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MA Thesis in Comparative History, with a specialization
in Late Antique, Medieval, and Renaissance Studies.

**Axing the Volkhv:
Magic & Sorcery in the Tale of Bygone Years**

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Joshua Michael Duffield

(USA)

Thesis submitted to the Department of Medieval Studies,
Central European University Private University, Vienna, in partial fulfillment of the
requirements of the Master of Arts degree in Comparative History, with a specialization in
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Accepted in conformance with the standards of the CEU.

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Author's declaration

I, the undersigned, **Joshua Michael Duffield**, candidate for the MA degree in Comparative History, with a specialization in Late Antique, Medieval, and Renaissance Studies, with a specialization in Interdisciplinary Medieval Studies declare herewith that the present thesis is exclusively my own work, based on my research and only such external information as properly credited in notes and bibliography. I declare that no unidentified and illegitimate use was made of the work of others, and no part of the thesis infringes on any person's or institution's copyright. I also declare that no part of the thesis has been submitted in this form to any other institution of higher education for an academic degree.

Vienna, _____2023

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Abstract

Axing the Volkhv: Magic & Sorcery in the Tale of Bygone Years

Joshua Michael Duffield (USA)

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Magic, sorcery, the Devil, Christianization, and consolidation of political authority are major topics discussed in the medieval Kyivan Rus' by the monks of the Cave Monastery through the chronicle tradition. This study will use the *Povest Vremennykh Let'* in its Laurentian redaction in order to analyze sorcerous activity by male individuals known as the *volkhv* within the Rus' focused on the year 1071. I will specifically look at who the *volkhv* were, attitudes regarding them from within the *Povest Vremennykh Let'*, areas of influence on sorcery, how to define them, and their purpose within the chronicle.

In Chapter 1 I will investigate the historiographic background and research on magic and the Rus'. In Chapter 2 I will analyze traditions and historical heritages regarding magic, demonic belief, and sorcery in the areas abutting the Rurikid dynasty for import of ideas and concepts. Chapter 3 will examine the 1071 *volkhv*, their beliefs and practices, and the threat they posed to the consolidation of the princely realms. Chapter 4 showcases the Antichrist, the Devil, and his demons as they war against the Church while black robed monks use their holy gifts of soothsaying and prayer to fight back.

The Church and the princes of the Rus' were attempting to unify and control a disparate land still undergoing conversion. I will show how the *volkhv* and demonic were turned into a foe and unifying threat for the purposes of completing and motivating this unification while also demonstrating the prospective and present strength of Rus'ian faith. The *volkhv* and the monks stand on opposite ends of the holy spectrum as they both sought to interpret God's providentialism in the world around them. The *volkhv* were turned into a useful polemical tool through the pen of the chroniclers. They were turned from a real group of shamans and service magicians into a concept of sorcerers that used the threat of Antichrist and the Devil in order to urge unity between the Church and the princes.

Chapter 1: Diabolical Beginnings

The lands of the Kyivan Rus' were disparate and prone to shifts in territory (real and imagined) as well as dynastic feuds over control of the prime throne of Kyiv. Christianization as a process officially began under the auspices of Vladimir Svyatoslavich in 988 following his highly publicized and multi-storied conversion. Lay Christianization had undoubtedly begun to spread much earlier outside of the royal line, and treaties with Byzantium acknowledge this in the oaths sworn by the Rus'ian spokespersons. The process was not immediate, however. Prior to Vladimir taking the throne in 980 he had to depose his brother Yaropolk who had himself slain his brother Igor sometime prior. Following Vladimir's death in 1015 his sons Yaroslav, Mstislav, and Svyatopolk tore the lands apart in fratricidal wars. Yaroslav was the final survivor of these wars and seems to have begun the process of sacralization of the princely line. When Yaroslav also died in 1054 after ruling for some time the dynastic conflicts continued, just not immediately following his bones turning cold.

Christianity spread quickly in Kyiv and Novgorod along with the other major centers of princely power and control. In cities the monasteries and churches thrived, allowing the new faith to spread quite efficiently from city to city. Within the border regions the process was slower and counteracted by sorcerous soothsayers called *volkhv* who came from the north. These *volkhv* wandered throughout the entirety of the Rus'ian lands according to the chronicler and seem so have enjoyed acceptance by the local villages and even admittance if not full acceptance to the larger cities. Drawing on a complex inheritance and knowledge of magic the *volkhv* were utilized by the authors of the *Povest Vremennykh Let'* (PVL) as a unifying factor and motivation for the continued efforts to Christianize the Rus' while remaining a legitimate threat in their own right. They also served as a comparative tool to showcase the power of God's gifts to his worshippers. The Christianization of the Rus' provided power for the Church, and a unifying force that gave legitimacy to the princes and their right to rule the lands they

claimed as part of the Rurikid dynasty. The *volkhv* were a threat, but one that could be exploited for political purposes by the Rus'ian nobility.

The year in question is 1071 and:

At this time, a magician appeared inspired by the devil. He came to Kiev and informed the inhabitants that after the lapse of five years the Dnieper would flow backward, and that the various countries would change their locations, so that Greece would be where Rus' was, and Rus' where Greece was, and that other lands would similarly be dislocated. The ignorant believed him...¹

“Repair Roads and Build Bridges”²

The *volkhv* remain one of the earliest known practitioners of magic within the Rus', possibly predating recorded knowledge of the *ved'ma* (witch) and certainly predating references to the *koldun* (village magician, heretic/*eretik*, wizard). Both W.F. Ryan's *The Bathhouse at Midnight* and Valerie Kivelson & Christine Worobec's *Witchcraft in Russia and Ukraine 1000-1900* touch on these early magic workers only briefly. Both studies justly note that there is little writing from the early Rus' in comparison to the later Muscovite Tsardom, even in comparison to the shift to Vladimir-Suzdal in the nearer 13th century. As a result, the *volkhv* are often mentioned as magicians, lightly touched on, but not heavily examined or subjected to a study of their actions regarding magic, religion, and the purposes of the chroniclers. This study will specifically examine the *volkhv* as seen within the PVL in order to determine their role and function from the viewpoint of the chroniclers of the early Rus'. I seek to expand upon the role

¹ *The Russian Primary Chronicle: Laurentian Text*. trans. Olgerd Sherbowitz-Wetzor, and Samuel Cross. (Cambridge, MA: Medieval Academy of America, 1930.) and *Polnoe sobranie russkikh letopisei: Tom 1, lavrentevskaya letopis*, Leningrad, CCCP: Arkheograficheskaiia komissiiia, Akademiia nauk CCCP, 1926. Accessed October 1, 2022. http://psrl.csu.ru/indexs/index_tom.shtml make up the two versions of the *Povest Vremennykh Let'* that I have used throughout this work. The Russian Primary Chronicle is an English language translation that I have used for general, non-quote, notes and will henceforth be shortened to RPC in all future notes. The *Polnoe sobranie russkikh letopisei* is a project started during the Russian Empire and completed under the auspices of the CCCP and is a typeset version of the *Povest Vremennykh Let'* in Old Church Slavonic that will now be called the PSRL in all future notes. Where I have quoted directly from the text, I will first use the RPC translation in the main body of the thesis and will include page numbers to both the RPC and PSRL along with the Old Church Slavonic in the footnotes. RPC 150, PSRL 174. в си [же] времена приде волхвъ прелщень бѣсомъ . пришедь бо Къіеву . глѣще сице . повѣдаѣ людемъ . ѡко на патое лѣто . Днѣпру потещи вспать . и землямъ преступати на ина мѣста . ѡко стати Гречьскы земли [на Руской] . а Русьскы на Гречьской . и прочимъ землямъ измѣнитисѧ . югоже невѣгласи послушаху

² RPC 124, PSRL 130. требите путь и мостите мость

of the *volkhv* within the history of the early Rus' from the minor footnote they currently hold in histories and studies and to show that they are not just a small class of magic worker in the Rus', but a group of magicians, sorcerers, and shamans turned into political tools by the monks at the Cave Monastery in order to communicate a Christian threat and message to the readers of the chronicle, the princes.

I will use the following questions as guidelines for this study: Who were the *volkhv* within the PVL and how were they used by the chronicler? What were the main roles and tasks the *volkhv* participated in, real or imagined? Why does 1071 contain such a full account of magic and the diabolic as orchestrated by these *volkhv*? What influences and ideas were part of the chroniclers' depiction of the *volkhv* and how did this affect the chronicle? These questions will allow me to showcase the position of the *volkhv* within the Rus'ian PVL and to demonstrate that they were a dire spiritual threat to the Rus'. By examining connections and knowledge from the Latin west, Byzantine Empire, and Scandinavian north I will demonstrate how the PVL adopts and utilizes ideals and concepts from other areas to strengthen themselves intellectually while also using those same tools to demonize the foreign threat of the *volkhv*.

