Week 2: Kievan Russia (9\textsuperscript{th}-11\textsuperscript{th} centuries)
The appearance of the Kievan State

• In the 18th century German scholars who worked at the Russian Academy of Sciences in St. Petersburg suggested the Norman (Scandinavian) theory of the beginning of Kievan State.

• This view stressed the role of vikings from Skandinavia (Normans) in the establishment of the first unified Russian state and their influence on the Russian culture.
“Invitation of the Norsemen”

The original account of this event is found in the Primary Chronicle. In the year 862 the quarrelling East Slavic tribes in the area of Novgorod invited “the Varangian Russes”:

“They accordingly went overseas to the Varangian Russes: these particular Varangians were known as Russes, just as some are called Swedes, and others Normans, Angles, and Goths, for they were thus named. The Chuds, the Slavs, and the Krivichians then said to the people of Rus, ‘Our whole 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 kinsfolk, who took with them all the Russes and migrated. The oldest, Rurik, located himself in Novgorod; the second, Sineus, in Byeloozero; and the third, Truvor, in Izborsk. On account of these Varangians, the district of Novgorod became known as the land of the Rus. The present inhabitants of Novgorod are descended from the Varangian race, but aforetime they were Slavs.”
“Invitation of the Norsemen” (picture in the manuscript of the Primary Chronicle)
“Invitation of the Norsemen” (modern picture)
Current views of the Norman theory

- The same historical source says that the first rulers of Kiev, Oleg (r. 882-913) was the Rurik’s relative and Igor (913-945) was the Rurik’s son.
- This theory has been criticized by the majority of native Russian historians.
- Still, several modern scholars accept the strong presence of the Normans in Russia in the 9th century.
- In particular the names of the first rulers, to and excluding Sviatoslav, as well as the names of many of their followers in the treaties with Byzantium, have Scandinavian origins.
- Western sources also testify for the Norman influence in Russia.
The great commercial route “from the Varangians to the Greeks”

- Connected Scandinavia with the Balkans and Constantinople (Byzantium).
- The goods were transported by boats along major river routes.
- Major cities of Rus developed on these trade routes (Novgorod, Smolensk, Kiev, Chernigov, etc.)
- The Varangians were present on this routes for a long time.
The great commercial route “from the Varangians to the Greeks” (8th-9th centuries)
Critique of the Norman theory

• The Chronicle referred to Novgorod, but Rus became identified with the Kievan state.
• The original assertion of the Norman influence on Russia was made before the early history of southern Russia had been discovered.
• The cultural influence of Scandinavia was not significant in the southern part of Russia.
• Later historians discovered that the name Rus had been known to some Byzantine and Oriental writers before 862 CE and was evidently located in southern Russia.
The origin of the name Rus

• Most historians conducted the search for the name Rus, in most cases unsuccessful.
• Different theories of its origins were suggested:
  1. From the Finnish word for the Swedes, Ruotsi.
  2. From the topographic (geographic) terms, ranging from the ancient word for the Volga river (Rha), to Slavic names for different rivers.
  3. From the names of ancient tribes living on the territory of modern Russia.
Russian “compromise” hypothesis of the “Rus” origins

• Rus-Ros had both a Scandinavian and a southern derivation, both groups merged in the later period (Kievan Rus).
History of Kievan Russia: 3 periods

• The first period starts with Oleg’s semi-legendary occupation of the city of Kiev in 882 and continues until 972 or 980.

• The second period: the period of prosperity, mainly the reigns of Saint Vladimir (978-1015) and Iaroslav (Yaroslav) the Wise (1016-1054).

• The third period: decline and fall, ca. 12th century. Kiev was plundered and destroyed many times at the end of the 12th-13th centuries by Russian princes as well as the foreign invaders.
First Norman rulers of Kiev: Oleg (882-912), Riurik’s relative, and Igor (913-945), Riurik’s son
Oleg seizes Kiev

In 882 Oleg together with Igor went to Kiev from the north (Novgorod), killed the local Norman rulers (who had been associates of Riurik before) and established the new state with the center in Kiev.
The first period of the Kievan state

• Kievan princes brought the different East Slavic tribes under their power, exploiting successfully the position of Kiev on the famous trade routes. Besides trade, Kievan princes attacked the Byzantine Empire, including its capital, Constantinople.

