt, and Rasmus T. Kristenses, Studies in Viking and Medieval Scandinavia 1, Turnhout: Brepols, 2007, 133.

72⁷¹ Timothy Taylor, *The Buried Soul. How Humans Invented Death* (London: Beacon, 2002), 177-178.

73 Hraundal. *New Perspectives on Eastern Vikings/Rus in Arabic Sources*, 85.

Thus, it is possible to assume that Ibn Fadlan's description of the burial rituals is not a Scandinavian tradition, which means that Scandinavians adopted Slavic culture. Hraudal studied this ritual and concludes that it is necessary to view this ceremony as a commonplace for a certain time and place rather than referring it to a uniform culture⁷⁴.

Hence Arabic sources give a detailed and vivid insight into the cultural, economic, and political life of the Scandinavian Rus in the 9-10th centuries, though they distinguish between Rus in the Kyiv and Caspian-Volga regions. The extent of the mobility of these groups requires further research which is possible by taking into consideration the potential of the Arabic sources.

a. Byzantium Primary Sources about Russian-Viking Contacts

One of the earliest primary resources about Russia is related to the 7-8th centuries and was written by Theophanes the Confessor. Special attention must be paid to the episode describing Russian ships and the Byzantium fleet. During the military campaign of Constantine V, he used the fleet of Russian ships, which are described in the chronicle as "rubea", that is "red"⁷⁵. The red color is a typical color of Russian ships, according to Russian epics. Thus, the red color, associated with Russia, should be interpreted that Russian ships were used. The described events took place in 773, meaning that the presence of Vikings and their interaction with Byzantium was many years before the first Rurik came to Novgorod which laid the foundation of the Russian state.

Other sources that clarify Scandinavian influence are the writings of Constantine VII Porphyrogenitus and Rus-Byzantium treaties signed in 907, 912, 945, and 971 AD, which were preserved as a part of Primary Chronicles in different versions, though Shakhmatov argues that the treaty of 907 is not authentic. There is no original copy of these treaties, but Slavic versions are translated from the Greek language by Bulgarian translators, as they are full of bulgarisms⁷⁶. These documents show that there was no sole ruler in the Russian Land,

⁷⁴Hraudal, *New Perspectives on Eastern Vikings/Rus in Arabic Sources*, 91.

⁷⁵MGH, *Scriptores*, I, 434. in Vernadsky, *История России. Древняя Русь [History of Russia. Ancient Russia]*, 286.

⁷⁶Petr Stefanovich, *The Political Organization of Rus' in the 10th Century*, *Jahrbücher Für Geschichte Osteuropas* 64, no. 4 (2016): 529–44. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/44113526>, 532.

as it was called by Greeks, but a group of princes or boyars, the word appearing in the treaties. Stefanovich distinguishes twenty-five territorial entities headed by princes, who thought it was inappropriate for them to go to Byzantium for signing the treaty and sent their envoys and messengers there⁷⁷. Thus, power did not reside in one person, or even a dynasty, or a clan. Though the chronicle is centered around the Rurik, as one possible legitimate authority, the political situation in those days might be more multi-centric⁷⁸. Indeed, Constantinople considered Kyiv to be the capital of the Rus, and probably its rulers owned more cities and were privileged in taxing the vessels going via the Dnieper.

Constantine VII Porphyrogenitus describes Olga's visit saying that she came with her relatives and her servants, ambassadors and merchants, and the reception was according to the accepted rules⁷⁹.

Thus, Constantine's account of Olga's visit mentions Kyev's vassals and even their servants, which means that Kyiv Rus had a hierarchical structure. It included the ruling nobility, their vassals, who were often sent as envoys, and their servants⁸⁰.

But there were many other cities along the Dnieper, such as Chernihiv, and Vyshgorod, which were fortified. It gives evidence that the cities were strong and well-developed military and trade centers. Besides, the Byzantium treaties state the names of envoys and merchants, most of whom had Scandinavian names, showing that the political elite was predominantly Norse. Moreover, many burial mounds on the outskirts of Chernihiv include Scandinavian burials⁸¹. The local nobility were the chieftains who controlled a relatively small region, which was a common feature of both Scandinavia and Rus in the X century. However, after Vladimir, the word prince was only used to refer to the descendants from the Rurik dynasty, when the whole political organization of Rus changed.

4.7 Old Nordic Primary Sources about Russian-Viking Contacts

⁷⁷Stefanovich, *The Political Organization of Rus' in the 10th Century*, 538.

⁷⁸Tolochko, A.P. *Очерки начальной Руси, [Essays of Primary Russia]*, (Kiev, Saintt-Peterburg, 2015), 307-314.

⁷⁹*Древняя Русь в свете зарубежных источников. Хрестоматия. Византийские источники [Ancient Russia in the light of foreign sources. Anthology. Byzantium sources]*, ed. T.N. Djakson, 143-144.

⁸⁰Stefanovich, *The Political Organization of Rus' in the 10th Century*, 540.

⁸¹Franklin S., Shepard, J. *"The Emergence of Rus", 750-1200*, London, New York, 1996.

Old Scandinavian primary sources, which include runic writings and sagas, represent rich material for a better understanding of the penetration of Vikings in the North part of Russia and their further expansion. Eighteen runic writings mention “Gardar” which is a word that denotes “Russia”, or the word “Holmgaror” which means the town of Novgorod⁸². For instance, Laddersta, written in the XI century reads “austr I Garda”⁸³, describing the trip of Arnfast to Russia. There are stones dated to the XI century with runic writing saying that Vikings died in Russia, including “Turinge Kyrka”, which says “fial I arrestaust I Gordum”⁸⁴. These stones were established by družina or retinue of the perished Viking warrior. The inscription on another stone “Hastugan” says that fiurir made a monument for his father, who was renowned for his honors, graciousness, and generosity⁸⁵. This writing is a description of a nobleman who was probably a Viking leader. Some inscriptions like “Veda” gives details about the dead Viking, narrating that Erinmund got much wealth in Russia and then acquired a village⁸⁶.

Another important primary source about Vikings in Russia is Skaldic poetry which is poems that were transmitted orally from one generation to the other, most of which are praise songs. The origin of some sagas may be found in Skaldic verses that narrate various historical events and Vikings’ victories. Some verses may be related to a sort of love lyrics, including “Lausavisur” which narrates about Olav Haraldsson’s secret love to Ingigerd, a bride of Yaroslav the Wise, who is giving to her Ladoga as a wedding gift, in the following words⁸⁷. Another lyrical verse from Saga about Harald Sigurdarson narrates about his unrequited love to Yaroslav’s Wise daughter Ellisif, or Elisabeth⁸⁸. Thiodolf Arnorsson composed a poem about Harald Sigurdarson where he describes the participation of Vikings in Yaroslav and

82Древняя Русь в свете зарубежных источников. Хрестоматия. Древнескандинавские источники [Ancient Russia in the light of foreign sources. Anthology Old Scandinavian sources], ed. T.N. Jakson et al., volume V (Moscow: Ruskii Fond Sodeistviya Obrazovaniyu i Nauke, 2009), 37.

83Древняя Русь в свете зарубежных источников. Хрестоматия. Древнескандинавские источники [Ancient Russia in the light of foreign sources. Anthology Old Scandinavian sources], ed. T.N. Jakson et al, 37.

84Древняя Русь в свете зарубежных источников. Хрестоматия. Древнескандинавские источники [Ancient Russia in the light of foreign sources. Anthology Old Scandinavian sources], ed. T.N. Jakson et al, 37.

85Древняя Русь в свете зарубежных источников. Хрестоматия. Древнескандинавские источники [Ancient Russia in the light of foreign sources. Anthology Old Scandinavian sources], ed. T.N. Jakson et al, 37.

86Древняя Русь в свете зарубежных источников. Хрестоматия. Древнескандинавские источники [Ancient Russia in the light of foreign sources. Anthology Old Scandinavian sources], ed. T.N. Jakson et al, 38.

87Древняя Русь в свете зарубежных источников. Хрестоматия. Древнескандинавские источники [Ancient Russia in the light of foreign sources. Anthology Old Scandinavian sources], ed. T.N. Jakson et al, 62.

88Древняя Русь в свете зарубежных источников. Хрестоматия. Древнескандинавские источники [Ancient Russia in the light of foreign sources. Anthology Old Scandinavian sources], ed. T.N. Jakson et al, 65.

Mstislav military campaign against the Polish⁸⁹. Thus, all these short extracts testify to the Vikings' presence in Russia and describe their activities.

“History of Norway” is another significant primary source written in Latin about Norwegian rulers, containing narratives about the Vikings' campaign to Russia and their life there. The author of this historical work is unknown, although some scholars suggest that it might be a priest who compiled several sources such as “Gesta Hammaburgensis ecclesiae”, “Ynglingatal”, and hagiography of Ari the Wise around the year 1170.⁹⁰

The chronicle narrates events related to the childhood of Olaf Tryggvason, a future king of Norway, who found refuge in Russia since his mother was afraid for his life and sent him with his tutor away first to Sweden and then to Russia. On the way to Russia via Estonia his tutor was killed, but the boy was ransomed by some kinsman, who at that time had just been sent to Estonia by the king of Russia to collect tribute, and he was brought to Novgorod where he spent his childhood⁹¹. When he was almost 12 years old, in the market, he met and courageously avenged his tutor⁹². So, the chronicle shows that Russia was a safe place to stay for Vikings, they could find their support and protection.