The murderous actions and soothsaying of the *volkhv* were taken as a direct attack on nascent Rus'ian Christianity that the monks used to show the threat of the Devil and urge action on the part of the princes. These calls of danger point to the disunity of the Yaroslavichii as the threat of the *volkhv* was used to communicate the spiritual need for a united and faithful Christian principedom. As a result of this, the *volkhv* existed in two worlds; the localized world of the village and the prince who used their magical services, and the imagined world of the chroniclers who saw the demonic forces of the *volkhv* corrupting and damaging the Rus'. The *volkhv* were not a minor threat, but a challenge to the sacral line of the Rus', the authority of the Church and prince, and a sign of the Devil roaring about the land. The *volkhv* and their

threat were exemplified in the year 1071 as an addition to the physical and political signs of disunity of the previous years.

This study will break into four parts in order to tackle the above questions and demonstrate the views iterated above. The present (first) chapter will provide an introduction to the topic and will elaborate on the history of the PVL and the historiography of the present subject. The section will conclude by examining the pre-Christian Rus' and the conversion of the polity under Vladimir Svyatoslavich and will provide evidence of pre-Christian use of magic and ritual. Combined, these discussions will prepare the reader for the rest of the analysis with a baseline understanding of some of the issues involved, as well as the above research questions and aims.

In the second chapter I will present an analysis of what to call the *volkhv* in more concrete terminology which will highlight the use of the *volkhv* as a rhetorical tool for the chroniclers. This section will also detail some of the prevalent views on what magic is, as well as my own definition of what magic may be defined as within the contexts of the PVL. Moving from this the role of the Scandinavian peoples and knowledge will be demonstrated, several illustrations provided of magic belief in those areas, and finally the relevance of those beliefs as evidenced by the contacts the Rus' had with Scandinavia. Within this section the role of oral transmission will be examined, and the discussion will highlight the survival, or imagined survival, of pre-Christian beliefs within Scandinavia.

Moving south to Byzantium the intellectual traditions that were imported or had possible influence on the Rus' will be highlighted. This part will specifically investigate amuletic imports and the role of demons as they may have been related to the Rus'. Following this survey, I will turn to the Latin territories in order to illuminate a final area of intellectual importance due to the extremely close ties the Rus' had with the west. This discussion will show how ideas could travel so effectively and how connected the Rus' were to the wider

world. Combined, these three areas of contact will illustrate the different ways intellectual knowledge could have been contacted, adapted, and adopted into the Rus' for the purpose of religious rite and condemnation of the other. The last section analyzing the sacralization of the Rurikid clan will demonstrate how all these three intellectual areas of import are combined to legitimize the Yaroslavichii, a foretelling of what the Cave Monastery will do in order to demonize the *volkhv*.

This will then lead us to the third chapter, dealing specifically with the 1071 incident and nature of the crimes and magic the *volkhv* commit and wield. The state of the Rus'ian land will be highlighted as the introduction to this section as the actions of the Rus'ian princes directly affected and were related to the events that had just and were about to occur. In this demonstration, the chroniclers had the perfect opportunity to highlight the spiritual conflict occurring within the Rus', and the *volkhv* were more than available to stand in for the role of an enemy. In the first major section the nature of the first *volkhv* and his prognostication will be dealt with as this and previous incidents involving the *volkhv* are brought together under the label of demonic influence and the providentialism of God. This section will also note the perceived weakness of faith in the Rus' and the threat of princes failing to heed or ignoring religious advice.

The next section will lead to the most famous instance of 1071, the murder of women during a famine and the killing of the *volkhv*. This will specifically note the role of the *volkhv* in the killings and the similarities to other folk customs and showcase more evidence of a perceived lack of faith within the Rus'. Tying into the previous chapter the possibility of Bogomilism and heresy will be examined as well as a brief note on the Antichrist discussion before the implications of the killings are discussed. Moving on to the general character of the *volkhv* and their magic, the discussion will note further influences of amulets, foreign influences at court contributing to the perceived chaos, and the role soothsaying played

showcasing the fallibility of the Devil and the strength of the Church. As the last *volkhv* has his skull split with an ax it will be demonstrated why the *volkhv* were so important to the chroniclers at this point in the PVL in conjunction with the other influences within the Rus’.

In the final chapter of this study, I will turn to the Antichrist, Devil, and the Cave Monastery. The discussion of the Antichrist and the Devil will showcase ideas on their power and influence that contributed to the demonization of the *volkhv* and why it was so important to ally them with these forces in the eyes of the chroniclers. In addition, the role of soothsaying on the part of the *volkhv* will be shown as a direct challenge to the Church as it challenges notions of God’s providential nature and the interpretation of signs by Christians. Finally, the powers and abilities granted to the Cave Monasteries monks will be illustrated as a counterpoint to the *volkhv* and show how the entries of 1071 on the *volkhv* and the 1074 entry on the monks compliment and counterpoint each other.

In the conclusion, all of the major points will be showcased, and conclusions drawn on who the *volkhv* were, their purpose, and what manner of persons they were to the Church, the princes, and to the people. Now, what kind of document is the PVL?

Going Down the Volga

Housed in the Russian National Library in St. Petersburg is a codex composed of one hundred seventy-three parchment leaves written in black and red ink; there are no illuminations within the work.³ This is the Laurentian Codex, named after the author of the back portion of the text itself; the first few pages were written by an unknown author. This foundational text is called the *Povest Vremennykh Let*’, it has also been known as the *Russian Primary Chronicle*, *The Tale of Bygone Years*, and even *Nestor’s Chronicle* to name only a few title variants. The PVL is the primary source of information for the history of the early Kyivan Rus’ aside from some

³ Sean Griffin, *The Liturgical Past in Byzantium and Early Rus*, (Cornwall, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2019), 37.

short accounts in other chronicles such as the *Chronicon Thietmari* which can be used to spot check some stories or entries. Unfortunately, for the entries concerned with this present study, there are no other chronicles, not even the *Novgorod First Chronicle: 1016 - 1471* (Новгородская первая летопись), that can be used to generate direct comparisons or alternate descriptions of the events involving magic and soothsaying in the Rus' for our events in 1071 much less details on the *volkhv*. So, what is the PVL?

Beyond its physical description, the PVL is foremost a chronicle. The chronicle form is a method of documentation and putting written word to vellum or parchment that originated in late antiquity within the sphere of the Roman Empire and continued to develop under the Latin west and Greek east under different terms.⁴ This historical writing style was imported to the Rus' when St. Vladimir the Great adopted Christianity in or around the year 988. The PVL's beginning roughly follows with the definition of earlier annals in that it primarily deals with past events that follow a chronology that is used to interpret past years that the author had not himself experienced.⁵ There is, however, no unified definition of a chronicle, or at least not one all medievalists can or likely will ever agree on. In the case of the Rus'ian chronicle, the varied authors seem to have combined elements of the *Chronicle* of George Hamartolus, the Old Slavonic Creed of Michael Syncellus, *Revelations* of Pseudo-Methodius of Patara, the *Paleya* compendium of the Old Testament, and the *Zlatostruy* of John Chrysostom to name some of the larger works that were used to aid in the composition of the PVL.⁶ Pulling from these Byzantine models the monks generated a general recording of human events and Christian ideals of God's providentialism, their literary inspiration is clearly Greek. Some of the later events were also written by an author who was alive for the years recorded.

⁴ David Dumville, "What Is a Chronicle?" In *The Medieval Chronicle II*, 2:1–27 (Leiden: Brill, 2002): 3.

⁵ Dumville, "What is a Chronicle?," 4.

⁶ RPC 24, 25, 29.

The PVL itself begins around the year 850 after a mythological origin story of the Rus' and native Slavs. It continues through to the year 1110 and is generally thought to have been finished in a first redaction sometime within the time frame of 1113-1118. From its inception, this text is a sausage of a tale. Mixed and fused with other works, date issues, and even lexical problems that have filled more volumes with ink than the original text itself likely ever had, further studies on some of these varied issues have been authored by Horace G. Lunt who analyzed textual variations amongst the five main redactions,⁷ and in a more spot focused analysis by Orrin Frink who focused on the Old Church Slavonic case issues in context of negation within the PVL, to give just two examples of the detailed analysis the PVL has been subject to.⁸ As always, the most detailed and controversial of all studies was completed years ago by Aleksey Shakmatov. All further work now done on analyzing the construction of the PVL now uses his work to some extent.