• In 907, Oleg (882-912) defeated Byzantine and nailed his shield on the gates of Constantinople as a sign of his victory.
Oleg’s victory over Byzantine (19th century picture)
The death of Oleg: the legend of tragic prophecy
The story of Olga: the first female ruler and Christian ruler of Rus

- Olga (945-962) was a wife of Igor (913-945), Riurik’s son.
- Igor perished when he was collecting tribute from the neighbor tribe of Drevliane (the People of Woods).
- Igor’s son Sviatoslav was still a child, when his father was killed. Olga became a regent of the Kievan state.
The first task of Olga was to revenge the prince of Drevliane, who had killed her husband. This prince proposed Olga to became his wife. His envoys in Kiev were killed. Then Olga devised a plan to destroy the main city of Drevliane tribe. This behavior was in accord with the ancient pagan ideal of “the bloody revenge”.
“The first revenge of Olga”
“The last revenge of Olga”: burning of Iskorosten’
In 954 Olga went to Constantinople herself, where she was baptized. She became the first Orthodox ruler of Russia.
Later on, after the Kievan state accepted Orthodoxy, Olga was recognized as a saint by the Church.
Secret meetings of the Christians in Kiev
Prince Sviatoslav

• Prince Sviatoslav (945-972), the son of Igor, when grew up, became a fearless warrior.
• He engaged in a series of war campaigns and conquests, defeated a variety of enemies: Khazars, Pechenegs, and Bulgars.
• Unlike his mother, did not accept Christianity.
Major enemies in the south: Nomadic tribes of Pechenegs and Polovtsy
Second period: prosperity of Kievan Russia

- This period includes the reigns of Saint Vladimir (978-1015) and Iaroslav (Yaroslav) the Wise (1016-1054).
- In the political aspect, the state remained unified and powerful.
- In the cultural aspect, Saint Vladimir adopted Christianity as the state religion in 988.
Prince Vladimir was converted to Christianity during his campaign against Byzantium. His baptism took place in Crimea.
Prince Vladimir ordered that all people of Kiev should be baptized and the statues of pagan gods should be destroyed.
Baptism of Russia

• Baptism of Russia had enormous influence on the life and culture of Kiev.
• The human sacrifices to pagan gods, multi-wife system and slavery were abolished. Vladimir himself abandoned his numerous wives and married the Byzantine princess.
• In the cultural aspect, Christianity facilitated cultural exchange with Byzantium and other Western states.
• Architecture, painting, music and other arts were influenced by the Byzantine (Greek) models.
• First written literature appeared.
The first Orthodox Church in Kiev – Desiatinnaia Church. It did not survive, below is the modern reconstruction.
Iaroslav (Yaroslav) the Wise (1016-1054)

• Yaroslav was the elder son of Saint Vladimir, first appointed the ruler of Novgorod.
• The state continued to develop quickly during his reign. He signed a trade treaty with Byzantium.
• Yaroslav’s sons and daughters married Western princes and princesses. For example, a Yaroslav’s daughter became the queen of France.
Sofiiskii Cathedral (Sophia) in Kiev: modern reconstruction of the original view, 11th century.
Third period: decline and fall-1

- After the death of Yaroslav the Wise in 1054, the conflicts between the sons of the royal family for the Kievan throne started.
- Originally, every son of the great prince received a territory to rule, Kiev was assigned to the eldest son in the family. For example, after Yaroslav, his eldest son Iziaslav received Kiev and Novgorod, the second – Chernigov, the third – Pereyaslavl’, the fourth – Smolensk, the fifth – Vladimir-in-Volynia.
- The princes moved to the higher appointments after the death of the eldest son, ultimately occupying the highest position in Kiev.
- These cities where the sons were appointed are called “appanage” (Rus. udel).
- However, the rules of succession were very complicated and non-efficient: after the death of the great prince, not his son, but his younger brother inherited the Kievan throne. This caused conflicts of princes and eventually civil wars between them.
Third period: decline and fall-2

- With a constant increase in the number of princes, precise calculations of appropriate appointments became extremely difficult.
- In 1097, after another internal conflict between princes, the princes held a meeting in Liubech (near Kiev), where they agreed that the principle of succession from father to son should prevail. This was a turning point in the formation of independent appanages (appanage Russia).
- 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.
- In 1169 the prince of the city of Vladimir, Andrei Bogoliubskii, who was a contender for the Kievan throne, seized Kiev from his distant relatives, plundered the city and moved capital to his appanage in Vladimir. This marked the political and economic decline of Kiev.
Economics of Kievan Russia

• According to the foreign historical records, the main concern of the Kievan prince in the 10th century was to gather tribute from subject territories, construct boats and organization of the foreign trade expeditions.

• Major military campaigns of the Rus against the Greeks (Byzantium) had the purpose of sign effective trade treaties.

