

Week 3. Appanage Russia in the 12-13th century:
the age of division and defeat.

Cultural heritage of the pre-Mongolian period.

The appanage system

- By the mid-12th century Kievan Russia was split into several appanages.
- These appanages were governed by almost independent princes' dynasties, Kiev was losing its supreme authority.
- There were around 12 big appanages on the territory of the former state. Each of them had a principle city.
- Because of this independence, these appanages had different directions of development.

12 major principalities (duchy or princedom)



The split and its consequences

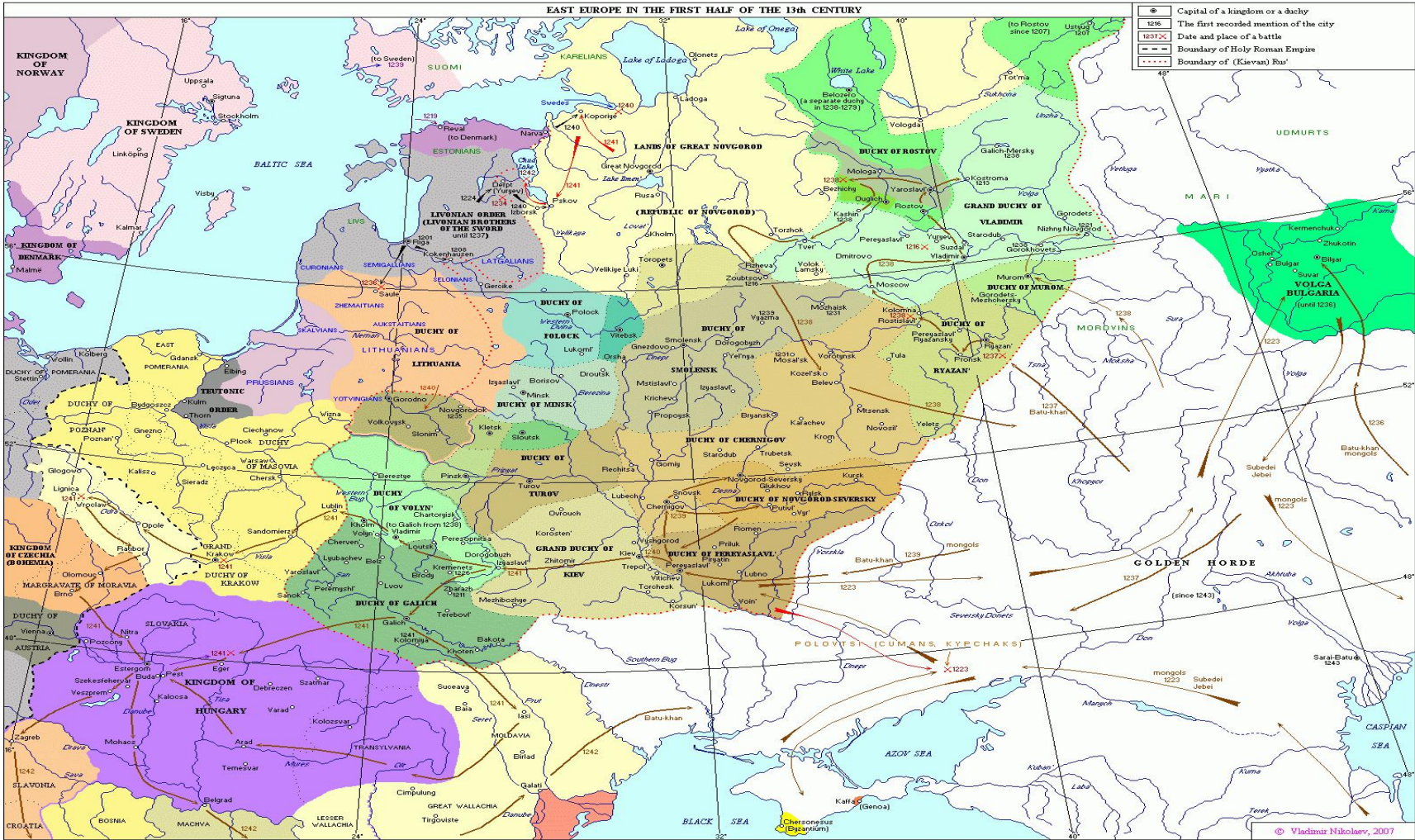
Victory of the princes over the infidels is gone, for now brother said to brother: 'This is mine, and that is mine also,' and the princes began to say of little things, 'Lo! This is a great matter,' and to forge discord against themselves. And on all sides the infidels were victoriously invading the Russian land.'

The Lay of the Host of Igor (S. Cross's transl.)

Most important appanages and their locations

- North-eastern region – major cities Vladimir and Suzdal, the areas of intensive colonization in the 10th-11th centuries, later formed the center of the Russian state (Moscow state, since the 14th century).
- Northern region: Novgorod, the center of republican state with large colonies in the north.
- South-western region: later occupied by Lithuanian and Polish states, nowadays forms the western part of Ukraine.
- North-western region (Polotsk): occupied by Lithuanians in the 14th century, later formed the center of modern Belorussia.
- Southern region (including Kiev) suffered the most from the foreign invasions.

Russian states and their neighbors in the early 13th century



Geographical approach

- In this course we will cover only north-eastern and northern areas (Novgorod), as they were the most important in the future development of the Russian State (Moscow state).
- Nevertheless, other areas also had very complicated history and important cultural achievements, especially notable, as nowadays southern and north-western lands of Kievan Russia form the independent states of Ukraine and Belorussia.
- For the general outline of the history of these southern and north-western lands in the 12th-14th centuries, see the textbook.