Who were the authors of this book, as well as other chronicles of the era? They were churchmen foremost, monks who lived most of their lives within the walls of a monastery celebrating the liturgy and using a large rotating series of books in order to guide their lives, plan their days, and select which musical tone to sing in. They defined themselves in ecclesiastical terms instead of simply as a writer of a particular text, they were proud to be monks first and foremost the rest was secondary to them.⁹ It should be no surprise then that a historical chronicle such as the PVL is also filled with theological underpinnings and ideals. Not only were these learned men members of the ecclesiastical community, they were also members of an imported community that was based off of the monastic *ustav*' (rule) that was

⁷ Horace G Lunt, "Lexical Variation in the Copies of the Rus' 'Primary Chronicle': Some Methodological Problems," *Harvard Ukrainian Studies* 18, no. 1/2 (1994): 10–28.

⁸ Orrin Frink, "Negation and Case Selection in the Laurentian Primary Chronicle," *The Slavic and East European Journal* 8, no. 3 (1964): 302–7.

⁹ Simon Franklin, *Writing, Society and Culture in Early Rus, c.950–1300*, (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 223.

learned from a Byzantine source, the *Typicon of Patriarch Alexis the Stoudite*.¹⁰ There were of course adaptations and changes to be made from the Byzantine-Greek original document, but much of it could still be used and governed almost all aspects of life (how to pray, sit at a table, what to eat, how to sing [tones], and other criteria); these were Byzantine rules and rites being wholly imported to the Rus'.¹¹ Attractive though it may be to leave it here as an easy importation of rules, that cannot be the case - Rus' is not Byzantium.

Even though there were Byzantine rules governing them, the majority of the monks at the monastery were themselves native Rus'ians and thus influenced by their own personal beliefs as well as the foreign Byzantine ideals.¹² This did not allow for a passive acceptance of Byzantine religious culture but required modification of certain rules and habits either out of necessity, or simply out of their own will. Francis Butler notes in particular that the language of the stories about Olga's conversion point to the chronicle writers accepting the Byzantine faith and worldview, while pointedly distancing themselves from the intellectual conquest through baptism that Byzantine thought attempted to broadcast.¹³ Their rules were Byzantine in origin, but the monastery was determined to go its own way to some extent. Even though they imported Byzantine ideals, the Rus'ian church was ideologically separating itself through both distance and language. Intentionally or not!

As to the number of writers, it is almost certainly not just a single monk, but at least two were likely involved. Alan Timberlake makes a note of two different compilers whom he refers to as the 'Early' and 'Late' compiler responsible for a base version of the PVL in the years between 1089 and 1117.¹⁴ Alternatively, Donald Ostrowski makes the case for a 1114-

¹⁰ Griffin, *The Liturgical Past in Byzantium and Early Rus*, 66.

¹¹ Franklin, *Writing, Society and Culture in Early Rus, c.950–1300*, 144-145.

¹² Francis Butler, "Ol'Ga's Conversion and the Construction of Chronicle Narrative," *The Russian Review* 67, no. 2 (2008): 237.

¹³ Butler, "Ol'Ga's Conversion and the Construction of Chronicle Narrative," 237-238.

¹⁴ Alan Timberlake. "Redactions of the Primary Chronicle." *Русский язык в научном освещении* 1, 1 (2001): 212–214.

1116 final composition with a Narrator A who developed a narrative that was written during the reign of Iziaslav Yaroslavich (r. 1054-1078, with interruptions) with the work culminating in the death of Yaroslav Vladimirovich (1054); Narrator B then continues the narrative until the end of the PVL.¹⁵ As the purpose of this study is not to examine the many redactions of the PVL but to analyze the role of *volkhv* within the Rus' I will retreat from any further analysis of this issue of authorship. Instead, I will allow this to show that there were several different authors, and most assuredly not just the single writer who was often identified as Nestor in early scholarship.

As a result, the PVL is not just a book detailing history authored by a religious male figure. It is a book detailing history according to the worldview and interpretation of multiple Christian monks in a land that was still not fully converted. As a result of this the various sources and traditions that were used as a base to write the PVL were combined with a political concept and religious message. Keeping this view in mind the figure of Olga of Pskov is identified with Saint Helena the mother of Constantine, Saint Vladimir is identified with Saint 'equal-to-the-apostles' Emperor Constantine the Great and as a bishop consecrating a church, and Boris and Gleb symbolize the eucharistic offering and ritual given here for the whole Rus'ian land.¹⁶ These comparisons were enthusiastically included into the chronicle and demonstrate theological cunning on the part of the monks as they attempted to legitimize and consecrate the dynasty who protected them. In addition to his already heavy role Saint Vladimir also serves to stand in for the confessor type saint while Boris and Gleb fill in for the martyr type saint.¹⁷ This is not just history being recounted as legend, this is history being retold with an eye for the Christian present while looking for meaning in past actions. The PVL is not

¹⁵ Donald Ostrowski. "Pagan Past and Christian Identity in the Primary Chronicle." In *Historical Narratives and Christian Identity on a European Periphery: Early History Writing in Northern, East-Central, and Eastern Europe (C.1070–1200)*, Edited by Ildar H. Garipzanov. (Belgium: Brepols Publishers, 2015), 253.

¹⁶ Griffin, *The Liturgical Past in Byzantium and Early Rus*, 230-231.

¹⁷ Gábor Klaniczay, *Holy Rulers and Blessed Princesses: Dynastic Cults in Medieval Central Europe*, Trans. Eva Palmai, (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 12.

simply a historical recounting then, but a Christian reinterpretation of an earlier or parallel chronicle/historical tradition for the purposes of political propaganda and sacralization of the Rus'ian state.

Influenced by liturgical practices and imagery, the PVL already bears hallmarks of native traditions and thought as well as imported Byzantine ideals that were being welded together for the needs of the Church and princes. In addition, there are also Scandinavian legends, likely transmitted orally, that make up significant tales (Oleg's death & Olga's revenge) in the pre-Christian years of the PVL.¹⁸ This then leads us to the final component of using this 'sausage.' The Laurentian Codex is not the final version which was completed in the early 12th century. This Laurentian Codex (the earliest one known) was copied down by a monk named Laurentius who was commissioned for this project during the reign of Prince Dmitry Konstantinovich of Suzdal in the year 1377. This version was likely copied from a version made in Tver for Prince Vladimir Yaroslavich in 1305, which was copied from a series of Rostov manuscripts from 1229-1281, which were themselves copied from a series commissioned in 1177-1212 by Prince Andrey Bogoliubsky of Vladimir-Suzdal' using copies from south Pereyaslavl', which were themselves copied from the original Kyiv document made some fifty or more years prior to that.¹⁹ Just as a modern sausage, knowing how something is made can turn the stomach and ruin the appetite.

The PVL is a chronicle, a record of years, which was written by native Rus'ian monks who projected their Byzantine knowledge of the saints and the liturgy onto a conceptual past in order to tell a Rus'ian political tale and message. The commissioners who ordered it to be copied were likely all princes or bishops who sought to glorify their own patrimonies and ancestry. The PVL truly begins to develop, and much of the text is devoted to, the tale of Saint

¹⁸ Frog, "Medieval Christians' Knowledge of Shamanism in the North: An Oral Tradition in the Historia Norwegie and the Russian Primary Chronicle." *Shaman: Journal of the International Society for Academic Research on Shamanism* 29(1-2) (2021): 27-28.

¹⁹ Griffin, *The Liturgical Past*, 37-38.

‘equal-to-the-apostles’ Vladimir Svyatoslavich and closes with the emergence of Vladimir Monomakh, the grandfather of the 1177-1212 commissioner Prince Andrey Bogoliubsky of Vladimir-Suzdal’ who was working to develop his own patrimony in parallel to Kyiv and the western patrimony of Galicia-Volhynia. From the rise of the Vladimir-Suzdal’ dynasty in the 13th century the PVL physically followed the Monomakh dynasty and its princes through to the rise of Moscow. This 1377 redaction was commissioned during the reign of Prince Dmitry Konstantinovich of Suzdal on the eve of the ascension of Moscow under the Daniilovich Prince Dmitry Donskoy. The same Donskoy whom Dmitry Konstantinovich would acknowledge as his overlord prior to the Battle of Kulikovo in 1380 where the Golden Horde would be defeated on the battlefield by a Rus’ian-Muscovite army.²⁰ This is the PVL.