• The majority of population in the Kievan state were engaged in agriculture, crafts and arts.
Major commercial routes

• The goods were transported by boats along major river routes.
• The most important “transportation rivers” were Dnieper (Kiev was built near it), Volhov (near Novgorod), and Volga.
• The wish to control the river routes explains the campaigns against the Bulgars and Hazars, living near the Volga.
Foreign trade:

- Major trade partners: Byzantium, Oriental countries (Iran, the Arabs), Western countries (Poland and Germany).
- Russian exports consisted primarily of raw materials, in particular furs, wax, and honey. Other items for sale included flax, hemp, tow, burlap, hops, sheepskin, and hides (skin).
- In return the Kievan Russians purchased such luxury goods as wines, silk fabrics, and objects of art from Byzantium, and spices, precious stones, and various fine fabrics from the Orient.
- Large communities of foreign merchants lived in the Russian cities. The trade contacts played an important role in the spread of Christianity.
Internal trade

Also developed rapidly. This development was rooted in the natural division of the country into the steppe and the forest: the grain-producing south and the grain-consuming north. Thus, the exchange was necessary. Nevertheless, agriculture developed in the north as well. In the steppe agriculture was extensive: the peasant cultivated new, good, and easily available land as his field became less productive.

In the forest agriculture was intensive. Peasants cultivated a part of the their land, while the other part was left hallow (“resting”), with alternation of the two after a number of years.
Cities became great centers of trade and handicrafts: especially Novgorod
Social order:

- At the top stood the prince and the ever increasing princely family, followed by retainers of the prince (Rus. druzhina).
- The retainers (warriors) together with the local aristocracy formed the upper class of aristocrats (boyare). They formed the council of the boyars (Rus. Duma), which worked in coordination with the prince and discussed the most important state affairs.
- The majority of the towns’ population were known as commoners -- *liudi* (literally “men”), who played quite important political role in the society.
- The bulk of the population were peasants (Rus. *smerdy*), engaged in agriculture.
- The slaves occupied the bottom of the social pyramid.
Democracy in the Kievan state?

- The boyar duma developed from consultations between prince and his immediate retinue (Rus. druzhina).
- It certainly was quite far from the later parliament in Europe, but it represented significant legal limitation of the prince’s power, it played the role of advisor to the prince.
- Town meeting (Rus. veche) was similar to the assemblies of freemen in the European states of the similar period.
- All heads of households could participate in these gatherings, held in the market place and called to decide such basic issues as war and peace, emergency legislation, and conflicts with the prince or between princes.
- Veche became the main power in the later independent state of Novgorod.
The boyar duma
Town meeting (Rus. veche)
Uprisings in Kiev: the first one is dated to 1068, when the Veche expelled prince Iziaslav.
The question of feudalism in Kiev

- Kievan peasants (at least the great majority of them) were free men at the beginning of Kievan history, and remained free throughout the evolution of the Kievan state.
- Bondage gradually increased, which was especially emphasized in the Soviet historiography.
- Several types of bondsmen emerged, who became dependant on the rich landlords, usually as a result of loans.
- Princes and their retainers received land as their property (the appanage system). They possessed the right to collect taxes from the assigned land (Compare with the feudal system in Western Europe).
Heritage of Kievan Russia in the political culture of Russia

• The economical and social development of Kievan Russia, and its particular institutions, deserve study as they influenced greatly the subsequent periods of Russian history.

• The most important institutions of that time included prince and his retinue (military force), the boyars’ council (duma) and the town meeting (veche).
Reasons for the decline and fall of Kiev

The decline and collapse of Kievan Russia was ascribed to a number of factors; there is a considerable controversy about the precise reasons:

1. The loose nature of the Kievan state and its evolution in the directions of further decentralization and feudalism.

2. Social conflicts: gradual enserfment of the peasants by the landlords and the worsening position of the urban poor.

3. Destruction of the trade. The great commercial route “from the Varangians to the Greeks” was cut, the direction of the trade routes changed in the 11th century and bypassed Kiev.

4. Kievan princely political system did not function well.
Internal and external wars
Internal and external wars

• Kiev had to fight countless exhaustive wars on many fronts.
• The most important danger for Kiev came from the southeast (inhabitants of the steppe).
• The Turkic peoples constantly attacked southern Russia: the Pechenegs replaced the Khazars, and the Polovtsy (Kumans) – the Pechenegs, but the fighting continued.
• After the Polovtsy and Kievan Russians started to seek union with each other, the Mongols arrived and eventually destroyed Kiev in 1240.
• Ecological crisis: deforestation weakened the military defenses of Kiev.