Vladimir Monomakh

- The reign of Vladimir Monomakh, the grandson of Yaroslav and the grandson of the Byzantine Emperor, in Kiev (1113-1125) is considered to be the time of revival of the Kievan state.
- He fought with the numerous external enemies, most notably the Polovtsy, the tribes of the Turkic origin in southern steppes.
- Monomakh also fought with the Baltic tribes, Finnish tribes, and the Volga Bulgars.
- He was an outstanding organizer and administrator, a builder. He organized the congresses of princes to seek union against the Polovtsy.

Cultural contributions

- Monomakh possibly founded the city of Vladimir, which later became the center of the north-eastern region and the seat of the great prince in the late 12th-13th centuries.
- Monomakh was a literate person and an able writer. His short self-biography and “Testament” are considered to be monuments of old Russian literature.

Vladimir Monomakh hunting, 20th cent. painting



Monomakh's family and its international connections

- Vladimir was married three times (in succession) and had numerous children from each of wives.
- Some sources cite his first wife as Gytha of Wessex, a daughter of King Harold of England who fell at Hastings (1066).
- The second wife, Eufimia, is considered to have been a Byzantine noblewoman.
- His third marriage is thought to have been to a daughter of Aepa Ocenevich, Khan of the Polovtsy.
- His daughter married a Byzantine prince, pretender to the throne of the Byzantine empire. Another daughter married the King of Hungary. His grand-daughter married the Byzantine Emperor.

“Monomakh’s cap”: according to the legend, was brought to Russia by his mother, Byzantine princess



Vladimir Monomakh's descendants

- Vladimir Monomakh had many children. He was succeeded by his able and energetic son Mstislav (ruled in 1125-32) and after him, by another son, Iaropolk, who ruled until his death in 1139.
- Another his son, Iurii Dolgorukii, i.e. George the Long Arm, was appointed by Monomakh as the ruler of Suzdal in the north-east. It is an old city, situated not far from Moscow.
- Iurii continuously fought for the Kievan throne with his nephews, and eventually succeeded.
- The main purpose of Iurii Dolgorukii was to strengthen his own land in the north-east. This policy was continued by Iurii's sons: Andrei Bogoliubskii and Vsevolod Third (Vsevolod the Large Nest).
- Moscow was founded by Iurii Dolgorukii ca. 1147.

Monument to Iurii Dolgorukii in Moscow



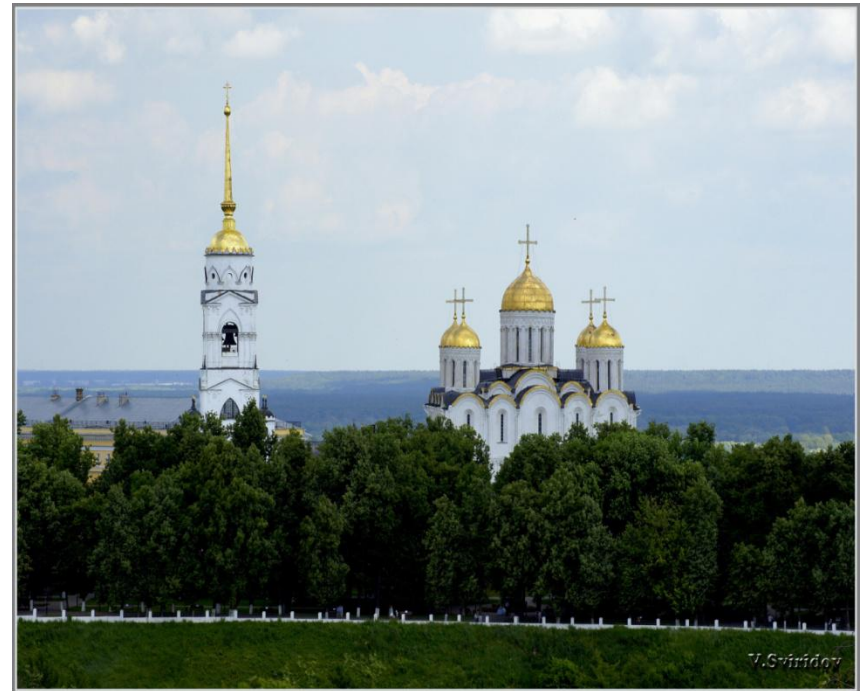
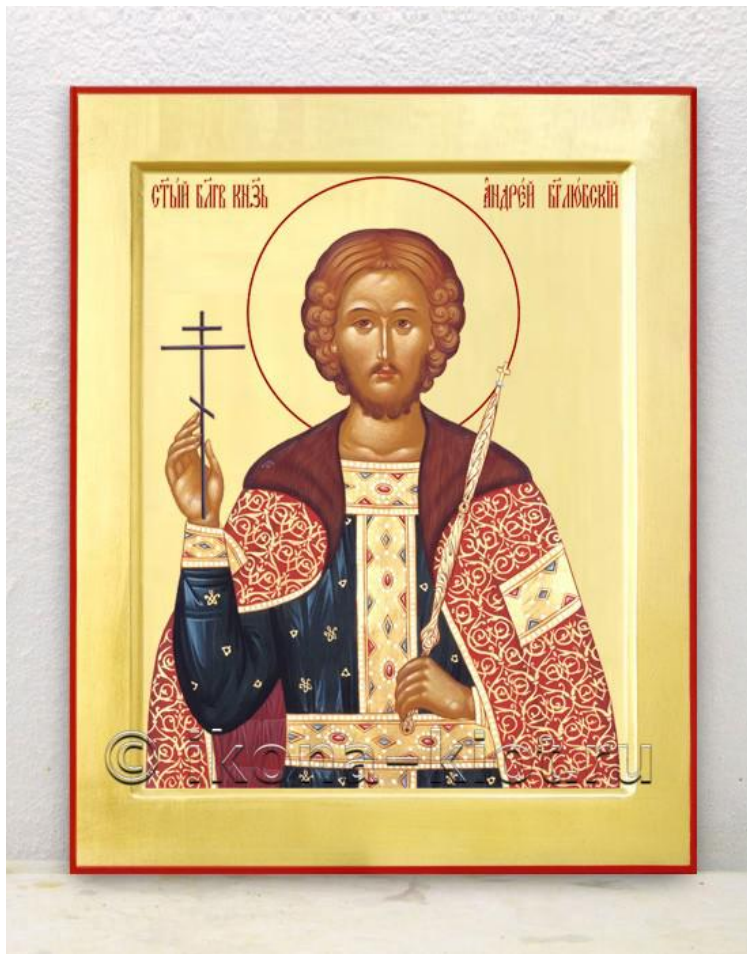
First Kreml' in Moscow (12th century)