Elder Faith & Magic

The historiography of magic and the Middle Ages has become quite broad and encompassing as time has trudged on and ink has dried. By narrowing this study to the PVL and the Rus’ian regions, these sources can more efficiently be categorized and analyzed. There are two general areas that will need to be focused on. First, historiography related to the study of the medieval Rus’ at large. Second, historiography of magic in the Middle Ages and Early Modern period. Both areas have changed since the early 20th century and new names, ideas, and controversies have emerged. This section will briefly but not exhaustively look at some of the people, ideas, and considerations that emerged when attempting to fuse these two disparate and occasionally cooperative fields together.

Before specific authors and their works can be examined, a brief aside must be examined for a controversial theory that is either fully raging or has been resolved depending on when a source was written. That theory is, of course, the Normanist Controversy. Recent

²⁰ Janet Martin, *Medieval Russia, 980-1584*. (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 259.

publications and histories generally bypass this argument to some extent if not completely. However, for this study of sorcery and soothsaying it is important to understand the climate and historiography of the foundational scholars and their works that influenced and were used in this present analysis.

In brief: the Normanist Controversy is an ideological debate over the academic theory on the origins of the word and people of the Rus' that identifies them with the Varango-Norse as a leading and driving substratum over the indigenous Slavic population. This theory emerged in the 18th century with Gerhard Friedrich Müller (1705-1783) and Gottlieb Siegfried Bayer (1694-1738) who pioneered the idea of the Rus'ian state being formed by the Normans.²¹ This theory was generally adopted by German historians who studied Rus'ian history as well as some Imperial Russian historians.

However, there was a large variety of thought as to how much of the Rus'ian society was Norman. Some early historians even maintained that the entire Rus'ian medieval state was Norman and everything from the language, law, and literature was brought from the Scandinavian-Normans.²² One major issue is that in the Norman vs Anti-Norman debate, almost all of the western books dealing with this issue were either in German or English, and the anti-Norman texts were almost all in Russian; this does not account for the issue that the Normanist theory kept being revised as more Slavic elements were shown to be a part of the early Rus'.²³ In short, this was a messy and frustrating debate to wade through.

Even in its heyday, there were many who disagreed with the theory. The anti-Normanists argued it was impossible to know the true impact of the Rus' on the native Slavic peoples. Charles Halperin noted that the sacral clan (*rod*) of the Rus' may have been a native

²¹ Omeljan Pritsak, "The Origin of Rus'," *The Russian Review* 36, no. 3 (1977): 249.

²² N. Riasanovsky, "The Norman Theory of the Origin of the Russian State," *The Russian Review* 7, no. 1 (1947): 96-97.

²³ Riasanovsky, "The Norman Theory of the Origin of the Russian State," 98.

element that existed prior to the Norman influences.²⁴ He later retracted his viewpoint and rejected his earlier acceptance of the “Russian Land” translation issue due to its nationalistic elements.²⁵ By the end of the Second World War academic thought accepted small aspects of the Normanist theory, but wisely maintained that the impact of the Normans needed to be analyzed more closely in regards to native Slavic elements as well as Byzantine, Khazar, and other influences on the early Rus’ian state to determine the miniscule impact of the Normans.²⁶ This, at last, was a slightly more reasonable suggestion.

Under these auspices, the debate continued off and on until the end of the 20th century. By this time other peoples and perspectives were being added to the Normanist Theory in order to broaden and try to clarify the origins of the Rus’, though this did nothing to quell the debate.²⁷ These points were further developed and the Normanist debate began to become overly decentralized while both of the main parties were still defending their own redoubts, but the conflict was now less heated.²⁸ Scholars such as Thomas Noonan were still conducting their own research and generating analysis through material discoveries, which he accomplished by following the trail of silver dirhams along the river systems as incentive for Norman influence.²⁹ This theory of Thomas Noonan’s, however, was itself later modified by the research of Anne Stalsberg who makes the case of local ship production, as the Scandinavian-Norman ships would not be able to navigate the river systems past Staraya Ladoga (Novgorod area).³⁰ As a result of this, the hunt for silver, which likely was helmed by adventurous Vikings

²⁴ Charles Halperin, “The Concept of the Russian Land from the Ninth to the Fourteenth Centuries.” *Russian History* 2, no. 1 (1975): 32.

²⁵ Charles Halperin, “Rus’, Russia and National Identity.” *Canadian Slavonic Papers / Revue Canadienne Des Slavistes* 48, no. 1/2 (2006): 158.

²⁶ Riasanovsky, “The Norman Theory of the Origin of the Russian State,” 109-110.

²⁷ Pritsak, “The Origin of Rus’,” 272-273. Pritsak’s argument shows that the argument was becoming stale, and that new criteria had to be brought into this debate.

²⁸ Ellen Hurwitz, “Kievan Rus’ and Medieval Myopia,” *Russian History* 5, no. 2 (1978): 186-187.

²⁹ Thomas S Noonan, “Why the Vikings First Came to Russia,” *Jahrbücher für Geschichte Osteuropas* 34, no. 3 (1986): 346-347.

³⁰ Anne Stalsberg, “Scandinavian Viking-Age Boat Graves in Old Rus’,” *Russian History* 28, no. 1/4 (2001): 368.

who still relied on local production and craftwork, was not simply an imposed Norman conquest of the land burying the Slavs.

As the 21st century is breached, the Normanist controversy and the migraine it caused in all Rus'ian historians was beginning to wind down in furor. At this time, the Normanist theory is a bygone term that features rarely in modern papers. In summary, from a theory that advocated for a Scandinavian-Norman takeover of the Slavic peoples there has now become an acknowledgement of a more plausible reality: a Slavic state with Norman (primarily mercantile),³¹ Byzantine, Steppe, and Latin influences interacting and counteracting each other to varying degrees. While the mythical Rurik may have been Scandinavian, those Norse rulers had to quickly adapt to the Slavic peoples around them. In reading histories of the early Rurikid dynasty, it is imperative to understand that scholars of the 20th century were working in the midst of the debate on the origin of the Rus'.

In Rus'ian historiography there are several names that have risen since the mid-20th century whose works now dominate the field of research, general information, and modern professorship for any studies of the Rus' and the later Muscovite Tsardom. Western and Slavic scholarship are not as divorced as they used to be, and the contact and proliferation of these academic contacts is evident in linguistic arguments and debates on technical terminology such as the analysis of Pavel Lukin on the *veche* and Council of Lords in Novgorod,³² or in the analysis of Sean Griffin concerning the role of the liturgy in the PVL.³³ We will now begin a short look at modern Rus'ian scholars, both Slavic and Western.

Modern histories of the Rus' feature several challenges. First is the matter of translation. English, German, Hungarian, Polish, Russian, and Ukrainian all make up major languages that

³¹ Christian Keller, "Furs, Fish, and Ivory: Medieval Norsemen at the Arctic Fringe." *Journal of the North Atlantic* 3 (2010): 9.

³² Pavel V Lukin, "The Veche and the 'Council of Lords' in Medieval Novgorod: Hanseatic and Russian Data," *Russian History* 41, no. 4 (2014): 458–503.

³³ Griffin, *The Liturgical Past in Byzantium and Early Rus*.

scholars use when writing about the Rus'. Due to the minority area in medieval history that Rus'ian research has occupied, many of the studies and main sources aside from the PVL and other spot selected sources have not been translated from the original Old East Slavic except for Russian and Ukrainian readers. This effectively disbars scholars who are not familiar with a Slavic language which uses the Cyrillic script and therefore makes this field difficult for many to enter. This is, however, not a unique issue, and many sources from around the medieval world are similarly difficult to access for a non-specialist.

In recent historiography some of the most current scholars are John L.I. Fennell (d. 1992), Simon Franklin, Charles Halperin, Valentin Ianin (d. 2020), Pavel Lukin, Janet Martin, Donald Ostrowski, Vladimir Petrukhin, Christian Raffensperger, and Jonathan Shepard. This list is not exhaustive by any means, nor does it cover the full gamut of names and personnel who study the Rus' currently. The plethora of names listed here is only to provide a rough baseline of some of the most well-known or prolific people to be encountered in this field of research. Below I will briefly lay out some of the most relevant researchers used within this present study.