Furthermore, the Saga about Olaf Tryggvason clarifies that a tribute collector was commissioned by Prince Vladimir to go to Estonia⁹³. It shows that Vikings, who resided in Russia, were collecting tribute from neighboring lands, Estonia, in particular, and also their main activities were in Novgorod, though Noonan argues that Prince Vladimir sent Sigurd to Estonia with a mission to recruit new warriors for the Prince's army⁹⁴.

Olaf Haraldsson and his son Magnus the Good were other famous Vikings who stayed in Russia for a long time and were warmly welcomed. Deprived of his possessions, Olaf usually

89Древняя Русь в свете зарубежных источников. Хрестоматия. Древнескандинавские источники [Ancient Russia in the light of foreign sources. Anthology Old Scandinavian sources], ed. T.N. Jakson et al, 66.

90Древняя Русь в свете зарубежных источников. Хрестоматия. Древнескандинавские источники [Ancient Russia in the light of foreign sources. Anthology Old Scandinavian sources], ed. T.N. Jakson et al, 69.

91 Древняя Русь в свете зарубежных источников. Хрестоматия. Древнескандинавские источники [Ancient Russia in the light of foreign sources. Anthology Old Scandinavian sources], ed. T.N. Jakson et al, 69.

92⁹²Древняя Русь в свете зарубежных источников. Хрестоматия. Древнескандинавские источники [Ancient Russia in the light of foreign sources. Anthology Old Scandinavian sources], ed. T.N. Jakson et al, 70.

93Древняя Русь в свете зарубежных источников. Хрестоматия. Древнескандинавские источники [Ancient Russia in the light of foreign sources. Anthology Old Scandinavian sources], ed. T.N. Jakson et al, 97.

94T. Noonan, *Why the Vikings First Came to Russia*, 17-18.

wintered with his numerous fleet in Russia⁹⁵. Besides, Saga about Magnus the Good narrates that Olaf sent his son Magnus to Yaroslav the Wise and his wife Ingigerd where the boy found refuge, was honored, and brought up with love and respect⁹⁶.

Also, there are sagas about ancient times, the so-called “Fornaldarsogur”, which appeared at the end of the XII century. These anonymous sagas are based on oral tales, ancient northern legends, and travelers’ accounts with the occasional addition of fictional elements. Although some sagas describe non-existent fairy lands, others describe a historically real route from Sweden to Russia and coincide with certain historical events and deserve consideration.

Yngvars and Orvar Odds Sagas are especially noteworthy in the context of contacts between Vikings and Russian people. Yngvars Saga narrates about Yngvar’s travelings and undertaking military campaigns. Despite containing some folklore elements, it may be considered a reliable primary source due to the discovery of stones with runic inscriptions which coincide with historical events⁹⁷. For instance, saga the says about the marriage between Yaroslav the Wise and Ingigerd⁹⁸. Then follows a description of the Vikings’ help at the request of Ingigerd to Yaroslav the Wise against Kyiv Prince Svyatopolk Vladimirovich and victory over him⁹⁹. Hence, Vikings were a part of the Prince’s retinue, and Kievan, or Novgorod Princes awarded them lavishly for their participation and military support against their enemies. It can also be confirmed by the subsequent description of Ingvar’s stay in Russia with Yaroslav the Wise, which says that Ingvar spent three winters at Yaroslav’s royal court, learned many languages, and explored the river route¹⁰⁰. Staying at Yaroslav’s the Wise court for three years shows that Ingvar must have served in the retinue of the Prince. Moreover, being blessed by the bishop, demonstrates that he was an honorable guest. Hence, the above-mentioned extracts show that Vikings served in the Prince’s army, participated in Russian military campaigns, and collected tribute from the conquered lands.

95 *Древняя Русь в свете зарубежных источников. Хрестоматия. Древнескандинавские источники [Ancient Russia in the light of foreign sources. Anthology Old Scandinavian sources]*, ed. T.N. Jakson et al, 70.

96 *Древняя Русь в свете зарубежных источников. Хрестоматия. Древнескандинавские источники [Ancient Russia in the light of foreign sources. Anthology Old Scandinavian sources]*, ed. T.N. Jakson et al, 142.

97 *Древняя Русь в свете зарубежных источников. Хрестоматия. Древнескандинавские источники [Ancient Russia in the light of foreign sources. Anthology Old Scandinavian sources]*, ed. T.N. Jakson et al, 244.

98 *Древняя Русь в свете зарубежных источников. Хрестоматия. Древнескандинавские источники [Ancient Russia in the light of foreign sources. Anthology Old Scandinavian sources]*, ed. T.N. Jakson et al, 245.

99 *Древняя Русь в свете зарубежных источников. Хрестоматия. Древнескандинавские источники [Ancient Russia in the light of foreign sources. Anthology Old Scandinavian sources]*, ed. T.N. Jakson et al, 246.

100 *Древняя Русь в свете зарубежных источников. Хрестоматия. Древнескандинавские источники [Ancient Russia in the light of foreign sources. Anthology Old Scandinavian sources]*, ed. T.N. Jakson et al, 247.

“Orvar-Odds saga” is another important writing which contains significant information about Russian towns and their rulers. It is debatable when this saga was written: DeVries argues that it was written between 1265 and 1275¹⁰¹, Simek and Palsson attribute it to the second half of the 13th century¹⁰², and Kroesen believes that it might have even been written at the turn of the 13-14th centuries¹⁰³. Generally, the main narrative of the saga is about Viking Oleg who became a ruler of Novgorod. The saga enumerates old Russian towns, including Kyiv, Suzdal, Murom, and Rostov, with their rulers. Becoming the ruler of Novgorod, Odd died from the snake’s bite, which was predicted to him earlier¹⁰⁴. The tale of the prophecy which came true is also described in the Primary Chronicle, where the author writes that Prince Oleg died from the snake’s bite¹⁰⁵. Thus, it is possible to conclude that both narrations are based on the same events that took place in Novgorod.

Thus, Scandinavian sagas narrate the events that took place in Russia, often coinciding with Russian primary sources, giving a detailed description of Vikings’ arrival, presence, and rule in the main Russian cities.

4.8 Conclusion

There is no more debatable issue in the Russian historiography that the origin of Russia and its people. Opposite opinions on that problem caused the appearance of two schools: Normanists and Anti-Normanists, where the former argue that the Rus were Scandinavians who arrived in the northern part of Russia, expanded their influence, and started ruling the established country. It is conventionally considered that Vikings came to Russia between the years 750 and 1050, “settled permanently and became part of what came to be called the Rus state”¹⁰⁶ as the *Oxford Illustrated History of the Vikings States*.

This traditional interpretation of the events is based on the Russian Primary Chronicle where the monk Nestor writes about the invitation for the Vikings to come and rule Russia. It is

101J. DeVries 1967, *Altnordische Literatur Geschichte*, Berlin, 1964-67, B. I-II, 2, Aufl, 296.

102Simek, Hermann Palsson, *Lexicon der Altnordischen Literatur*, (Stuttgart, 1987), 265.

103R. Kroesen, *Orvar-Odds Saga* (MSE,1993), 744.

104Древняя Русь в свете зарубежных источников. Хрестоматия. Древнескандинавские источники [Ancient Russia in the light of foreign sources. Anthology Old Scandinavian sources], ed. T.N. Jakson et al, 265.

105Повесть временных лет [The Tale of Bygone Years], ed. V.P. Andrianova-Peretz, Texts, translation and commentaries by D.S.Likhachev, (Saint-Petersburg, 1996), 156.

106 *The Oxford Illustrated History of the Vikings* ed. by Peter Sawyer, (Oxford University Press, 1997), 134.

supported by other primary resources such as the Annals of Saint Bertin, the oldest manuscript mentioning the Russians, who came to Emperor Theophilus as a part of the Greek delegation. Besides, Russian-Byzantium treaties mention the names of only Scandinavian origin, proving that the Rus were Vikings.

In Russia, the 18th century was the time when the West-European culture was worshipped by the imperial government which invited scientists, architects, engineers, and designers from Germany, Italy, and France. Besides Peter I death in 1725, started the turbulent period of palace coups, when the throne was occupied by successors who were brought up under the influence of the West. Describing this time, Danilevsky wrote that with the death of Peter, the German influence, which had been given such a huge advantage, did not cease to grow, so that in Anna's time one could doubt whether the Russian national character would disappear, whether it would completely erase from the Russian state, whether the Russian people would not turn into a tool, into a material means for German purposes¹⁰⁷.

Hence, this theory of the origin of The Russian state was very convenient and suited the government of Anna Ioannovna, a Russian Empress, who surrounded herself with German nobility. Coming from Courland, she brought many Germans with her to the royal court, where they occupied almost all top government positions, headed by Biron, her favorite. This time in the history of Russia is even called "The Age of Biron".¹⁰⁸ At that time Bayer, a German historian and one of the first academicians of Saint-Petersburg Academy of Science, and later Miller and Schlotzer put forward the Normanist version of the establishment of the Russian state. This interpretation justified the presence of Anna Ioannovna's German favorites who were hated by the Russian nobility.

Lomonosov was the first scholar who challenged the Normanist idea of humiliating the Russian national identity accusing Miller of biased arguments, saying that it was inexcusable to call arguments unreliable if they contradicted his opinion¹⁰⁹. On the one hand, patriotic feelings, on the other, distortion of the historical fact, inspired Lomonosov to study chronicles and propose a new hypothesis. His famous Anti-Normanist theory about eastern Slavs who

107 Nikolai Yakovlevich Danilevskiy, *Россия и Европа. {Russia and Europe}*, ed. by O. Platonov, (Moscow, Institute of Russian Civilization, 2008), 402-403.