Andrei Bogoliubskii and Vsevolod Third (Vsevolod the Large Nest)

- Andrei Bogoliubskii captured Kiev in 1169 and plundered it. He did not stay in Kiev, but transferred the seat of the great prince to his favorite city of Vladimir in the northeast.
- Andrei was killed in a conspiracy in 1174 , but was succeeded by his brother Vsevolod Third (Vsevolod the Large Nest) in 1176. He was the third Russian grand prince with this name. He had the nickname of the Large Nest, as he had many sons, who also ruled as separate princes in the northeastern lands.

Andrei Bogoliubskii and his capital Vladimir



Novgorod and its place in Russian history

- When the might and authority of Kiev declined, Novgorod became the true capital of northern Russia as well as the greatest trading center and the leading center of the entire country.
- The city of Novgorod was founded not later than the 8th century. According to the Primary Chronicle, it was to the Novgorod that Riurik came in 862. It remained the important center during the Kievan period. It formed the northern base of the celebrated trade route “from the Varangians to the Greeks”.
- It had very convenient location on the river Volkhov, which flows from the Lake Ilmen to Lake Ladoga, opening the way to the Baltic Sea and trade centers around it.
- Important rulers of Kievan Russia started as the princes appointed to govern in Novgorod by their fathers: Saint Vladimir and Iaroslav the Wise, etc.