Simon Franklin in particular has analyzed and looked at magic in the Rus' through written material in his analysis *Writing, Society and Culture in Early Rus, 950-1300*³⁴ in addition to the well-known book that was written in cooperation with Jonathan Shepard *The Emergence of Rus, 750-1200*.³⁵ His focus on the earlier history of the Rus' is invaluable for beginning any research into the PVL and the history of these regions.

Janet Martin is the author of a foundational text/sourcebook for new learners of Rus'ian and Muscovite history. Her book *Medieval Russia 980-1584*³⁶ is an introductory volume that is useful for both the new student and also those familiar with the history already. In particular

³⁴ Franklin, *Writing, Society and Culture in Early Rus, c.950–1300*.

³⁵ Simon Franklin and Jonathan Shepard, *The Emergence of Rus: 750-1200*, (New York, NY: Longman Publishing Group, 1996).

³⁶ Martin, *Medieval Russia, 980-1584*.

she has also studied the economic and trade aspects of late Rus'ian and early Muscovite history. Her exploration of these topics and knowledge of historiographic trends has been extremely helpful in compiling sources lists and topics for this study and other works focused on Rus'ian and later history.

Vladimir Petrukhin is an incredibly prolific Russian historian who has dealt with the medieval Rus' and their steppe connection via Khazar influence and even done an analysis of the Finno-Ugrians in *Myths of the Finno-Ugrians*.³⁷ This analysis of the Finno-Ugrian myths is extremely helpful in applying additional context to the 1071 entry. He has also done other major works such as *The Christianization of Rus: from paganism to christianity*,³⁸ and other histories of the Rus' such as *The Ancient Rus: 9th Century - 1263*.³⁹ Both of the recently mentioned works delve into the *volkhv* and the impact they had on the Rus' as well, with *The Christianization of Rus: from paganism to christianity* being the most impactful. His work is predominantly in Russian but there are a handful of texts and presentations that allow access to English reading peoples.

Christian Raffensperger stands out and apart, somewhat, for his focus on Latin connections with the Rus'. While the majority of the above researchers have analyzed Byzantine or steppe connections primarily, Christian Raffensperger looks at Latin connections in *Reimagining Europe: Kievan Rus' in the Medieval World*⁴⁰ and at titles and terminology of the *knyazii* in *The Kingdom of Rus'*⁴¹ to list some of his recent work on the subject. Martin Dimnik is another author who has similarly looked at other, more local, connections in his analysis of the Chernigov dynasty.

³⁷ Владимир Петрухин [Vladimir Petrukhin], *Мифы финно-угров [Myths of the Finno-Ugrians]*, (Москва: Астрель. 2005).

³⁸ Владимир Петрухин [Vladimir Petrukhin], *Крещение Руси : от язычества к христианству [The Christianization of Rus: from paganism to christianity]*, (Москва: Астрель. 2006).

³⁹ Владимир Петрухин [Vladimir Petrukhin], *Древняя Русь. IX в. – 1263 г. [The Ancient Rus: 9th Century to 1263]*, (Москва: Астрель. 2005).

⁴⁰ Christian Raffensperger, *Reimagining Europe: Kievan Rus' in the Medieval World, 988-1146*, (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2012).

⁴¹ Christian Raffensperger, *The Kingdom of Rus'*, (Kalamazoo: Arc Humanities Press, 2017).

Finally, I will briefly go over some of the current names and works of my parallel and entwined area of research: magic, witchcraft, and sorcery. In the field of magic and witchcraft studies some of the more prominent current names are David J. Collins, Richard Kieckhefer, Gábor Klaniczay, Valerie Kivelson, William Francis (W. F.) Ryan, and Russell Zguta. Without the combined research, innovations, and theories developed by both Rus'ian medievalists and historians of magic and the occult the analysis of witchcraft, magic, and sorcery in the Rus' would be an almost impossible matter.

David J. Collins of the Jesuits along with Richard Kieckhefer are both historians who have focused explicitly on witchcraft and magic in the Latin West and early modern period. The work of Collins in articles and as an editor in publications such as *The Sacred & The Sinister* allows other scholars' research to be broadcast and made accessible. The work of Richard Kieckhefer is well known to students of the history of witchcraft and almost every current study has used or quoted from Kieckhefer to some extent, the present work included. Richard Kieckhefer's work on witchcraft and saints, *Magic in the Middle Ages*, is foundational as a starting point and for research into Latin views and conceptions of magic.⁴²

Gábor Klaniczay is similar in some ways to Kieckhefer and Collins' research, though only because the subject matter in *Witchcraft and Demonology in Hungary and Transylvania* is located to the west of the Rus'.⁴³ The additional works on sacrality and the sacred that Gábor Klaniczay has authored have also been extremely helpful in connecting the Latin ideals of saints to the Rus'. Using the research edited by or created by Klaniczay was an extremely useful step in looking for comparisons and for generating new lines of inquiry.

In looking at magic in the Rus' Valerie Kivelson, William Francis Ryan, and Russell Zguta make up the current biggest three researchers in this field. The most targeted and relevant

⁴² Richard Kieckhefer, *Magic in the Middle Ages*, 3rd Edition, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2022).

⁴³ *Witchcraft and Demonology in Hungary and Transylvania*, eds. Gábor Klaniczay and Éva Pócs (Cham, Switzerland: Springer, 2017).

researcher, Valerie Kivelson, has focused briefly on the early Rus' in her collected analysis *Witchcraft in Russia and Ukraine, 1000–1900: A Sourcebook* that examined magic from the PVL into the reign of Ivan Vasilyevich “the Awesome.”⁴⁴ This work and its English translated articles are extremely useful as many of the later sources are not readily available in the English language.

W. F. Ryan's *The Bathhouse at Midnight*⁴⁵ is another excellent analysis of magic in the early Rus' that allows for an in depth analysis of the issue of magic as well as more physical components such as the use of talismans which will come into play in both Chapter 2 and Chapter 3, and is extremely useful for later periods of Rus'ian history into the Early Modern period. In conjunction with this, the targeted research presented by Russell Zguta on the 1071 incident has been extremely important to this present study.

History of the Rus', history of magic, and the sordid history of the PVL all come together to form a tale that is both interesting and disconcerting. The document itself is flawed and error and bias may have encroached over its many redactions and years. Despite this, the PVL is the only document that can be relied on for this era. Magic and soothsaying are attacked and condemned as Christianity is spread and consolidated under the auspices of the Church and princes. Through the PVL, and the clarification of secondary research, the Rus' can be seen as a religious borderland that was shifting, adapting, and consolidating against the forces of magic and soothsaying that were loose, or perceived to be loose, in their lands.

B Ataky - “To the Attack”

The Rus' converted to Christianity in 988 under the auspices of Veliky Knyaz Vladimir Svyatoslavich. Prior to this conversion the people were pagan with the princes acting as their

⁴⁴ Valerie A. Kivelson and Christine D. Worobec, *Witchcraft in Russia and Ukraine, 1000–1900: A Sourcebook*, (New York: Cornell University Press, 2020).

⁴⁵ W. F. Ryan, *The Bathhouse at Midnight: An Historical Survey of Magic and Divination in Russia*, Magic in History, (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press. 1999).

religious leaders. In 980 after the murder of Yaropolk Svyatoslavich, when Vladimir seized sole control over the Rus', there was an attempt on Vladimir's part to reform or at least consolidate the pagan worship of the Rus'.⁴⁶ This consolidation of religion may be a result of the pressures of Christian neighbors and a drive to sacralize his clan and claim legitimacy as he was the youngest of three brothers. The conversion of 988 speaks to the failure, or at least dissolution, of this idea following the failed military campaign against the Volga Bulgars when the human sacrifice he offered to Perun and other pagan deities was not repaid with crushing victory, but with a peace deal instead.⁴⁷ As the gods had not provided their services, it was time to begin looking for a new deity that would aid him in securing his legitimacy and victories, such as the singular God the Muslim Volga Bulgars worshiped.

The conversion of Vladimir and his Rurikid dynasty did not mean immediate conversion of the common peoples, his personal *druzhina*, or even the *boyars* despite what the PVL states. The chronicler seems to indicate this difficulty as after the conversion stories he notes:

He [Vladimir] took the children of the best families, and sent them for instruction in book-learning. The mothers of the children wept bitterly over them, for they were not yet strong in faith, but mourned as for the dead.⁴⁸

In either case, this conversion was top down. As the church was established, monasteries formed and cities such as Kyiv and Novgorod were the first to become established areas of Christian influence. From these cities the common people would be converted, but it was also the *boyars* and *druzhina* who would begin to be converted, and who had the mobility (social and physical) to affect this spread of faith. Even as this process occurred, evidence of magic as

⁴⁶ Martin, *Medieval Russia, 980-1584*, 6.