108 Mini Curtiss, *A Forgotten Empress: Anna Ivanovna and Her Era*, (New York: Frederick Unga Publishing Company, 1974), 72.

109 Mikhail Vasilievich Lomonosov, *Полное собрание сочинений, [Complete Works]*, vol. 6, (Moscow-Leningrad, 1950), 20.

founded Ancient Russia found many followers among whom the most well-known historians are Gedeonov, Ilovaisky, and Kostomarov.

Yet, another part of historians ignored Lomonosov's arguments including Karamsin, who wrote that his fatherland was weak and scattered into many regions before the Vikings' arrival¹¹⁰. Being a monarchist, Karamzin supported the idea of a strong and unified state, which he believed was strengthened by the rule of Vikings.

Besides, the first half of the 19th century was a period in historiography when there were more adherents of the Normanist theory which was an official version of the establishment of the country. Russia was an absolute monarchy, and the historical process was interpreted as a result of the rulers' governing. Besides, on the one hand, chronicles were interpreted literally without critical analysis, on the other, German influence in science contributed to the interpretation, which flattered German national feelings. Also, it should be taken into consideration that many Russian tsars were ethnically Germans from the Holstein-Gottorp dynasty starting with Peter III who became a Russian emperor in 1761¹¹¹.

However, in the second part of the 19th century, the situation changed, and the Normanist theory started losing its popularity. The reason for that was the emergence of Slavophilism, a new philosophical movement that rejected the Western European path and put forward the doctrine of Russian exclusivity based on old Slavic routes. Indeed, the Anti-Normanist theory better suited a new doctrine created by Khomyakov and Kireyevsky.

After communists seized power in 1917, the new socialist state had to make up its version of historical events to meet the ideology of an emerging country. Soviet historians, including Grekov and Rydzevskaya, abandoned the Normanist theory and created their interpretation according to the Marxist concept. Rydzevskaya argues that the emergence of Russia is a natural process and a consequence of socio-economic shifts within feudal society¹¹².

At the start of the cold war, the ideological situation changed and required a new interpretation: a historical explanation of the Western harmful influence, and justification of the Russian self-sustainability and priorities of the Russian society. Anti-Normanist

110 Nikolai Mikhailovich Karamsin, *История государства Российского [History of Russian State]*, book 1, vol. 1, (Rostov-on-Don, 1995), 104.

111 *Советская историческая энциклопедия [Soviet Historical Encyclopedia]*, edited by E.M. Jukov, volume 4, (Moscow: Academy of Science of the USSR, 1963), 666.

112 E.A. Rydzevskaya *Древняя Русь и Скандинавия IX-XIV века [Ancient Russia and Scandinavia IX-XIV centuries]*, (Moscow: Nauka, 1978), 133.

interpretation in its simplified form suited the interests of the communist society. Mavrodin, Tretyakov, and Rybakov were governmental supporters of the convenient theory. Rybakov was an especially ardent opponent of the Normanists saying that there is no such theory or hypothesis, but only an Anti-Russian political doctrine¹¹³. However, some historians suggested their interpretation among whom was Artamonov, an archaeologist and a director of a well-known museum “Hermitage” in Saint Petersburg. He suggested that Ancient Russia united the Northern Scandinavian part and the Southern Slavic part, underlining that Vikings did not cause the process of state formation, they incorporated into that process and made it quicker¹¹⁴.

Today, the Anti-Normanist interpretation is relevant, as Putin’s regime requires historical justification of his aggressive policy and ideology where a self-sufficient Russia is threatened by the West. Though such Kremlin ideologists like Dugin suggest that Russia has its path in development, its mission is the unification of Slavic people, admitting that at the foundation of ancient Russia foreign warriors established their rule over peaceful Slavs¹¹⁵.

As for Western historiography, the Varagian problem became more discussed in the 20th century, especially by those historians who left Russia after the Revolution of 1917 including Vernadsky, Taube, and, Pashkevich, who were definitely Normanists on par with Danish Slavist Stender-Peterson and Swedish archaeologist Arne. As for adherents of the Anti-Normanist theory, Lowmianski argued that the Ancient Russian state already existed, when at some period the rulers were of Scandinavian origin¹¹⁶. Other Anti-Normanists were predominantly Russian scholars who lived in immigration. Lesnoy argued that Vikings could not play any essential role in the history of Russia since there is almost no information about these events in Latin chronicles¹¹⁷. Ilyin suggests that Varagians belonged to a certain ethnicity called Rus, and if they were Vikings, they would force the Slavs to use their language, which did not happen¹¹⁸.

113 Boris Alexandrovich Rybakov, *Киевская Русь и Русские княжества. IX-XII века [Kievan Rus and Russian Principalities]*, (Moscow, 1982), 296.

114 Краткие сообщения о докладах и полевых исследованиях института истории материальной культуры, [Short reports on the reports and field studies of the Institute for the History of Material Culture], vol. 4, (Moscow: Academy of Science, 1940), 12.

115 Alexander Geljevich Dugin, *Геополитика России, [Geopolitics of Russia]*, (Moscow: Gaudeamus, 2012), 138, 140, 143.

116 Henryk Lowmianski, *Русь и норманы, [Russia and Normans]*, (Moscow: Progress, 1985), 204.

117 Sergei Yakovlevich Lesnoy, *Откуда ты Русь, [Where you are Rus from]*, (Moscow, 1995), 33.

Thus, the Primary Chronicle was interpreted differently, from a trustworthy source of information, like Karamzin to a legend, or a fairy tale, according to Ilovaisky, depending on the political beliefs. However, considering the Scandinavian and Byzantium chronicles, it is possible to conclude that these texts confirm the events described in the Primary Chronicle.

Another important point was the reason for the Vikings' arrival and the time when they started their expansion. Archaeological findings of Noonan, Sedov, and Kylberg relate the first Vikings' emergence on the territory of Russia much earlier than the Primary Chronicle states. One of the hypotheses put forward by Noonan was that the Vikings' activity was due to their search for Islamic silver. Indeed, located at the crossroads between the East and the West, Russia could be an intermediary for Islamic objects that were going to Europe. It is confirmed by Ibn Fadlan's account that trade connections between Vikings and Arabs were quite strong.

Thus, primary sources, both chronicles and archaeological findings give researchers a vivid insight into political, economic, and cultural life, even though they may be interpreted differently, according to the political ambitions or views both of rulers and historians.

5. Czech-Russian Contacts in the Middle Ages

5.1 Trade Relations

Though the Czech and Russian people had their paths in historical development, where the Czech experienced more Western influence and Catholicism and Russia were affected by the East and Byzantium, both got into contact with each other and established mutually beneficial trade connections.

The Primary Chronicle describes the Czech people as friends¹¹⁹. Still, the sources are quite sparse about this period, but some chronicles are clarifying the trade relations between Bohemia and Russia in the Middle Ages.

Florovsky argues (100) that before the year 999, Czechia possessed the upper part of the Vistula with the center in Krakow. At the same time in 981, Russian prince Vladimir was defeating the Polish and occupied the city of Przemysl. At this very point between Krakow and Przemysl regions, was the border between the two countries, which later brought long-term ties between Prague and Kyiv. Though this border did not exist for long due to Boleslav

¹¹⁸ Natalia Ilyina, "Изгнание варягов очередная задача русской исторической науки, [*Expulsion of the Vikings is another task of Russian historical science*], (Paris, 1955), 18, 29-30.

¹¹⁹ *Повесть временных лет [The Tale of Bygone Years]*, vol I, 11.

the Brave struggle, cooperation, and trade were established and flourished between the two peoples for the years to come.

Raffelstetten Customs Regulation dated to 903-904 AD says:

Sclavivero, qui de Rugis vel de Boemanis mercandi causa exeunt, ubicunque iuxta ripam Danubii vel ubicunque in Rotalariis vel in Rcodariis loca mercandi optinuerint, de sogmauna de cera duas massiolauna eius dem precii; sivero mancipia vel cavallos vendere voluerint de una ancilla tremisam I, de cavallo masculine similiter, de servo saigam I, similis de equa¹²⁰.

Here the documents mention that the slaves from “Rugis” and “Boemanis” were coming to trade. Vasilevsky argues that the word “Rugis” was used by Western chroniclers to denote “Russia” referring to the fact that Princess Olga, the queen of Rugis, sent ambassadors to Otto I¹²¹. The scholar also suggests Russian merchants went along the Pripjat and the Western Dvina through Krakov to Prague where they joined the Bohemian merchants that head for the Danube lands¹²². That is the reason why the names are used together in Raffelstetten Customs Regulation¹²³.

The Regulation also mentions that the Russians were selling wax, as bee-keeping was very well-developed¹²⁴. Bee trade was flourishing in Russia, during the reign of Prince Yaroslav there was even a class of merchants trading wax, and tribute was paid until the XV century in wax and honey¹²⁵. Laurentian Chronicle also confirms that honey and wax were the main wealth of the Russian people which they were selling in the Danube lands in Pereyaslav¹²⁶. The demand for wax in Europe was very high since it was used for the production of churches for household use and religious services.

Another word “mancipia” is worth consideration, since it shows social relations that existed in Russia. Zimin argues that “mancipia” means “slaves”, that were either captured or got into

120 Alexander Vasilievich Nazarenko, *Немецкие и латиноязычные источники IX-XI веков*, [German and Latin language sources of the IX-XI centuries], (Moscow: Nauka, 1993), 64.