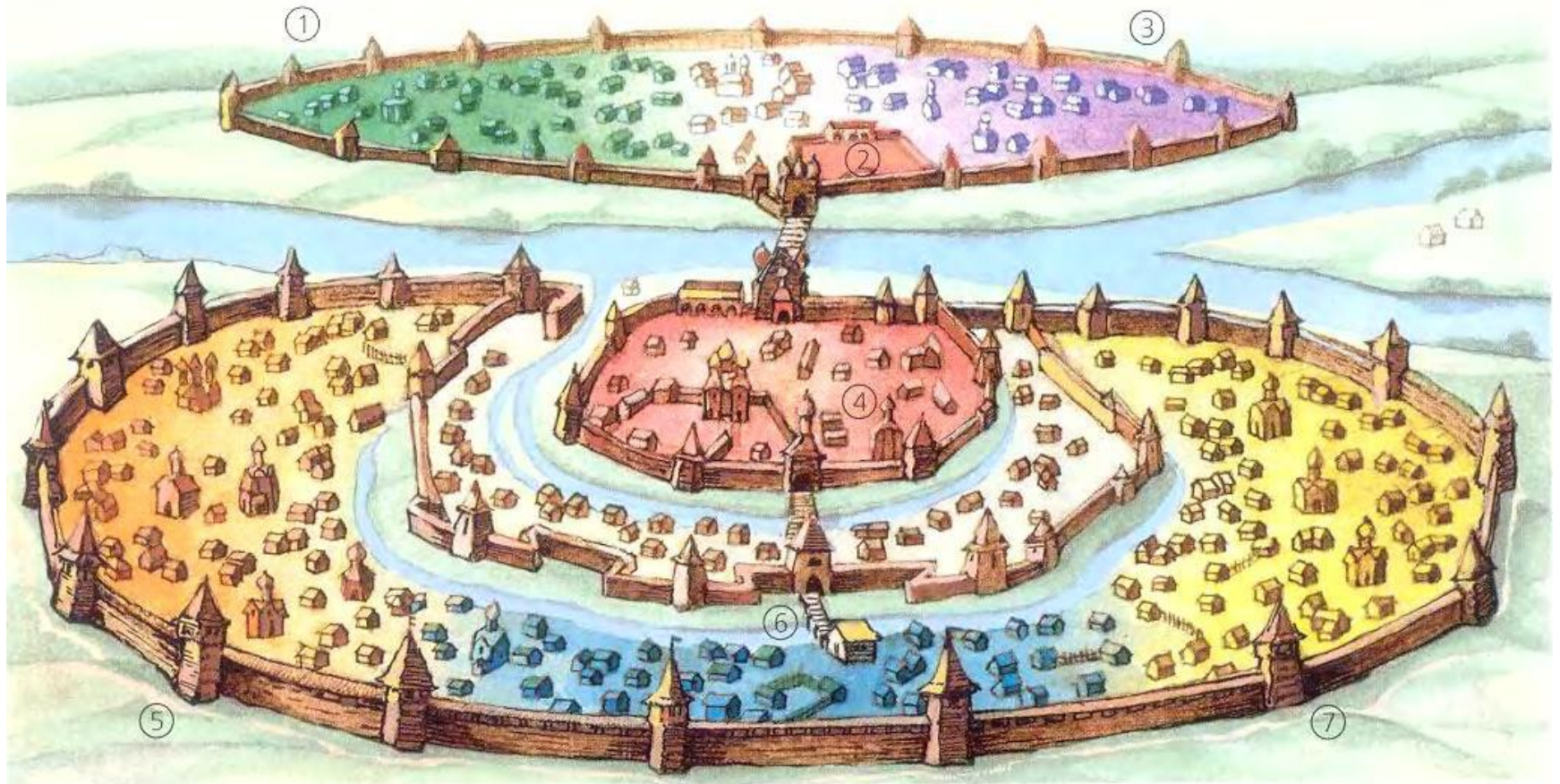
Political structure

- The special political structure of Novgorod was formed, when in 1136 the Novgorodians expelled the prince appointed to them and started to govern by themselves.
- Though the prince retained his office in the later period, its power was limited by the council of the townsfolk, veche.
- Veche usually met in the main market place. It invited and dismissed the prince, elected the important officials-advisors of the prince, and determined the election of the highest priest in the city (archbishop).
- It decided the issues of war and peace, mobilized the army, proclaimed laws, raised taxes, and acted in general as the supreme authority in Novgorod.

Prince in Novgorod

- The prince commanded the army and played a major role in justice and in administration. His rights and duties were regulated in great detail, and all his decisions should have been discussed with the elected officials.

Plan of ancient Novgorod



Fortress (Kreml') of Novgorod, the religious center



Market place in Novgorod (modern painting)



Achievements of Novgorod

- The princes of Novgorod later became very famous, because they effectively fought with the foreign enemies, for example Alexander Nevskii.
- Novgorod escaped the invasion of Mongols in the mid-13th century, which led to the development of its trade and culture.



- Andrei Bogoliubskii's attack on Novgorod in 1169 was not successful.
- The Novgorodians attributed their victory to the miraculous icon and divine help.

Democracy in Novgorod

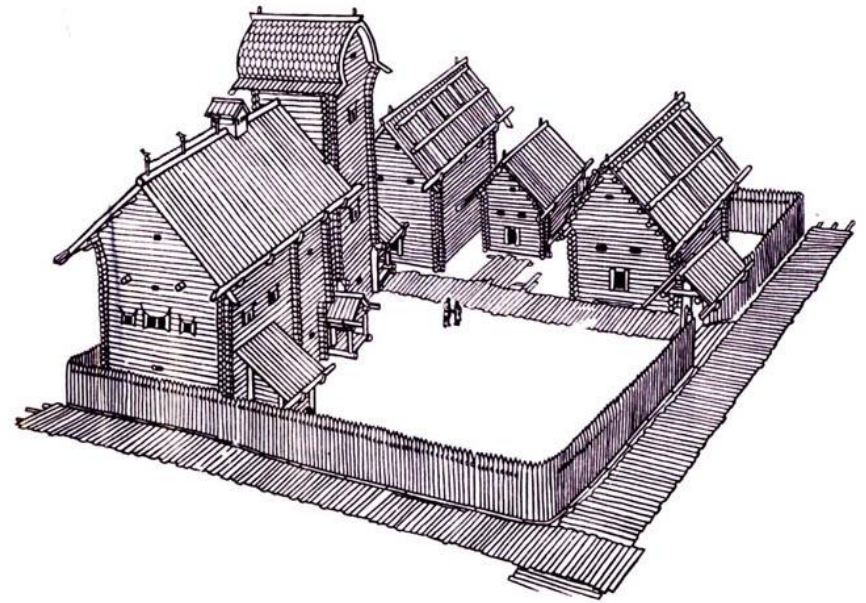
- Though the veche (council) in Novgorod was quite effective and was composed of all free householders, it had some drawbacks.
- For example, because the unanimity of decisions was required by the old law, veche members often engaged in bloody struggles over important issues.
- The Council of Nobles, who represented the standing committee of veche, quite soon became dominated by several aristocratic families. The representatives of these families occupied main elected official positions for generations (inherited positions), which caused the conflicts with the commoners.
- This political structure eventually appeared weak in the struggle of Novgorod with Moscow. In 1471 Novgorod was defeated and occupied by the grand prince of Moscow which was the end of his democracy and independence.

Novgorod in the international trade

- Novgorod was a big trade center, it traded on a large scale with the ports of the Baltic coast line (mainly German), its goods also reached England, Flanders and other distant countries.
- Most exported items included furs, wax, and honey; imported items included manufactured goods and metals.
- Novgorod served as an intermediary point in trade relations of East and West.
- Because of the needs of trade, the merchants of Novgorod explored the northern forests, and soon reached the coast of Arctic ocean. Novgorod colonies became important cities in the north of Russia (such as Vologda, Viatka, etc.)