⁴⁷ Jonathan Shepard, "The Coming of Christianity to Rus: Authorized and Unauthorized Versions," In *Conversion to Christianity from Late Antiquity to the Modern Age*, eds. Calvin Kendall, Oliver Nicholson Jr, William Phillips, and Marguerite Ragnow, (Minneapolis: Center for Early Modern History, 2009), 209.

⁴⁸ RPC 117, PSRL 118-119. пославъ нача поимати оу нарочитое чадѣ . дѣти и даѣти нача на оученье книжное . мѣре же чадѣ сихъ плакаху по нихъ . еше бо не бѣху сѧ оутвердили вѣроу . но акы по мѣртвѣци плакахсѧ

practiced by the reviled *volkhv* can be seen in the PVL.⁴⁹ These *volkhv* were sorcerers, diviners, and represented a foreign threat intruding into and amongst Rus'ian society.

Evidence of these *volkhv* can be seen prior to the conversion or the baptism of Vladimir. The most famous of the pre-Christian tales comes from the legend of Oleg the Prophet (d. 912), though there are concerns and possibilities that this is an intrusive Varangian tale.⁵⁰ In this tale the *volkhv* are expressly mentioned as being within the court of Oleg the Prophet, and he himself may demonstrate some soothsaying ability when he identifies the poisoned food Byzantine emissaries try to give him.⁵¹ The most famous part of the story and one likely imported into the PVL from Scandinavia concerns Oleg's death from a serpent. The 13th century Icelandic *Orvar-Odds saga* seems to be the most likely comparison as with the exception of some stylistic differences it shares many of the same features as the PVL version.⁵² The tale of Oleg is similar in many respects to the tale of Olga's revenge against the Derevlans, also a Varangian tale that is placed prior to conversion.⁵³ Within the PVL there is also the Byzantine story of Apollonius of Tyana, a sorcerer who vanquished poisonous scorpions and whose demons, who had served him in life, continued to perform miracles after his death, showing that at least the monks knew of the sorcerer.⁵⁴ Aside from these threats though, mentions of magic and even the *volkhv* are rare, until after the 988 conversion as a signifier of a new Christian age for the Rus' and the now targeted attacks of demons.

One of the only other accounts of the early Rus' in regard to magic is one that takes place much earlier, the travel account of Ahmad ibn Fadlan who indicates that the Rus' are "the filthiest of all God's creatures."⁵⁵ In this account of the pre-Rurikid Rus' there are elements

⁴⁹ RPC 134, 139, 150-154.

⁵⁰ Max Dashu, *Witches and Pagans: Women in European Folk Religion, 700-1100*, (Richmond, CA: Veleda Press, 2016), 128-129.

⁵¹ RPC 64, 69.

⁵² Frog, "Medieval Christians' Knowledge of Shamanism in the North," 28.

⁵³ Judith Jesch, *Women in the Viking Age*, (Woodbridge: Boydell & Brewer Ltd, 1991), 114.

⁵⁴ RPC 70.

⁵⁵ Ahmad Ibn Fadlan, *Mission to the Volga*, trans. James E. Montgomery, (New York: New York University Press, 2017), 33.

of both pagan faith and magic, though in the eyes of the PVL's chroniclers, they would likely have been the same thing. Particular to this account is the mention of a wealth ritual (magical and/or religious) where the Rūsiyyah (as Ahmad ibn Fadlan calls the Rus') arrive at market and:

Each carries bread, meat, onions, milk, and alcohol to a large block of wood set in the ground. The piece of wood has a face on it, like the face of a man. It is surrounded by small figurines placed in front of large blocks of wood set in the ground. He [the Rūsiyyah] prostrates himself before the large figure and says, "Lord, I have come from a distant land, with such and such a number of female slaves and such and such a number of sable pelts." He lists all his merchandise. Then he says, "And I have brought this offering." He leaves his offering in front of the piece of wood, saying, "I want you to bless me with a rich merchant with many dinars and dirhams who will buy from me whatever I wish and not haggle over any price I set." Then he leaves.⁵⁶

This account gives no indication of organized faith or priestly classes and may fall into the realm of local belief, or market magic. However, there is an individual of note in this account that appears later: the Angel of Death who presides during the funeral feast of a Rūsiyyah chieftain.⁵⁷ She leads the funerary rituals as an elderly coordinator and orchestrates the besotting, gang rape, and murder of one of the deceased's slave girls in a ritualistic manner. The woman called the Angel of Death takes on the role of a ceremony leader and is a member of either a local Slavic community or to an early Rus'ian community as she is recounted as having brought two of her daughters with her to assist in the ceremonial minutiae. Her status was elevated and central for the purpose of the ceremony, but it is unclear what her actual place in society was after or prior to the ceremony as her two daughters are referenced as being slaves (presumably) of the same group as the slave who was murdered. Ahmad ibn Fadlan describes her physical appearance: "I saw her myself: she was gloomy and corpulent but neither young nor old."⁵⁸ and later describes her as "The crone called the Angel of Death..."⁵⁹ She may be an indicator of a role some women were thought to have in the early Rus', a role which vanished

⁵⁶ Ibn Fadlan, *Mission to the Volga*, 33-34.

⁵⁷ Ibn Fadlan, *Mission to the Volga*, 35.

⁵⁸ Ibn Fadlan, *Mission to the Volga*, 36.

⁵⁹ Ibn Fadlan, *Mission to the Volga*, 37.

officially after Christianization and was silenced in the PVL. In the 1024 murders of the elderly, 1044 binding of the caul (discussed further below), and 1071 murders of women the *volkhv* are all present and shown as outsiders to Rus'ian society.⁶⁰

It should be noted that the targets of the *volkhv* in 1024 and 1071 are shown to be the elderly and in 1071 specifically women. Ahmad Ibn Fadlan's account shows that there were women with religious or magic authority prior to the Rus' conversion, even though we do not know how widespread this may have been. The *volkhv*, acting as itinerant sorcerers, may have encountered some of these women and seen them as threats, or simply used them as convenient people to blame in order to exercise their craft, even targeting any elderly women as a convenient and vulnerable class to blame for misfortune as seems to be evident from 1071. This may have allowed for the creation of a struggle between a (possible) local magic tradition and foreign practitioners and the Christian princes and churchmen who saw both as diabolic.

Magic, soothsaying, and witchcraft were all known to the pre-Christian Rus'. They did not have the official (popular practice was almost certainly a different matter) Roman understanding of magic as inherently evil and othering throughout society, and this would become an aspect of the dual-faith environment that the princes and their servitors had to combat.⁶¹ Soothsaying in particular, seems to have been the main threat and tool of the *volkhv* in their wanderings as they used it to sow disharmony and amass followings of the common people. After all, only God could know the future, and the *volkhv* threatened that premise.⁶² The Rus' did not live isolated lives, though, and other beliefs on magic and from pre-Christian peoples could have been encountered, transmitted, and co-opted. In 1071 the Kyivan chronicler used the lull in the princely conflict as a suitable entry point for his blistering attack on magic and its practitioners, the *volkhv*, within the Rus'. Already, it can be seen that there was an

⁶⁰ RPC 134, 139, 150-154.

⁶¹ Maijastina Kahlos, "The Early Church," In *The Cambridge History of Magic and Witchcraft in the West: From Antiquity to the Present*, edited by David Collins, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 172.

⁶² Franklin, *Writing, Society and Culture in Early Rus, c.950–1300*, 263.

understanding of magic and sorcery from local pre-Rurikid sources as well as from the traditions imported from Scandinavian legends. The Rus' were not Christian yet, but it was now possible to begin attacking beyond the sheltered and controlled city walls.

Chapter 1 Summary

The Rus' Christianized in 988 after a series of internal struggles. While centers of princely control were quickly brought into the Christian domain the outer regions passively resisted and were encouraged in this resistance by a group of sorcerous individuals known in the chronicle as the *volkhv*. Their activities were primarily magical and soothsaying in nature and were harshly attacked within the PVL.

The PVL itself is a text that saw multiple redactions and copying events over an almost 400-year period until the commission of the Laurentian. The text seeks to tell the tale of the origin and then Christianization of the Rus'. Following this first part the chronicle turns to the final struggle of completing the Christianization of the land by showcasing the *volkhv* as foreign threats intruding into the land and misleading the people while the princes began to war against each other and bring disunity to the Rus'ian land.