121 Vasilij Grigorievich Vasilevsky, *Древняя торговля Киева с Регенсбургом*, [Ancient trade of Kiev with Regensburg], (Санкт-Петербург: Типография Балашева В.С., 1888), 129.

122 Arist Aristovich Kunin, and Victor Romanovich Rosin, *Известия ал-Бекри и других авторов о руси и славянах*, [News of al-Bekri and other authors about Russia and the Slavs], (Санкт-Петербург, 1878)

123 Vasilevsky, *Древняя торговля Киева с Регенсбургом*, [Ancient trade of Kiev with Regensburg], 1333.

124 Nikolai Yakovlevitch Aristov, *Промышленность древней Руси*, [Industry of the Ancient Russia], (Санкт-Петербург, 1866), 39.

125 Aristov, *Промышленность древней Руси*, [Industry of the Ancient Russia], 40.

126 Cross & Sherbowitz-Wetzor, *Russian Primary Chronicle. Laurentian Text*, 23.

dependence¹²⁷. Ganshof suggests that “mancipia” can be translated as “human cattle” for sale, distinguishing between the term “servus”, which denoted a serf, from the term “esclave” meaning “slave”¹²⁸. Hence, Raffelstetten Customs Regulation provides historians with information about social groups of the Russian feudal society. Besides, the document mentions horse breeding, which has always been the wealth of the Russian people, which was equal to money¹²⁹.

Scandinavian scald about Magnus Olafsson describes the ships mentioning the value of Russian weapons saying that the oak boat was magnificent due to Russian weapons¹³⁰, giving the ground to suggest that Russian weaponry was also present in the market.

The Laurentian Chronicle narrates that Prince Svyatoslav told her mother and his boyars that he did not want to stay in Kyiv and preferred Pereyaslavets on the Danube, as it was the middle of his land where all the goods flew¹³¹.

Thus, Pereyaslavets on the Danube was a meeting point for the Czech and Russian traders where the Czech sold silver and horses and the Russian merchants sold fur, honey, wax, and slaves¹³².

Aristov argues that the Russian people had not enough cattle and were taking them from neighboring people¹³³. Such words as “Parisian”, “faras”, and “farius” are often mentioned in the Laurentian chronicle as meaning “a good horse”¹³⁴.

However, this way via Dnieper and Danube was dangerous and merchants were often robbed of the land and river by Polovets. Hypatian chronicle describes the boats full of fish and wine that were going from ports and trade centers. The chronicle also says that marble and glass were coming from Bohemia to Russia¹³⁵.

127 Alexander Alexandrovitch Zimin A.A. “Холопы на Руси”, [*Smerds in Russia*], (Moscow: Nauka, 1973), 25-26.

128 Ganshof F.L. “Note” (sur l’inguisitio de theloneis Rattelstettensis”// *Le Moyen Age*. Bruxelles, 1966 (Volume 72, N2), 206.

129 Cross & Sherbowitz-Wetzor, *Russian Primary Chronicle. Laurentian Text*, 54.

130 Древняя Русь в свете зарубежных источников. Хрестоматия. Древнескандинавские источники [*Ancient Russia in the light of foreign sources. Anthology Old Scandinavian sources*], ed. T.N. Jakson et al, 64.

131 *Повесть временных лет [The Tale of Bygone Years]*, ed. V.P. Andrianova-Peretz, 246.

132 Cross & Sherbowitz-Wetzor, *Russian Primary Chronicle. Laurentian Text*, 86.

133 Aristov, “Промышленность древней Руси, [*Industry of the Ancient Russia*], 40.

134 Cross & Sherbowitz-Wetzor, *Russian Primary Chronicle. Laurentian Text*, 28.

135 *Полное собрание русских летописей, Ипатьевская летопись [The Complete Collection of Russian Chronicle. Hypatian Chronicle]*, 161.

The trade contacts between Bohemians and Russians are also confirmed by a famous Spanish scholar and merchant of Jewish origin Ibrahim ibn Yakub al-Isra or al-Turtushi who visited several European countries and cities, including Prague, between 960 and 980 and wrote notes about his travellings. According to him, Russians and other Slavs come to Prague city from Krakow with their goods and buy from Prague people flour and tin¹³⁶.

Unfortunately, there are few archaeological findings about Russian-Czech contacts. Sláma describes the treasure, which was buried approximately in 1050 in Russia. It contained silver objects of Czech origin, including 123 coins of Přemyslid rule¹³⁷.

5.2 Religious and Spiritual Ties

5.2.1 Czech Missionary Activities in Kievan Rus

Russia adopted Christianity in 988 and since that time there was a flow of Slavic books of Czech-Moravian translation related to Cyril and Methodius' mission.¹³⁸ Though Czech people were Catholic and Russians were Orthodox, in the 10-11th centuries it was not a significant

¹³⁶ Древняя Русь в свете зарубежных источников. Хрестоматия. Восточные источники [Ancient Russia in the light of foreign sources. Anthology. Eastern Sources], ed. T.N. Jakson et al, (Moscow: Ruskii Fond Sodeistrviya Obrazovaniyu, 2009), volume 4, 79.

¹³⁷Jiří Sláma, *Raně středověké Čechy a Rurikovská Rus*. Archeologické rozhledy 42, 1990, 392.

obstacle that could prevent a spiritual interconnection between them. Located between Latin and Byzantium worlds, Catholicism, and Orthodoxy, Prague was influenced by both and was an intermediary for Russia with the West. At the very beginning of Christianity in Moravia, in the 9th century, its rulers even turned to Rome, though unsuccessfully, and Byzantium with the request to send preachers in an attempt to unify both teachings¹³⁹. Constantine and Methodius were sent to teach divine writing in the Slavonic language, educating future Moravian priests, though shortly due to political reasons Moravian ruler Svatopolk turned to Rome, as well as later Bohemian princes. Adopting Catholicism was primarily a political decision in the hope to strengthen its borders¹⁴⁰. Although double Latin and Slavonic liturgy was practiced, the latter was forbidden by the Pope after the meeting that took place in Rome in 968¹⁴¹. However, realizing their Christian social identity, the Czech created the “eternal king” St Václav¹⁴², symbolizing heaven and the policy, whose cult came to Russia. But in its turn, creating an image of the warrior, it united Viking pagan and Christian features which is seen in his helmet that we will discuss in the following chapter.

Obviously, after the adoption of Christianity, there was a lack of Christian books and priests to teach and spread the new faith. According to Hildesheimenses Annals, when in 960 Russian ambassadors came to King Otton I with a plea to send bishops, so they could preach and teach the Bible with the following words “Venerunt legati Rusciae gentis ad regem Ottonem, et deprecati sunt eum, ut aliquem suorum Episcoporum transmitteret, qui eis ostenderet viam veritatis; et professi sunt se velle recedere a paganico ritu et accipere religionem christianitatis”¹⁴³, the king sent to them bishop Adalbertus. Wattenbach argues that Adalbert was commissioned to a Slavic country due to his ethnic roots, as his mother was a captive Slav of noble decent¹⁴⁴. Thus, we may suggest that he could speak Slavic and preach in Slavic.

138 Antoniy Vasilievitch Florovsky, “Труды по истории России, Центральной Европы и историографии: Из Архивного наследия”, [*Works on Russian, Central European History and Historiography: From the Archive Heritage*], ed. V. Yu. Afiani, (Saint-Petersburg: Nestor-Instoriya, 2020), 102-103.

139 *Christianization and the Rise of Christian Monarchy* ed. by N. Berend, (Cambridge University Press, 2007), 222

140 *Christianization and the Rise of Christian Monarchy* ed. by N. Berend, 224.

141 *Christianization and the Rise of Christian Monarchy* ed. by N. Berend, 234

142 *Christianization and the Rise of Christian Monarchy* ed. by N. Berend, 252

143 *Annales Hildesheimenses* in Nazarenko, *Немецкие и латиноязычные источники IX-XI веков, [German and Latin language sources of the IX-XI centuries]*, 112.

144 W. Wattenbach, *Geschichtquellen* [im Mittelalter. 6. Ausf. B., 1893-1894, Bd.1-2), 367-368.

Another important chronicle, written by Regino of Prum confirms the arrival of Russian envoys with the mission to invite preachers to their country to spread Christianity and acquire more knowledge about their newly adopted religion. The chronicle says that in the year 959, the ambassadors of the Russian Queen Helena were asking to be sent a bishop and priests: Legati Helenae reginae Rugorum, quae sub Romano Imperatore Constantinopolitano Constantinopoli baptizata est, fite, ut post claruit, ad regem venientes, episcopum et presbiteros eidem genti ordinari petebant¹⁴⁵.

Nazarenko explains that it was Kyiv Princess Olga, who after baptizing received the name, Helena, after Emperor Constantine VII's wife's name¹⁴⁶. There is a discrepancy that she was baptized in the Byzantium church and was addressing the German king to send a bishop. It can be explained by the deterioration of relations between Russia and Byzantium after Olga's traveling to Byzantium in 957, which is proved by the Primary Chronicle which says that no gifts were sent to the Greek emperor after her return from Byzantium¹⁴⁷. Voronov put forward a hypothesis that Olga was afraid to be politically dependent on Byzantium and turned to the Western church¹⁴⁸. Thus, sending her envoys to Otton I can be interpreted as a political maneuver when turning the West may influence Russia-Byzantium relationships.