Peculiar culture of Novgorod

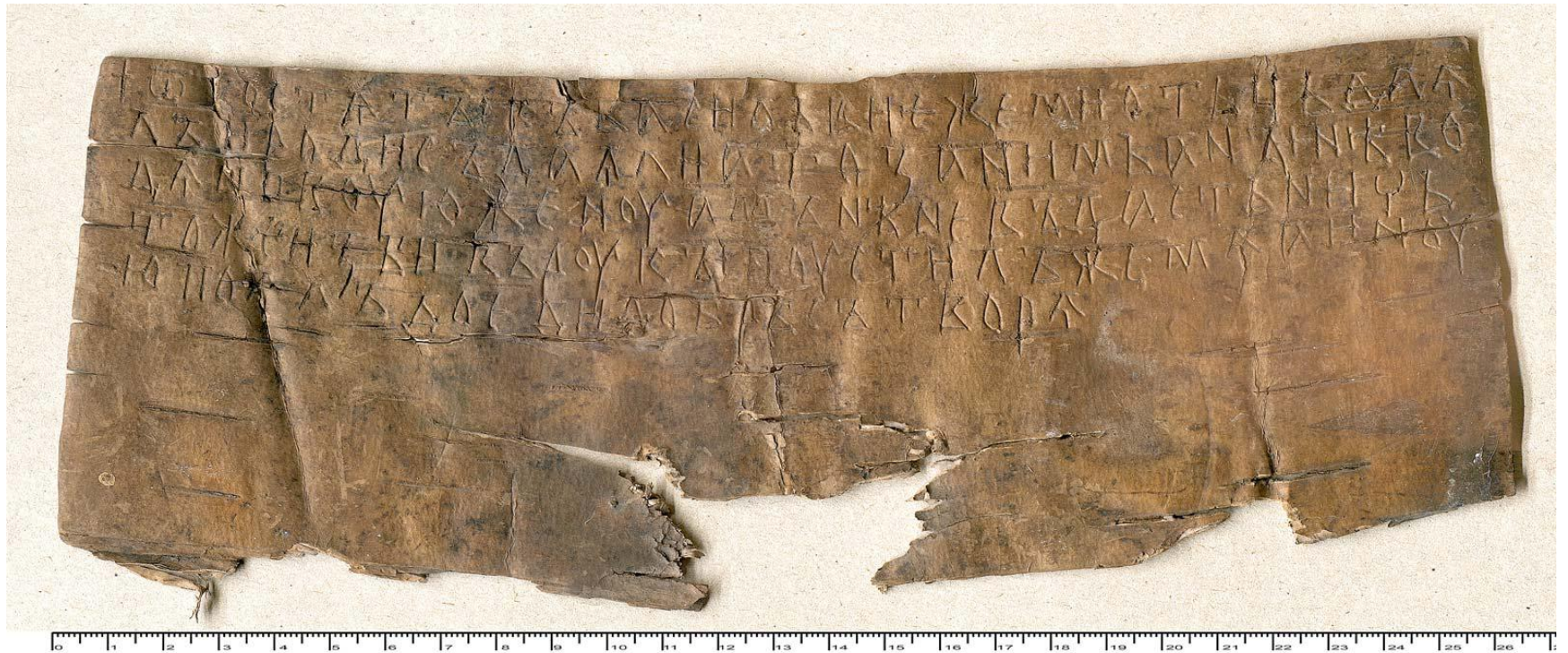
- Local initiative, trade, and autonomy constituted special features of Novgorod.
- The streets were paved with wood.
- On the left – reconstruction of a typical estate in Novgorod.



“Birchbark letters”

- During the archeological search, Soviet scholars discovered ca. 700 birchbark documents, usually short businesslike notes or messages, which suggest a considerable spread of literacy among the general population of that city.
- This was quite unusual at that time and different from most Western countries.

A birchbark letter from Novgorod



Cultural heritage of the pre-Mongolian period: Florinsky's view

Old customs and beliefs have left but a slightest trace in the documents of the earlier period, and no systematic attempt to record the national epic was made until the middle of the 19th century. Moreover, it is generally admitted that the survival of folklore has suffered important modifications in the course of time. Under these conditions any attempt to present a comprehensive survey of Russian cultural developments previous to the 17th century meets with insurmountable obstacles and is necessarily incomplete and one-sided. The sources have preserved merely the Christian literature, while the bulk of the national epic has been irretrievably lost... The early literary efforts of native origin were hardly more than slavish imitations of the Byzantine patterns.

Two religions of the Slavic people

- The Slavic people of Kievan Russia had two religions in succession: paganism and Christianity.
- Paganism included a deification of the forces of nature, animism (worship of different objects), and a worship of ancestral spirits.
- St. Vladimir's efforts to strengthen paganism did not last for a long time, as he converted to Christianity, the whole country was baptized.
- This conversion in the 10th century proceeded quickly and relatively painlessly, though we know some instances of the use of force by the government and of certain rebellions.
- However, the historians still argue about the effectiveness of the baptism of Russia. Many commoners retained many pagan beliefs and practices, some of them were incorporated into Christianity.
- This situation of "the double faith" is reflected in the later folklore: however, folk spirits usually are subordinated by the Christian priests.

Christianity and Russian culture

- Following the schism in the Christian church in 1054, Russian church followed the Orthodox tradition of the Greek church (Byzantine). That is why Catholicism became foreign to the Russian culture (e.g. enmity against Poland, Germany, and Sweden).
- Significant Greek influence on the native culture is well-observable in the period of Kievan Russia.
- Most metropolitans (highest clergy) of Kiev were the Greeks, they brought together with them the highly developed Greek culture, art, and thought.
- Speaking about the state of the Russian church at that time, one should note both copying the Greek examples and the changes to fit Russian circumstances.