Foreign and pre-Christian influences may have still remained within the land, and the *volkhv* were unwittingly tapping into and dealing with areas of that pre-Christian society that the chroniclers for the most part ignored apart from the legends they did not wish to malign due to the recent adoption of Christianity by their princes. Part history and part religious text, the PVL outlines an intrusive threat to the Rus'ian domain in the character of the *volkhv* for the purposes of educating the monks and the princes.

Chapter 2: The *Inostrantsie* Views

Classifying Magic & Волхв

“The man from Novgorod sat upon the threshold of that same house, while the magician lay there in a trance, and the devil took possession of him.”⁶³ The demarcation between the realm of magic and the realm of religion was not a stone edifice of Theodosian defense. It is undoubted, from the very writings of the chronicler, that the monks at the Cave Monastery thought of the *volkhv* as sorcerers and magic users. Contact with the diabolic and condemnations of soothsaying fit hand in hand with the language used throughout the 1071 entry and fits neatly into the medieval Christian viewpoint of the 12th century.

While the monastic author of this section hammers home that magic and diabolic craft was at work it is left up to the modern reader and interpreter to define these vague, and sometimes nebulous concepts. In addition, how the *volkhv* themselves should be discussed is a problem in and of itself: sorcerer, shaman, witch, service magician, and magus are all terms that can be used when discussing the *volkhv* and their activities. When attempting to define magic and the *volkhv* themselves it is imperative to understand how and when the text was written in the early 12th century, influences of its time from foreign and local actors, with some mentions of the influences of the time when the Laurentian Codex was recopied in the late 14th century.

This discussion on the part of the chronicler was likely influenced by their own local (Rus’ian) experiences, their education and training (Byzantine), as well as the regional connections of the princes and their families (Latin & Varangian). In combination, we are left with a plethora of factors and considerations when analyzing the sudden and violent appearance of so many magic users in the heart and borderlands of the Rus’ian princes' domain. The final

⁶³ RPC 153, PSRL 179. Новгородцю же сѣдашу на порозѣ тоѣже храминѣ . кудесникъ же лежаше
щѣпъ . и шибе имъ бѣсѣ

major consideration is that the writers of the PVL were in conscious and full control of their faculties when writing and understood the words and phrases they used as intimately as we now understand our native tongues. When the author wrote about the *volkhv*, they knew exactly what kind of character they were writing about, there was no need to define that figure as they and the princes would understand the term. So, what is magic, and what is a *volkhv*?

Magic does not exist, unless it does. More specifically, magic is given only what powers the individual, culture, and societal context allow it to hold. On one extreme Walter Cannon showed in 1942 that people who thought that they had been bewitched actually suffered from organ failure, heart damage, and heightened blood pressure due to the adrenaline and terror from the fear of being targeted by witchcraft in South America, Australia, Africa, New Zealand, Polynesia, and the Caribbean.⁶⁴ This visceral reaction of terror and possible death foreshadows the later thought of Edward Bever who has used cognitive science to argue that magic may have worked similar to the psychological placebo effect for how magic may have actually “worked.”⁶⁵ Similarly the monks at the Cave Monasteries may have literally seen demons as a result of their mental discipline and training affecting their minds.⁶⁶ In a similar fashion the soothsaying of the *volkhv* may have been akin to the modern use of horoscopes to divine the future, imprecise enough to allow for a variety of possible outcomes, with a variety of different outcomes which could then be seen as proof that their magic worked and possibly with as visceral an effect as Walter Cannon’s ideas, or mentally stimulated as the monks themselves may have been.

The previous comments have defined how magic “worked,” but what is magic and how should it be defined? In the field of Late Antiquity Fritz Graf defines magic as “an element of

⁶⁴ Ronald Hutton, *The Witch: A History of Fear, from Ancient Times to the Present*. (Llandysul, Wales: Yale University Press, 2017), 39.

⁶⁵ Catherine Rider, “Common Magic,” In *The Cambridge History of Magic and Witchcraft in the West: From Antiquity to the Present*, edited by David Collins, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 320.

⁶⁶ Inbar Graiver, “Demonic Machinations and Cognitive Mechanisms: Cognitive Insights into Early Monastic Demonology,” *The Journal of Religion* 102, no. 1 (January 2022): 25-26.

the indigenous discourse on the relationship between the human and the supernatural.”⁶⁷ Alicia Walker defines magic in the Byzantine Empire as the belief that “such endeavors involved the marshaling of supernatural powers outside of ecclesiastical authority and rituals.”⁶⁸ Another Byzantine definition of magic that parallels Dr. Walker’s is offered by Henry Maguire as “relations with the supernatural that were outside the regular channels of the church.”⁶⁹ Maijastina Kahlos defines Greco-Roman magic as seen by the early church as “a socially constructed object of knowledge whose content and formulations vary according to different social contexts and circumstances.”⁷⁰ Ronald Hutton defines magic as “any formalized practices by human beings designed to achieve particular ends by the control, manipulation, and direction of supernatural power or of spiritual power concealed within the natural world.”⁷¹ One of the most complete and lengthy of definitions, and also the most relevant, is the definition of Simon Franklin who notes that there are many different ways to interpret magic, specifically three as he gives them as 1: there is no term/definition as magic is not a stable concept, 2: magic as defined by the medieval authors and their world view, and 3: to turn magic from time related to a word of our own choosing.⁷² All of these options are valid, all have major caveats, and all have uses in analysis.

My definition of magic for the purposes of this present analysis and its considerations is that magic is best defined as ‘practices which threaten the church and power of the princes and are thus associated with the devil, or with pagan remnants of faith.’ This should additionally be qualified to include ‘as well as techniques that call on spiritual and/or Christian

⁶⁷ Fritz Graf, *Magic in the Ancient World*, Tr. Franklin Philip. (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1997), 19.

⁶⁸ Alicia Walker, “Magic in Medieval Byzantium,” In *The Cambridge History of Magic and Witchcraft in the West: From Antiquity to the Present*, edited by David Collins, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 210.

⁶⁹ Henry Maguire, “Magic and the Christian Image,” In *Byzantine Magic*, ed. Henry Maguire, (Washington, D.C.: Dumbarton Oaks Research Library and Collection, 1995), 51.

⁷⁰ Kahlos, “The Early Church,” 148.

⁷¹ Hutton, *The Witch: A History of Fear, from Ancient Times to the Present*, x.

⁷² Franklin, *Writing, Society and Culture in Early Rus, c.950–1300*, 255-258.

elements to protect and utilize spiritual power.’ A broad definition, but one that allows for a preliminary understanding and a workable train of thought.

In the field of magic in the Middle Ages there are other considerations that need to be taken into account when attempting to define this term. In particular terms such as natural, demonic, common, learned, and astral magic (to name a small amount) are all further subdivisions that are used to further delineate magic and how it was understood in the Middle Ages to those who encountered and practiced it, as well as to us now, as we attempt to decipher and understand a system that can appear alien to us. These clarified sub-fields of magic are used for geographic and dating purposes. By the 13th century two different fields had expressly opened up in the Latin west - natural and demonic magic.⁷³ This differentiation allowed for court and “learned/educated” practitioners of magic to separate themselves from the older Greco-Roman ideals of magic which had been used to demonize the pagan gods, and had expressly condemned hostile magics.⁷⁴ Things hidden from society were to be feared as possibly malevolent. This was taken further under the tutelage of the Carolingian dynasty as church and secular power were brought closer to each other and condemnation of magic was focused, rendering any mystical experience not subsumed by the church as demonic and magic itself a keyword that marked a boundary between the church and what was seen as pagan.⁷⁵ Though this did not stop people, including and sometimes mainly priests, from tinkering and attempting to defend their magic of choice. Magic was not something “else,” but something intrinsic to the world view of premodern society.

Here it should be noted that Rus’ian history shifted from Byzantine and the Latin west’s history by the rise of Chinggis Khan. While the attitudes and influences of the 12th century,

⁷³ Kieckhefer, *Magic in the Middle Ages*, 103-104.

⁷⁴ Kahlos, “The Early Church,” 154.