Though the King honorably appointed him as a bishop for the Russians and provided him with all necessary things, from the very beginning Adalbertus was reluctant to go to Kyiv, having thought that he would get a better position than going to a foreign land¹⁴⁹. He was unhappy with his appointment, as he might find his occupation incompatible with the reformed monasticism¹⁵⁰. Adalbertus's mission failed, and he returned without succeeding and achieving the designated objectives to spread Christianity, being convinced of the futility of all his efforts¹⁵¹.

145Nazarenko, *Немецкие и латиноязычные источники IX-XI веков*, [German and Latin language sources of the IX-XI centuries], 212.

146Nazarenko, *Немецкие и латиноязычные источники IX-XI веков*, [German and Latin language sources of the IX-XI centuries], 111.

147 Cross & Sherbowitz-Wetzor, *Russian Primary Chronicle. Laurentian Text* [translated and edited], 83.

148 *Чтения во историческом обществе Нестора летописца*, [Readings in the Historical Society of Nestor the Chronicler], book 1, edited by V.S. Ikonnikov, (Kiev, University Press, 1879), 16.

149Древняя Русь в свете зарубежных источников. *Хрестоматия. Западно-европейские источники*. [Ancient Russia in the light of foreign sources. Anthology. West-Europeans sources], ed. T.N. Djakson et al., 48.

150Древняя Русь в свете зарубежных источников. *Хрестоматия. Западно-европейские источники*. [Ancient Russia in the light of foreign sources. Anthology. West-Europeans sources], ed. T.N. Djakson et al., 48.

151Древняя Русь в свете зарубежных источников. *Хрестоматия. Западно-европейские источники*. [Ancient Russia in the light of foreign sources. Anthology. West-Europeans sources], ed. T.N. Djakson et al., 49.

There are no details or descriptions of his traveling to Russia or any particular information about his stay in Kyiv. This can be explained by the fact that his missionary activity did not bring any fruitful results.

It is clear that the route was from Regensburg to Prague, Krakow, and finally to Kyiv¹⁵². Prague diocese was situated on the crossroad between Roman and Byzantium cultures, where Latin and Greek languages for the liturgy. The liturgy until the middle of the 11th century could be in two languages that gave fertile ground for the development of religious and cultural ties with Russia due to language similarities. Latin-Slavic translation school in Bohemia facilitated the relationships between the two countries. Hence, the first papal and imperial delegations to Kyiv were accompanied by Moravian messengers, as they could speak both Slavic and Latin and were able to assist in translation¹⁵³. Probably, most of them were clergy who composed religious writings in Latin and Slavic, being a mediator between Latin and Slavic cognition. Thereby, Christianization facilitated the development of relationships between Russia and neighboring countries and introduced an expanded knowledge of Russian about Latin culture, where Bohemia performed the role of a mediator, helping Russians with translated books, interpretations, and international contacts in general.

5.2.2 Veneration of Czech Martyrs in Kievan Rus

Russian culture and religious traditions are inextricably linked with several Czech martyrs, whose cults were brought to Kievan Rus, and their life descriptions were rewritten and transmitted from the older generation to the younger. Indeed, the most revered Czech martyr was Saint Wenceslas, the grandson of Saint Ludmila, brought up by her in Christian traditions, a wise and fair ruler, whose life was distinguished by mercy. Due to the political and religious ambitions of his brother Boleslav and some pagan nobles, he was assassinated next to the temple, entrusting his life to God's will and humbly accepting his death in the first half of the 10th century and was later canonized¹⁵⁴, takes a special place in the history of Russia.

152 *Древняя Русь в свете зарубежных источников. Хрестоматия. Западно-европейские источники. [Ancient Russia in the light of foreign sources. Anthology. West-European sources]*, ed. T.N. Djakson, et al., 33.

153 Václav Hunaček, *K Nejstarším Vztahům Rusko-Českým, Československo-sovětské vztahy I.* – 1972, 12.

154 *Повесть временных лет [The Tale of Bygone Years]*, ed. V.P. Andrianova-Peretz, 344.

One of the first ambassadors of the Saint Wenceslas cult in Russia was Predslava Vladimirovna, who after the arrest of her husband had to return to Russia, where she continued Přemyslid traditions and continued her veneration of the Czech martyr¹⁵⁵. On the other hand, Kulafa argues that the legend of Saint Wenceslas came to Russia with the efforts of bishop Vojtech, famous for his extensive missionary activity¹⁵⁶.

In Russian chronicles, the name of Wenceslas is transliterated to Vyacheslav, and prayers and chronicles refer to that name. For instance, the Hymn to Saint Vyacheslav calls his “God’s chosen”, “the jewel of the Czech country”, “a bearer of the spirit of meekness”, and “a light of Heaven”¹⁵⁷. Interestingly, the Hymn glorifies the city of Prague, saying that it is a glorious city proclaiming St Vyacheslav’s miracles to the world¹⁵⁸. Thus, we may suggest that the text was written by Czech writers and later translated and came to Kievan Rus. Florovsky argues that even before the Hymn appeared in Russia, St. Vyacheslav’s hagiography had appeared, which was a conscious and motivated adoption of church honoring¹⁵⁹. The cult of St. Vyacheslav has been in the Russian land for a long time, as evidenced by Archangel’s Gospel, which was written in 1092¹⁶⁰.

Florovsky argues that the old Russian name book included the name Vyacheslav which might be a tribute to the Czech martyr and the reverence of St Vyacheslav that already was present in the Russian religious consciousness¹⁶¹. By the beginning of the XI century chronicles already mention the name of Vyacheslav implying an inner connection between the Czech martyr and Russian princes. The name was so popular that Russian princes were named Vyacheslav. For instance, the Primary Chronicle describes Vyacheslav, who was one of the

155 Hunaček, *K Nejstarším Vztahům Rusko-Českým*, 13

156 Stepan J. Kolafa, *Rus Vladimira I. A Cechy v Československo-sovětské vztahy*. (Česko: Universita Karlova, 1989), 135.

157 *Сказания о начале Чешского государства в древнерусской письменности*, [*Tales of the Beginning of the Czech State in Old Russian Literature*], ed. V.D. Korolyuk et al., (Moscow: Nauka, 1970), 124.

158 *Сказания о начале Чешского государства в древнерусской письменности*, [*Tales of the Beginning of the Czech State in Old Russian Literature*], ed. V.D. Korolyuk et al., 124.

159 Antoni Vasilievitch Florovsky, *“Чехи и восточные славяне”*, [*Czech and Eastern Slavs*], volume 1, (Prague, 1935), 124.

160 *Архангельское Евангелие 1092. Исследования. Древне-русский текст. Словоуказатели*. [*Archangel Gospel 1092. Researches. Old Russian Text. The word guide*] ed. by G.V. Aksenova et al 1997

161 Florovsky, *“Труды по истории России, Центральной Европы и историографии: Из Архивного наследия”*, [*Works on Russian, Central European History and Historiography: From the Archive Heritage*], ed. V.Yu. Afiani, 78.

youngest sons of Yaroslav the Wise and died in Smolensk in 1057¹⁶². After him was named the son of Vladimir Monomakh who also received to rule Smolensk¹⁶³, according to the Primary Chronicle. Galitsko-Volynsky Chronicle mentions a nobleman, a boyar, Vyacheslav the Fat from Vladimir, who accompanies Princess Romanova with her son Daniil to Ugri¹⁶⁴.

These examples are evidence that many noble people and even princes were named after Saint Vyacheslav, and his cult was extremely popular in Russia. Besides, several literary monuments confirm his popularity. For instance, in 1827 Vostokov discovered the manuscript “The Tale of the Assassination of Prince Vyacheslav of Bohemia” dated to the end of the XV century in the library of Chancellor Count Rumyantsev that narrates the legend of Saint Vyacheslav¹⁶⁵. If a prominent Russian statesman kept such a manuscript in his library, it shows that Russians knew and worshipped the Czech martyr.

Vostokov’s discovery of the above-mentioned manuscript was just the beginning, followed by other important findings related to St. Vyacheslav in the Rumyantsev’s collection, including St. Vyacheslav and St. Ludmila’s hagiography and transfer of their relics¹⁶⁶. However, these chronicles were not new to the public, as the texts were rewritten in Kievan Rus and were later published in 1659 in the two-volume Moscow edition of the prologue¹⁶⁷. Besides, in 1904 Nikolsky discovered a Russian translation of the Latin manuscript written by Humboldt of Mantua¹⁶⁸.

Also, an important relic worth consideration is St. Wescslav’s helmet, which was probably brought from Russia and was kept in the Přemyslid family. Its uniqueness is the seeming cross on the front part of the helmet which was noticed shining during the battle against Prince Kourim, though crosses were not usually engraved on the helmets¹⁶⁹. However, upon closer examination, it turns out that it also depicts a tree with many branches similar to

162 *Повесть временных лет [The Tale of Bygone Years]*, ed. V.P. Andrianova-Peretz, 110.

163 *Повесть временных лет [The Tale of Bygone Years]*, ed. V.P. Andrianova-Peretz, 168.

164 *Galitsko-Volynsky Chronicle* ed. by N.F.Kotlyar, (Saint-Petersburg: Aleteya, 2005), 81-82.

165 Alexander Christophorovitch Vostokov “*Филологические наблюдения*», [*Philological Observations*], (Saint Petersburg: Санкт-Петербург: Publishing House of Imperial Academy of Science, 1865), 91.

166 Vostokov “*Филологические наблюдения*», [*Philological Observations*], 92.

167 *Сказания о начале Чешского государства в древнерусской письменности*”, [*Tales of the Beginning of the Czech State in Old Russian Literature*], 15.