The role of Russian Christianity (initial period)

- Church had quite important social and political role. The metropolitan usually tried to make peace between Russian princes in their conflicts.
- There were two types of priests in the Russian Orthodoxy (unlike Catholicism): the white and black. Black clergy (monks) were engaged in different philanthropic and educational activities.
- The Church operated hospitals and hostels, schools, etc.
- The role of the Church was important in creation of the earliest Russian literature (in Church Slavonic language)

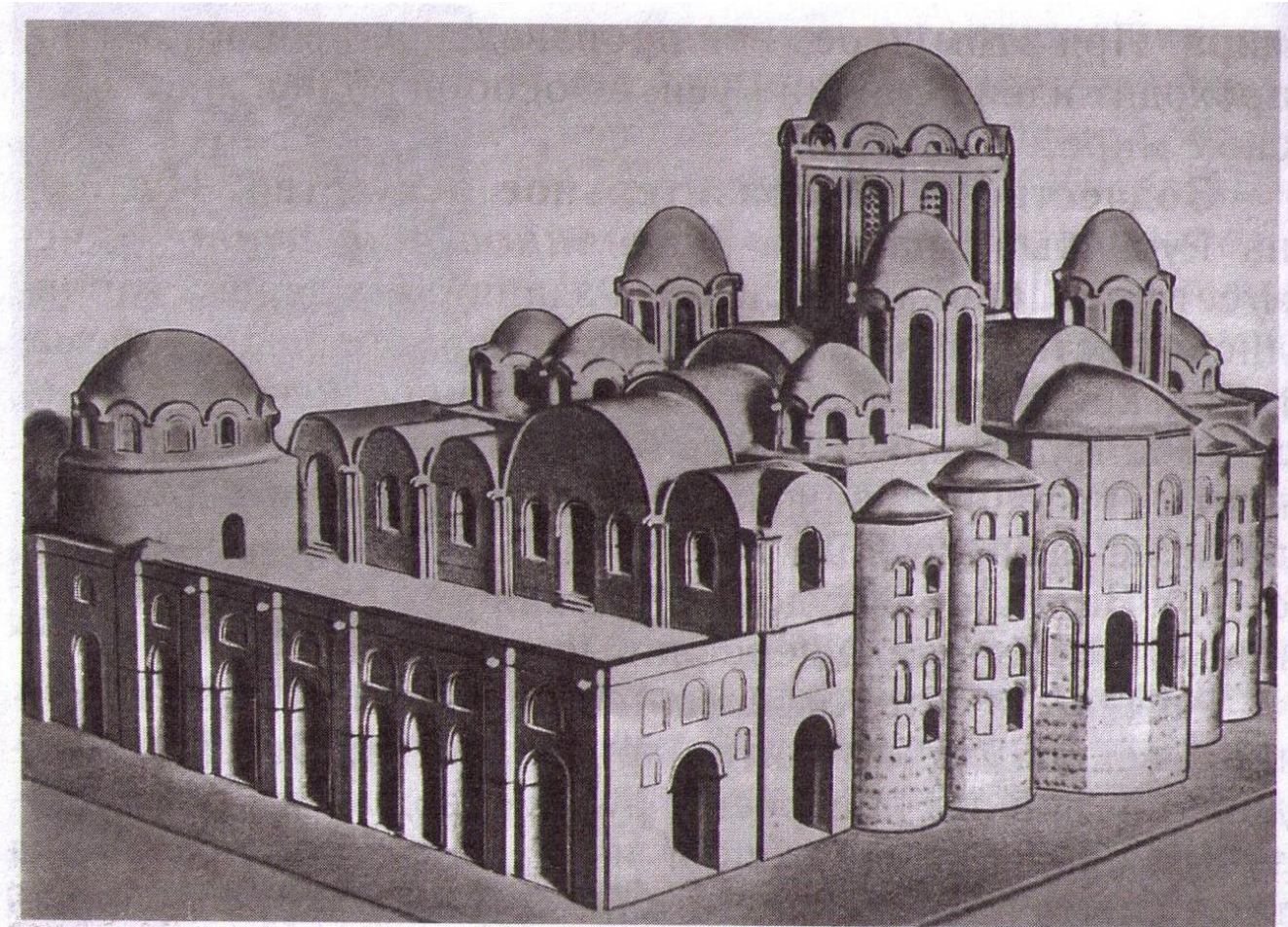
Special features of Russian Christianity (initial period)

- In certain important respects the Russian church could not compete with the Greek church of Byzantium. For example, theology and philosophy did not develop in the Russian lands.
- Yet, ethical and esthetic traditions of Russia were quite peculiar.
- This Russification of Byzantine Christianity became gradually apparent in the emergence of Kievan saints, in the creative growth of Church architecture and art, its total influence on Russian society and culture.
- Who were the first Kievan saints? (in your textbook). They embody the Christian virtues of Russia.