168 *Сказания о начале Чешского государства в древнерусской письменности*”, [*Tales of the Beginning of the Czech State in Old Russian Literature*], 16.

169 Anežka [Merhautová](#), *Der St. Wenzelshelm*, - In: [Umení](#) vol. 40 (1992), 173.

images that can be found of Vikings' decorative objects. Besides, a tree resembles a mask of the Viking epoch with rings and bracelets on hands that were the only decoration of Vikings. Thus, it is probable that the image on the helmet is Odin, a deity of the pagan world, who was especially popular in northern Europe due to the Vikings' influence on Norse mythology. Furthermore, Odin made a sacrifice, piercing himself with a spear to redeem the sins of his ancestors where the researchers see the analogy to Jesus Christ and his sacrifice to people¹⁷⁰. At that time, the transition from paganism to Christianity, many workshops manufactured objects of Christian and pagan origin, and St. Wenceslav's helm is seen as a result of this fusion¹⁷¹. Hence, founding Prague diocese, Boleslav II intentionally created the relics, St Wenceslav's helm, of a God's warrior, that could reach Prague from Russia.

Another saint martyr, blessed Ludmila was loved and venerated in Kievan Rus. It can be traced in the Great Menaion Reader of Moscow Metropolitan Macarius in the middle of the XVI century. It describes Saint Ludmila's life, martyrdom, and miracles at her burial place which is a sign of divine glorification, which inspired her grandson Wenceslas to move her remnants to Saint George church¹⁷². Being a patroness of Bohemia, she was also venerated by the Russian people.

No icons of Saint Ludmila have been found yet¹⁷³, but the Klintzovski iconography manual compared Ludmila with Princesses Elena and Olga¹⁷⁴. This comparison demonstrates the love and veneration of the Russian clergy and people for the Czech saint. Besides, there is a fresco painting of Saint Ludmila, which is situated in the Cathedral of the Holy Cross in Romanov-Borisoglebsk in the suburbs of Yaroslavl. Notably, the fresco painting of Saint Ludmila is located opposite the painting of Princess Olga in the cathedral, reaffirming a strong association between Czech and Russian Princesses.¹⁷⁵

The proverbial hagiography of Saint Ludmila describes her assassination in detail, saying how she was strangled.¹⁷⁶ As the wall paintings depict Saint Ludmila without the crown, it may be

170 [Merhautová, *Der St. Wenzelshelm*](#), 175.

171 [Merhautová, *Der St. Wenzelshelm*](#), 176.

172 *Великия Минеи Четию*, [*The Great Menaion Reader*], September, days 14-24, day 16, (Saint-Petersburg: Publishing House of Imperial Academy of Science, 1869), 1216.

173 *Сказания о начале Чешского государства в древнерусской письменности*, [*Tales of the Beginning of the Czech State in Old Russian Literature*], ed. by Korolyuk et al., (Moscow: Nauka, 1970), 31.

174 Russian State Public Library (Moscow), QXIII, II.л.23 об.

175 A. I. Suslov and S.S. Churakov, *Ярославль, [Yaroslavl]*, (Moscow, 1960), 189-190.

assumed that the painter was acquainted with hagiography and depicted the Princess according to the description.

Another important point is the similarity of her assassination with the Scandinavian burial custom that was described by Ibn Fadlan. Ludmila was strangled with the veil by Vikings Tunna and Gommon according to their ritual, being a sacrifice as a widowed Viking's wife¹⁷⁷.

This episode shows that Scandinavian culture was very extensive, their pagan rituals also reached Bohemia possibly via the route Kiev-Krakow-Wroclaw-Prague showing the interconnectedness of cultural links and the penetration of people and customs into neighboring countries.

5.2.3 Sazav Monastery as a Spiritual Link Between Czech and Russian People

Some Russian saints were worshipped and venerated by the Czech people. The most famous were Saints Boris and Gleb, sons of Kyiv Prince Vladimir, killed by their brother Svyatopolk in the course of internal war. They took the murder almost voluntarily and became patron saints of the Russian land. For many years, the death of the brothers was a warning and appeal to stop internal strife between Princes, neighboring lands, and relatives, finally becoming a cornerstone of the Russian ideology.

The chronicle about Saint Boris and Gleb describes the episode when Boris remembers the sufferings of Saint Vyacheslav¹⁷⁸. It shows that the author of the hagiography was aware of the events that took place in the Czech land. Besides, for a young Russian Christian state, the similarity between the assassination of Princess Ludmila and her grandson Vyacheslav and the killing of the brothers Boris and Gleb is rather vivid.

Another similar comparison is evident in the Great Menaion Reader of Metropolitan Macarius, which compares Boleslav with Svyatopolk¹⁷⁹. Though it is quite unclear who made these literary borrowings, it is apparent that both Czech and Russian people were aware of the

176 *Сказания о начале Чешского государства в древнерусской письменности*, [Tales of the Beginning of the Czech State in Old Russian Literature], ed. by Korolyuk et al., 107.

177 Dusan Trestik, *Pocatky Premyslovcu*, 1997, 372.

178 *Сказания о святыхъ Борисъ и Глебъ. Сильвестровскій списокъ XVI Века*, [Tales of Saints Boris and Gleb. A 16th century Silvestrov list], (Saint-Petersburg: Publishing House of The Imperial Academy of Science, 1860), 48.

179 "Великие Минеи-Четии, собранные Всероссийским митрополитом Макарием" [The Great Menaion Reader, compiled by Metropolitan Makarius of All Russia], volume I, edition III, (Saint-Petersburg, 1883), 2189.

events that took place in both states, had similar views on what is good and evil, and cherished in their memories the heroes, defenders of the faith, and martyrs of their lands mutually.

The Chronicle of the Czechs says about “reliquiae sancti Glebii et socii ejus”¹⁸⁰. Thus, the first Russian saints were worshipped by the Czech, and twenty-five years after the canonization, the relics were transferred and put on the altar of Sazav monastery in 1095, when the chancel was consecrated by the Prague bishop Cosma. And though shortly Slavic prayers were ceased in the monastery, the fact that the relics of Russian martyrs were brought to Sazava is very important, indicating that the spiritual ties were strong.

It is important that these ties were strengthened also with the help of dynastic connections, as, the granddaughter of St. Vladimir and a niece of St Boris and Gleb was the first Czech Queen¹⁸¹, definitely maintaining the cult of her uncles. Also, Russian religious books could reach Prague, being addressed to her, or might be brought to Sazav monastery together with Boris and Gleb’s relics¹⁸².

Another important piece of evidence is that Vladimir’s second wife was Czech and although Vladimir did not live with her after the Christianization of Russia, she was highly respected and lived in Vishgrád, surrounded by Czech entourage. It is suggested that among these people was a future abbot of Sazav monastery Prokop, who could learn Cyrillic and made his efforts to spread the cult of Saint Wenceslas in Russia. Besides, coming back to Czechia, he could create a Hymn to the saint and a Cyrillic part of the Gospel of Reims¹⁸³.

In general, the Sazav monastery was an important religious center where the liturgy was in the Slavic language. The Chronicle of the Czechs describes the abbot of the monastery Prokop as “well trained canonically in the Slavonic letters previously invented and established by the holiest Cyril”¹⁸⁴. Besides, the monastery was engaged in literary activities, including translations, laying the foundation of the Slavonic cultural center. However, there were predecessors of Slavic traditions in the liturgy including Raihrad, Hradisko, and Ostrava¹⁸⁵. It

180Vincenti Pragensis Chronica// Fontes Rerum Bohemicarum 1874, volume 2, 246 Mnich sázavský-nenasel jsem,, 251.

181Hunaček, *K Nejstarším Vztahům Rusko-Českým*, 23.

182 Hunaček, *K Nejstarším Vztahům Rusko-Českým*, 26.

183 Kolafa, *Rus Vladimira I. A Cech*, 135.

184Cosmas of Prague edited by Janos M. Bak, 496.

185 Hunaček, *K Nejstarším Vztahům Rusko-Českým*, 13-14.

is confirmed by the fact that the Chronicle of the Czechs does not mention this fact, as well as anything connected to the Slavic cult in Moravia, or Sazav¹⁸⁶.

Florovsky argues that the Sazav monastery was an important common thread or a link between Czech clergy faithful to the ideas of Slavic traditions and ceremonies and eastern Slavdom, suggesting that at any time between its foundation and 1096, the monastery could give St. Vyacheslav hagiography for religious awe reverence in Russia¹⁸⁷.

Thus, the cultural connection between Czechia and Russia was very close due to the religious mediation of the Slavic church, favorable conditions that were created in Russia for monks wishing to continue Slavic tradition in the liturgy, as well as the influx of religious literature coming from Bohemia, which was convenient for the Russians due to the similarity of the languages.

186 Hunaček, *K Nejstarším Vztahům Rusko-Českým*, 15.

187Florovsky, “Труды по истории России, Центральной Европы и историографии: Из Архивного наследия”, [*Works on Russian, Central European History and Historiography: From the Archive Heritage*], ed. V. Yu. Afiani, 84.

5.3 Diplomatic and Dynastic Contacts

Czechia had a significant position linking the Western and Eastern civilizations. By the end of the 10th century, Kievan Rus had a border with Czechia, which enabled and facilitated contact between the two countries. According to the Primary Chronicle Russian Prince Vladimir Svyatoslavich lived in peace and love with Czech Prince Oldřich¹⁸⁸. At that period Czech-Russian contacts were especially favorable due to dynastic ties. Vladimir's wife was Czech, and she gave birth to her son Visheslav¹⁸⁹. As the chronicler was a contemporary of Vladimir, this information may be considered especially trustworthy and reliable. The marriage was between 982 and 983, which is indirectly indicated by the founding charter of the Prague diocese of 1086 which describes its eastern border.¹⁹⁰ In the 80ies of the 10th century, Russia and Czechia had a common frontier that definitely facilitated Russian-Czech relations in each sphere of life, especially taking into account that it was the time of the Christianization of Russia.

Vladimir's granddaughter Svyatoslava-Svatava married Vratislav II and became the first Czech Queen, and as it was stated in the previous chapter, being a niece of St Boris and Gleb, she patronizing the Slavic monks and venerated the cult of the Russian martyrs¹⁹¹.

Tatishev writes that Vladimir Svyatoslavich's daughter Predslava married the Czech king Boleslaus III¹⁹², which is confirmed by the chronicle of Thietmar of Mersenberg where he writes that Boleslaus forced her into marriage¹⁹³. Later, in 1034 Yaroslav named his son

188 *Полное собрание русских летописей*, [The Complete Collection of Russian Chronicles], volume 1, (Moscow, 1962), col. 126.

189 *Полное собрание русских летописей*, [The Complete Collection of Russian Chronicles], col. 80.

190 Kolafa, *Rus Vladimira I. A Cechy*, 134.

191 Hunaček, *K Nejstarším Vztahům Rusko-Českým*, 23.

192 Vasiliy Nikitich Tatishev, "История Россійская", [Russian History], vol. 1, (Moscow-Leningrad, 1962), 373.

193 Nazarenko, *Немецкие и латиноязычные источники IX-XI веков*, [German and Latin language sources of the IX-XI centuries], 137.

Vyacheslav, as we noted in the previous chapter. Since the Primary Chronicle describes this event¹⁹⁴, it is possible to assume that at a such solemn moment in the life of the Russian ruler the name could not have been given randomly, but it was a carefully selected choice, showing adoration and reverence for St. Vyacheslav, a Czech martyr.

According to Sláma, marriages between Přemyslov and Rurik mostly took place indirectly through the family of Arpadov and Piastov¹⁹⁵.

Prince Yaroslav the Wise was very active in the international political arena, and one of his daughters Anastasia married a Hungarian king Andrew. Anastasia remained Russian Orthodox until the end of her life, though his spouse was of a different confession. Being Orthodox, she was helping Orthodox monks and believers. Approximately at that time after the exile, Sazav monks were fleeing to Hungary expecting refuge and a friendly reception in one of the Orthodox monasteries, supposedly St Andrew in Visegrád, since it was dedicated to the patron saint of Hungarian King Andrew and was built with the participation of his wife Anastasia. There were many Slavs among the monks in that monastery¹⁹⁶. Anastasia contributed to the start and development of Russian political and cultural influence.

Her daughter Eufemia married Ota I, and the tradition of dynastic marriages with the royal Olomouc dynasty started, which is confirmed by the fact that his first son was named Svyatopolk, given according to his parents' traditions¹⁹⁷. The name Svyatopolk was very popular with the Rurik family and in the area Pomerania, thus the ties between the two countries were quite strong. Later, Svyatopolk married a Russian, though apart from that she was noble, no information is preserved. Besides, it is assumed that Eufemia's daughter married David, a Russian Prince of Smolensk, the son of Svyatoslav II of Kyiv, and Chernihiv¹⁹⁸. Sometime later this family gave shelter to a four-year-old son of Ota, a legitimate heir to the Olomouc throne¹⁹⁹.

194 *Полное собрание русских летописей*, [The Complete Collection of Russian Chronicles], col. 138.

195 Sláma, *Raně středověké Čechy a Rurikovská Rus*, 392.

196 Gyula Moravcski. *Studia Byzantina*, (Budapest, 1967), 330-331, 335.

197 Barbara Krzemienska, *Olomouctí Přemyslovci a Rurikovci*. In: *Casopis matice moravské* vol. 106 (1987) p. 260-261.

198 Krzemienska, *Olomouctí Přemyslovci a Rurikovci*, 261.

199 Krzemienska, *Olomouctí Přemyslovci a Rurikovci*, 262.

In 1143, the Prince of Novgorod Svyatopolk Mstislavovich married a Moravian Princess, who might be a sister of Ota III²⁰⁰. From the 40ies of the 12th century, the ties between Rurik and Olomouc ruling families weakened.

Another fact related to diplomatic relations worth mentioning is the traveling of the Duke of Bohemia and later a King of Bohemia Vladislav II through the territory of Russia. Joannes Kinnamos, a famous Byzantium historian, describes the campaign in which Vladislav II took part, coming back from the Second Crusade in 1148²⁰¹. Prague Chronicle says that he was traveling “per Ruziam”²⁰², probably through Kyiv, where was the Volhynian prince Izyaslav. This fact indicates that the Czech ruler had a friendly relationship with Kyiv Prince, he expected a safe stay in Kyiv and a safe journey through the territory of Kievan Rus. Also, Sláma argues that there were Czech warriors who served in the Russian army, especially during the feud between Princes²⁰³.

Russia was a country where both Czech and Viking nobles could find refuge, support, and protection during their exile, or the time unfavorable for their return to their home country. As previously mentioned, Olaf Tryggvason, Olaf Haraldsson, and his son Magnus the Good stayed in Russia in safety before coming back to their homeland to rule similarly to young Ota III of the royal Olomouc dynasty who came to Russia after the death of his father²⁰⁴.

Hence, being linked through several dynastic marriages, Bohemia and Russia were the countries where their rulers may safely travel, stay, and give each other every necessary assistance.

200 Krzemienska, [Olomouctí Premyslovci a Rurikovci](#), 263.

201 Древняя Русь в свете зарубежных источников. Хрестоматия. Византийские источники [Ancient Russia in the light of foreign sources. Anthology. Byzantium sources], 271.

202 *Vincenti Pragensis Chronica*, Fontes Rerum Bohemicarum 1874, volume 2, 418.

203 Sláma, *Raně středověké Čechy a Rurikovská Rus*, 392.

204 Sláma, *Raně středověké Čechy a Rurikovská Rus*, 392.

5.4 Tracing Czech-Russian Contacts through Archaeological Discoveries

There were various archaeological findings that were discovered, but many of them are related to spiritual ties between two countries. Religious consciousness of Czech and Russian people was interconnected which is also manifested in the fact that some church and parish objects were found in Bohemia. These objects of religious veneration made in Russia or Byzantium were crosses. Hornickova argues that pectoral crosses reached Bohemia from Kyiv Russia in the 11-12th centuries and were found in many places throughout the country, including Praha-Vysehrád, Opocnice, Veltruby, Chrudim, Sázava, and many others²⁰⁵. Bohemian pectorals show that early medieval Bohemia was a cultural center, where art and religious objects fled from Byzantium and Kievan Rus'. The Benedictine monastery at Sázava, linked to Eastern traditions and culture, was a center of Slavonic liturgy in the 11th century. It was even decorated with paintings, sculptures, and crosses, and many pectoral crosses were found at that site²⁰⁶. The crosses of Kievan origin were found throughout the 11-14th centuries and Bohemian craftsmen's crosses were inspired by the Eastern tradition, as well, demonstrating that the contacts between Russia and Bohemia were not weakened²⁰⁷.

205 Katerina Hornickova, "Between East and West Bohemia reliquary", (Byzantinoslavica, 1999), 1-2.

206 Hornickova, "Between East and West Bohemia reliquary", 9.

207 Hornickova, "Between East and West Bohemia reliquary", 11.

Another important finding is “Dagmar’s Cross”, an enamel cross that reminded Orthodox motives and belonged to Czech royalty, Dagmar of Bohemia who later became the Queen of Denmark. In 1683, extending the graveyard in the monastery where Dagmar was buried, her cross was found²⁰⁸. It shows that Czech royalties might be under some influence of Orthodoxy, having spiritual ties with neighboring Russia.

Arab coins, beads from semi-precious stones, gems, and other goods of Eastern origin were coming through the territory of Russia. Very few things are found, including a body cross, and rare silver jewelry, like a necklace, pearls, and a buckle²⁰⁹. Other objects are made of slate and found in Prague and Olomouc, which supposedly came from the mine located close to Kyiv. In Russia, slate was used for different purposes: as a material for buildings, bas-relieves, and architectural details, that decorated religious and secular constructions; to make sarcophaguses, like the one built for Princess Olga; for icons; and jewelry like small decorative beads²¹⁰. Objects made of slate were transported by merchants to the Baltic and western Slavs, so they were found both in Scandinavia and Czechia, namely in Prague and Olomouc²¹¹.

A recent archaeological finding was exhibited in the town museum in Čelákovících in 2020, which is also worth mentioning²¹². It was a sword supposedly of Scandinavian warfare which gives us a ground to assume that Scandinavian warriors and their weapon was present and used in Czechia and their route was from Russia.

Some archaeological discoveries may be reexamined since DNA tests enable scientists to see artifacts and findings from a new perspective. Maříková-Kubková describes an important archaeological finding which is seen from another angle due to scientific progress: in 1928 remains of the unknown warrior were reburied in Prague Castle, later the tomb was visited by a Nazi archaeologist who wanted to prove his hypothesis about the German origin of the warriors; after World War II, the debates about the origin of the warrior were over, but they resumed recently, when DNA analysis became available, as a result of Scandinavian origin

208 Eva Doležalová, *Markéta Přemyslovna a Dagmar Dánská Zapomenutá a znovunalezená princezna* in *Dějiny a současnost*, 3, 2013.22.