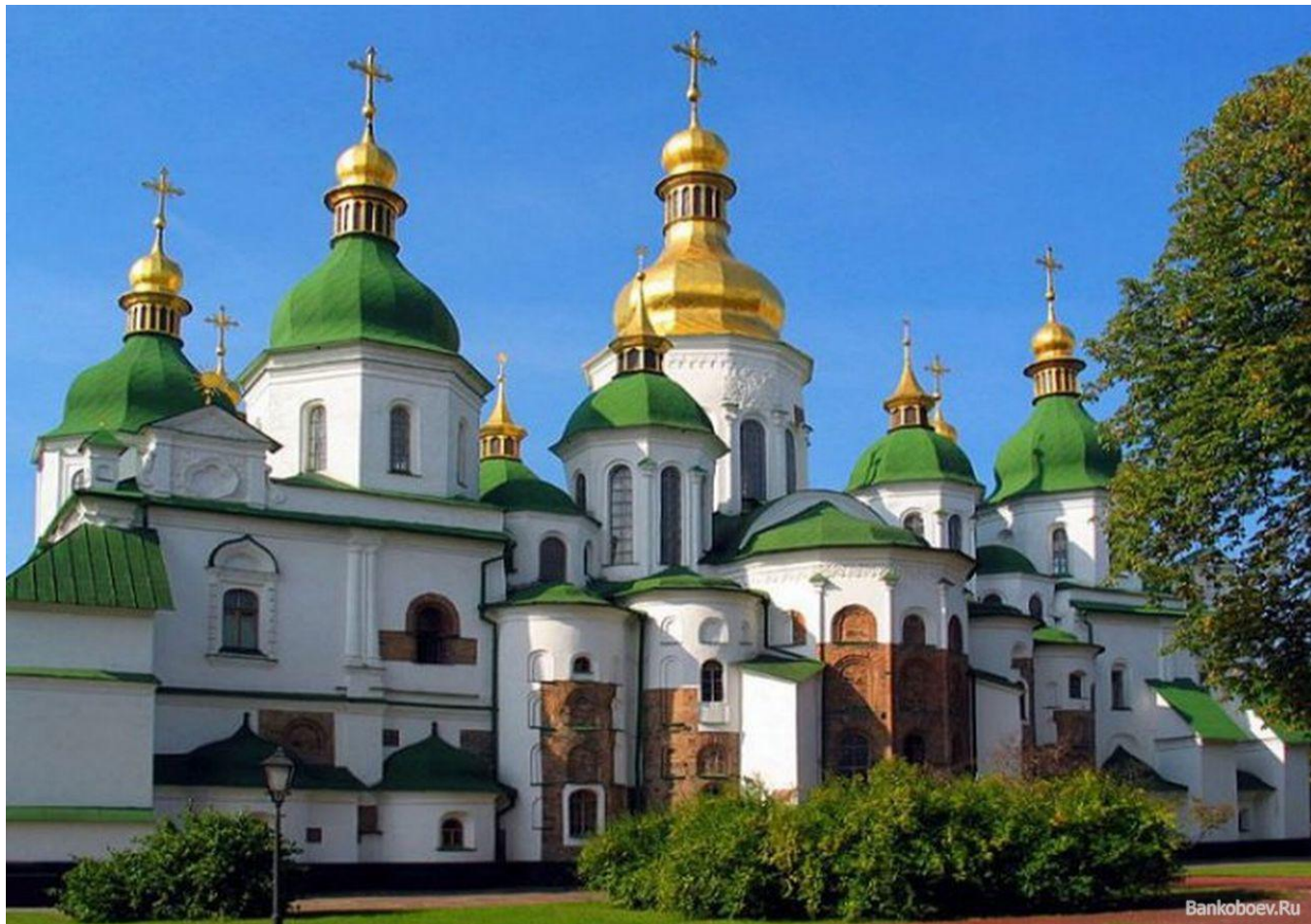
Saint Boris and Gleb: an old icon



Architecture: church buildings



St. Sofiia Cathedral in Kiev, built in 1037, modern view



St. Sofiia Cathedral in Kiev, mosaics-1



St. Sofiia Cathedral in Kiev, mosaics-2



St. Sofiia Cathedral in Kiev, musicians and acrobats



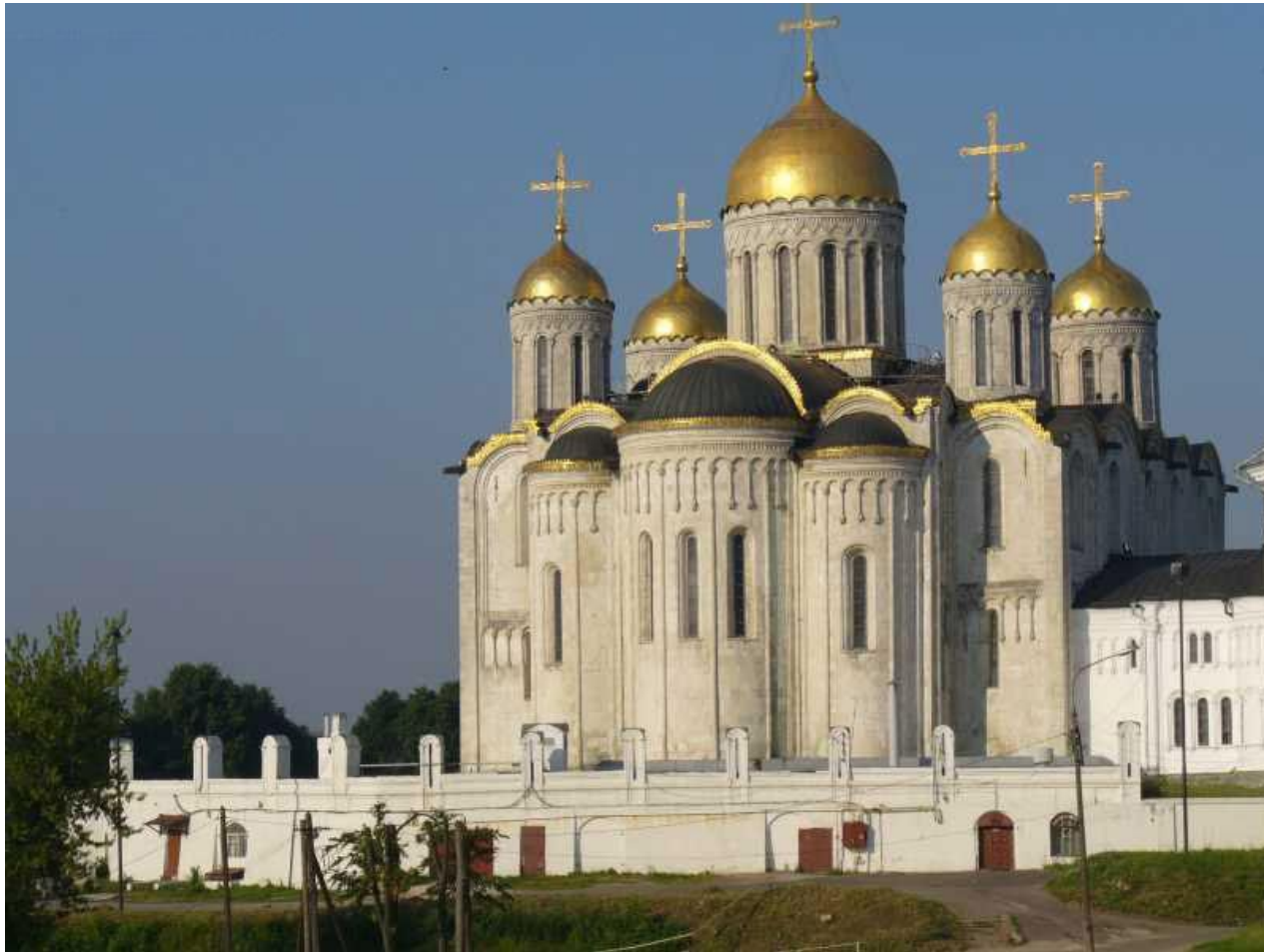
St. Sofiia Cathedral in Novgorod (1045-1050)