209 Sláma, *Raně středověké Čechy a Rurikovská Rus*, 392.

210 Sláma, *Raně středověké Čechy a Rurikovská Rus*, 393.

211 Sláma, *J. Raně středověké Čechy a Rurikovská Rus* 395

212 <https://www.celmuz.cz/dre-cs/21461-pribeh-mece.html>

was identified²¹³. That is important evidence of the presence of Vikings on the territory of Czechia, and we may suggest that being good warriors they could be guards of Czech nobles. Besides, it is highly likely that Vikings were coming to Czechia from Russia, as Russian rulers and their retinue were actually Vikings.

All of the above-described archaeological findings confirm the contacts between Russia and Bohemia that were quite extensive.

5.5 Conclusion

The adoption of Christianity was an important point in creating new links with the Western World. New Christian ideology was big progress for Russia since it helped to develop closer links, establish trade contacts, and general cooperation with neighboring countries, one of which was Bohemia. Having different paths in historical development, related to Latin and Byzantium influence they contacted each other in different ways.

The study revealed that at the end of the 10th century, countries had a common border which laid the basis for further contacts. Besides, the main trade route from Kyiv lay through Prague where the Czech sold Russians silver, horses, cattle, marble, and glass and bought fur, honey, and wax. It was a convenient route and Prague, as well as Olomouc were the cities where Russians could stay, trade, and later establish even dynastic contacts.

Czechia had a similar language, which was a contributor to establishing ties between countries. Obviously, Russia lacked books, priests, and knowledge about the new Christian faith and needed Slavic books, which Czechia could provide. The books fleeing from Prague

213 Maříková-Kubková, J. 2019: 1928: Viking na Pražském hradě (nález hrobu bojovníka na III.nádvoří Pražského hradu). In: M. Kuna – M. Starcová – J. Maříková-Kubková a kol., Sto letv archeologii. Objevy, nálezy a expedice Archeologického ústavu v Praze 1919–2019, 43.

exerted a spiritual and cultural influence on Russia. Also, Czech translators and clergy were coming to Russia, on the one hand, and dynastic marriages, on the other, facilitating the exchange of information, bringing the cult of several saints into each other country. So, it is not a coincidence that Czech martyrs, Saint Ludmila and Wenceslas, were venerated by the Russians, and even Princes named their children after them. In return, the cult of Russian martyrs Boris and Gleb and their relics were brought to the Sazav monastery. One of the reasons for Russian martyrs' veneration was the stay of Abbot Prokop for a certain time in Russia at the court of Prince Vladimir's Czech wife, where he learned about them, as well as got acquainted with Russian customs and traditions.

Such contacts became possible due to dynastic marriages, which took place on both sides. Apparently, spouses were taking with them servants from their countries, continuing their traditions, and spreading their beliefs. Yaroslav the Wise was especially active in dynastic marriages, and his daughters and granddaughters continued Byzantium traditions, they built Orthodox monasteries and protected Slavic monks. Also, close relationships between countries meant mutual protection which is manifested in the fact that Czech Princes could safely travel through the territory of Russia and even could escape from their home country in hard times and find refuge and protection in Russia.

To conclude, though the evidence about contacts between Bohemia and Russia is quite modest, still it is apparent that both countries were deeply interconnected. Having studied Czech and Russian primary and secondary sources, the researchers discovered a strong spiritual tie between the two countries, where Czechia played a special role as a key actor binding the West and the East.

6 . Conclusion

Thus, studying the Primary Chronicle and its versions, Arabic and Greek sources, Rus-Byzantium treaties, Scandinavian sagas, and European chronicles it is possible to conclude that Russia, Scandinavia, and Bohemia are interrelated. Clearly, contacts between Russia and Scandinavia were much more intense than with Bohemia due to the geographical positions and historical path of the countries.

The research reveals that at various times historians, depending on their background, political interests, and cultural experience, assess the Vikings' arrival at the southeast of the Baltic Sea differently. Even though existing archaeological evidence and documents were used to support a certain opinion, new findings and even documents are discovered that may shed further light on the problem of the origin of the Russian state and the role of Vikings in its establishment.

As for the contacts between Bohemia and Russia, the number of archaeological resources is also quite limited, and we propose further extensive research in this sphere. Since the countries had once a common border, contacts might have been more intense than we may conclude in the framework of the sources that are currently available.

In the course of the present paper, we analyzed the works of the most well-known Russian historians and concluded that their opinion about the origin of Russia and its people depended on their ideological position, as they interpreted events according to their own beliefs. We discovered that the reasons for the Vikings' settlement, penetration into islands, and founding towns and trading centers are manifold. Vikings were not as numerous to influence the life of local people profoundly, and in many spheres, they were the ones who adopted local traditions and customs. However, their dangerous venture from Ladoga via the Dnieper to Byzantium was a turning point in history similarly adaptation took place when Russian spouses moved to Czechia. Even though they continued Slavic traditions, building monasteries and protecting Slavic monks, they fully adapted to Czech culture, and even if coming back to Russia, they brought new for them Czech culture into the life of Russians, including Predslava who had to return to Russia after her husband's arrest, bringing the veneration of the cult of Czech saints.

Also, the research reveals that Czechia performed a very important role as a mediator between Russia and the Western world. The first reason was the language and an excellent school of translators in Czechia who could translate both religious books and non-religious compositions and send them to Russia. Also, western missionaries and delegations coming to Kyiv needed interpreters, the Czechs were the ones who could help. Secondly, dynastic marriages contributed to establishing political and spiritual ties. Thus, Czechia, located on the border of the Latin and Slavic worlds was a significant intermediary that provided Russia with new knowledge and facilitated the contacts with the West.

On the other hand, the relationships between Russia and Czechia were mutually beneficial. Both countries traded successfully: Czechia was selling silver, marble, cattle, and horses in return for wax, honey, and fur. Also, Russian merchants, coming to Prague stayed safely in the city, contacted local merchants, established business contacts, and were spiritually enriched. In return, having established fruitful trade contacts, and strengthening the relationships with dynastic marriages, Czech Princes could expect a warm welcome to partner with their Russian counterparts. Similarly, Vikings could find refuge in Russia and stay safe for several years including Olaf Truggvason, who spent his childhood in Novgorod and later returned to his home country to become the king of Norway, or Olaf Haradsson who stayed a long time in Russia and then even sent his son Magnus the Good to Yaroslav the Wise under his protection.

Indeed, spiritual ties between Russia and Czechia were quite strong and positive especially after Russia adopted Christianity. Before Christianization, its people were described as known

for their barbarity, ferocity, and cruelty according to “Life of St. George of Amastris”²¹⁴. Some of the cruel customs of Vikings were described by Ibn Fadlan, and the same savage pagan tradition was applied when Saint Ludmila was assassinated. It demonstrates how pagan Vikings affected the life of Slavic people in Russia and Bohemia.

Having conducted thorough research about contacts between Viking Age Russia and Czechia, we suggest that Scandinavians arrived in Russia, expanded their influence, established a reliable trade route from the North of Ladoga to Byzantium, and most importantly, became the rulers of the Russian lands and started the Rurik dynasty. Rurik Princes were the ones who established contacts with neighboring countries, one of which was Czechia.

Hence, after analyzing primary and secondary resources we propose that further ties of Czechia with Russia, are the ties with the descendents of Vikings. It is confirmed by several archaeological findings and sources. Firstly, Saint Wenceslas helmet has Scandinavian elements, an image of the pagan deity Odin. The helmet might have been brought from Russia, altered in Czechia, but preserved a Viking symbol of a God’s warrior. Besides, Saint Ludmila was assassinated by Vikings who performed a sort of Scandinavian ritual, killing her, the same that was described by Ibn Fadlan in his account of traveling Russia. Both murders symbolized the transition of a bride to the other world, performed with cruelty and harshness.

After adopting Christianity, Vikings in Kievan Rus established and extended their spiritual and religious contacts. After dynastic marriages that took place between the ruling families of Přemyslid and Rurik, Russian wives adhered to the Orthodox faith and supported Slavic monks, or coming back to Russia, spread their knowledge of Czech martyrs. As a result, appeared the cult of Saint Wenceslas and Saint Ludmila in Russia which means that Vikings started venerating Czech martyrs. Additionally, the finding of Dagmar’s Cross indicates that Dagmar of Bohemia and later the Queen of Denmark had an Orthodox Cross. That means how Vikings’ newly adopted Christianity in its Byzantium form penetrated Czechia and was kept, despite the overwhelming influence of the Catholic Church.

Thus, the present paper starts the research of Czech- Russian contacts in a new direction, in the light of the interaction of Czech with the Vikings, since the Russian ruling family, who initiated and maintained connections with Czechia was of Scandinavian origin, which is proved by numerous primary sources. The intensity of the time reached its peak in the second part of the 10th century due to Christianization, common border, pol, political interests, and

²¹⁴Mueller-Vollmer and Kristen Wolf, *Viking: An Encyclopedia of Conflict, Invasion, and Raids*, 204.

dynastic ties, and then declined. We may also suggest that due to huge progress in science, it is possible to conduct a DNA analysis of available archaeological findings. It will greatly contribute to the consideration of the problem in the new light.

Finally, in the course of the research, many Russian primary and secondary sources are used that have never been translated into the English language, or used in Western studies. We analyzed and contributed this essential layer of sources and historical literature to have a clearer understanding of the events that took place in Ancient Russia, enabling us to evaluate from a new perspective.

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