St. Sofiia Cathedral in Polotsk (in modern Bielorussia): originally built btw. 1030 and 1060



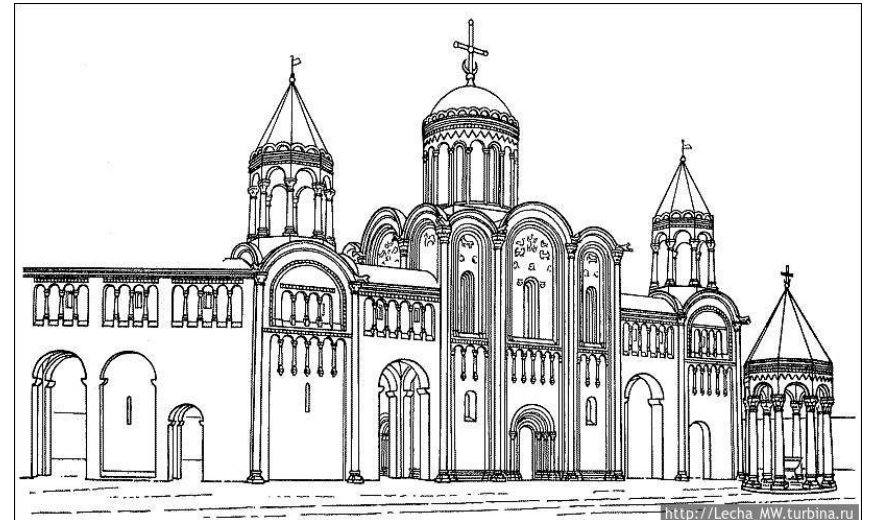
The Assumption Cathedral in Vladimir city, middle 12th century



“Golden Gates” of Vladimir, middle 12th century



The palace of Andrei Bogoliubskii in Vladimir, middle 12th century



Church of Intercession of the Holy Virgin (Pokrova na Nerli), middle 12th century



Icon of St. Mary of Vladimir, middle 12th century



“Angel with the Golden Hair”, end of the 12th century



Bronze gates of St. Sofiia Cathedral in Novgorod, 11th century



Bronze gates of St. Sofiia Cathedral in Novgorod, 11th century, a detail



Jewelry of the Kievan period (12th century)



Language and literature

- Written literature apparently appeared with the conversion to Christianity (but there are different views now).
- Since the 10th century, used the Cyrillic alphabet, invented by St. Cyril and St. Methodius (from the modern Bulgaria), suited specially to the Slavic languages.
- The language of the Church and its literature was Church Slavonic, which was based on the languages of southern Slavs (Bulgarians).
- Nevertheless, the literature in the Old Russian language also developed by the 12th century. This literature was influenced by the folklore, which was well-developed in Kievan Russia.
- The masterpiece of this written literature is *The Lay of the Host of Igor*.

The Lay of the Host of Igor

- There has been a controversy among the historians of Russian literature about the genuine nature of this piece.
- The tale talks about the war of the local prince of Putivl' (now near Kursk) against the Polovtsy, which was not successful.
- It describes the battle and the sorrow's of the Igor's capture, as well as the feelings of the Grand Prince Sviatoslav in Kiev and the laments of the Igor's loving wife Yaroslavna.
- The story concludes with Igor's escape from his captors and the joy of his return to Russia.
- This narrative is praised for its poetic language, descriptions of feelings, nature, foreign lands and customs. For many centuries it remained unsurpassed in the old Russian literature.

The Lay of the Host of Igor, modern illustrations



Prince Igor, an opera by A.P. Borodin, written in 1870-1887



© Mariinsky Theatre | Valentin Baranovsky

“A lament of Yaroslavna”, prince Igor’s wife



Church literature

- One should note the role of the Church literature in the history of Russia.
- It contained Church service books, numerous translations of the parts of Old and New Testament, and lives of the saints.
- Biographies of the saints were the earliest original Russian written narratives.
- The earliest historical chronicles also were created by the monks.
- For example, the Primary Chronicle, compiled by the Kievan monk Nestor at the beg. of the 12th cent., is our primary source of the early Russian history.
- The early historical chronicles are praised for their historical sense, realism, and richness of detail.
- Regional chronicles, such as those of Novgorod and Vladimir, a number of which survive, also flourished in Kievan Russia.