⁷⁵ Yitzhak Hen, “The Early Medieval West.” In *The Cambridge History of Magic and Witchcraft in the West: From Antiquity to the Present*, edited by David Collins, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 191-192.

when the PVL was finished, have been briefly noted above there is a final note to be made before examining the *volkhv*. The redaction of the PVL that is available to modern historians is from 1377. Three years before the Battle of Kulikovo Field, and in the midst of what could still have been a dynastic conflict in the eastern clan of the Rurikids, this version of the PVL was finalized. Contacts with that time included the Latin west to be sure, but a more immediate concern were the Muslim Golden Horde at the south and east of the burgeoning Muscovite state that was the *de facto* influence on all of the Rus'. While it is not the subject of the current analysis, the political character and events that may have influenced the copying of this redaction of the PVL are important to consider.

Before moving to other peoples for specific analysis, the nature of the *volkhv* must be quickly analyzed. What is the proper term for these *volkhv* - sorcerer, shaman, or service magician? Of these three terms, there are arguments both for and against all of these, though the present work has adopted sorcerer over usage of the other two for reasons (rightly or wrongly) I will outline below. The *volkhv* rendered as волхв (PY), Wolchw (PL), or влъхвъ/волвхъ (OCS/OES) are recurrent figures throughout the PVL. Their name and further identification with magic and demonic and prognostic connections indicates their unique role in Rus'ian society, more specifically, in the world view of the monastic chroniclers.

Before examining the three possible ways to address these *volkhv*, a short acknowledgement must be made. The term and title, *volkhv*, is itself not a dead word at the current time. It has been adopted and used by neopagan and native faith groups within modern Russia and Ukraine, as well as within a Cossack martial arts group for similar purposes. A work of major importance for these groups is a book called the *Book of Veles*, supposedly written on birch bark by old Rus'ian *volkhv*, 'discovered' by the Imperial Russian White Army in 1919 and deciphered and slowly published from the 1950's onward. The book, and its

contents, are an 18th-19th centuries forgery however.⁷⁶ The book's main inclusion in this section is for its terming the *volkhv* as priests, which would be used by more recent neopagan groups. The modern Cossack group Ancestral Fire of the Native Orthodox Faith further utilized the term as they formed a larger organization and created the rank of *Verkhovnyi Volkhv* or 'Supreme Magus.'⁷⁷ These different neopagan groups have also used the (mainly Russian) *kolovorot* symbol and begun to associate it with the *volkhv*, which they identify as priests rather than sorcerers, shamans, or service magicians.⁷⁸ This is a modern definition of the term, and merits only this brief inclusion to show an evolution in the term that is divorced from its origin. In 18th century Russian literature, the *volkhv* is also applied as a term for oracles and priests in pagan cults.⁷⁹ Extrapolating this backwards to the early 12th century Rus' would be foolish at the moment however. The recent Early Modern definition of a *volkhv* is likely to be completely separated from the reality of the historical/imagined *volkhv* inhabiting the pages of the PVL.

Returning to the more familiar historical base: The less awesome title, service magician, is used to refer to a magic user who is called on to do as their name suggests; use magic to solve a problem. The handyman of magic workers. This could be anything from curing a disease, countering witchcraft (evil magic), or helping to divine the future via soothsaying.⁸⁰ While this term is a viable possibility to use when discussing the *volkhv*, it is also too encompassing. The terminology ascribed to it by Ronald Hutton does not give any indication of the more sinister side of the *volkhv*, their murder of women and the elderly. As a result, I do not believe that this term is a good enough description for the bloody *volkhv* as they are described in the PVL.

⁷⁶ Adrian Ivakhiv, "In Search of Deeper Identities Neopaganism and 'Native Faith' in Contemporary Ukraine," *Nova Religio: The Journal of Alternative and Emergent Religions* 8, no. 3 (2005): 12-13.

⁷⁷ Ivakhiv, "In Search of Deeper Identities," 21.

⁷⁸ Victor A Shnirelman, "Perun, Svarog And Others: Russian Neo-Paganism In Search Of Itself," *Cambridge Anthropology* 21, no. 3 (1999): 25.

⁷⁹ Ryan, *The Bathhouse at Midnight: An Historical Survey of Magic and Divination in Russia*, 71.

⁸⁰ Hutton, *The Witch: A History of Fear, from Ancient Times to the Present*, x.

Building off the abandonment of ‘service magician’ the identification of shaman needs to be approached. In this instance it should be mentioned that Ronald Hutton does actually term a *volkhv* from the PVL a shaman who is mentioned for his prognostic ability and calling upon spirits (devils in the PVL).⁸¹ This identification of a shaman is seemingly accurate, especially for the geographic region, the area of the Chuds, which was known to Varangian as well the Rus’ quite intimately due to slave raids and trade contacts. This connection will be revisited more in-depth under “Varangian Incantation” as a reference to the Sámi and Finnic peoples. Vladimir Petrukhin also illustrates this comparison and displays the *volkhv* as a shaman in the context of a man seeking his fortune from a Chud *volkhv* who calls on shamanic spirits.⁸² Another historian, Devin DeWeese, briefly analyzed the role of shamans in his study *Islamization and Native Religion in the Golden Horde* where he noted that the steppe shaman:

...despite his important social roles, is often cast as a kind of spiritual ‘loner,’ set apart from his community and serving it almost grudgingly.... The shaman’s services are called upon primarily in times of individual crisis or communal imbalance...⁸³

These descriptions would match and would even explain the reason these supposed Finnic magicians were wandering the lands of the Rus’ian princes during famines. Indeed, this work would prefer to use the term ‘shaman’ were it not for the PVL itself when discussing the power and history of the *volkhv*:

Thus in ancient days, in the time of the Apostles, there lived Simon Magus, who through his magic caused dogs to speak like man, and changed his own aspect, appearing sometimes old, sometimes young, and sometimes even changed one man to the semblance of another, accomplishing this transfiguration by his magic art. Jannes and Jambres wrought marvels against Moses through enchantment, but eventually they had no power against him. Kunop also practiced devilish arts, such as walking upon the water; and he performed other prodigies, being misled by the devil to his own and others’ destruction.⁸⁴

⁸¹ Hutton, *The Witch: A History of Fear, from Ancient Times to the Present*, 87.

⁸² Petrukhin, *Myths of the Finno-Ugrians*, 43.

⁸³ Devin A DeWeese, *Islamization and Native Religion in the Golden Horde: Baba Tükles and Conversion to Islam in Historical and Epic Tradition*, (University Park, PA: Penn State University Press, 1994), 35.

⁸⁴ RPC 153-154, PSRL 180. ꙗко се [въ] первое чароды при апѣлѣхъ бо . быѣ Симонъ волхвъ еже твораше волѣшествомъ . посомъ глѣти члѣвчѣскѣи . и самъ премѣнашетьсѧ . ѡво старъ . ѡво молодъ . ѡво ли ꙗ иного премѣнаше во иного образъ . в мечтанъи сѣе твораше . Аннии Маврии . волѣшвѣнемъ чюдеса [творашета] противу Моисѣиѡви . но вскорѣ не възмогоста противу Моисѣиѡви . но и Конобъ твораше

The standard association of magic with the demonic is expected, but specifically tying the figures of the *volkhv* to Simon Magus from the perspective of the learned monks suggests either the plainer ‘magician’ term be used, or as I have chosen, ‘sorcerer’ for a more general term when appropriate. Simon Magus is also recorded by Pseudo-Clement of Rome as believing that he himself was a god, making him a suitably controversial figure to include.⁸⁵ As a result of this identification, and the violent acts they orchestrated, this study will use the term ‘sorcerer’ interchangeably with *volkhv*. With the local definition of *volkhv* and issue of terminology explained, it is now imperative to examine the roles of other people in relation to the Rus’ and their influences on views of magic.

Varangian Incantation

The PVL’s earliest known redaction, the Laurentian Codex, shares one primary issue with the analysis of magic and its possible transmission in the Varangian context. The Laurentian Codex was commissioned during the reign of a Christian prince, Prince Dmitry Konstantinovich of Suzdal, in the midst of a struggle between Suzdal and Moscow, under the Christian prince Dmitry Donskoy, with interference from the Muslim Golden Horde.⁸⁶ The Golden Horde itself, from 1359 - 1381, was in the midst of a civil war between the non-Chingisid Mamai and the Chingisid Tokhtamysh.⁸⁷ All of these events were far removed from the lofty and celebrated days of Prince Vladimir Svyatoslavich’s days as a prince of the conjoined Rus’ian principdoms. Even in its original early 12th century redaction, the PVL was far removed from the original pagan origins and knowledge on the *volkhv* the pre-Christian Rus’ would have known.

мечтанье бѣсовско . ѿко и по водам ходити [и] ина мечтанья твораше бѣсомъ лстимъ на пагубу собѣ и инѣмъ . сиць

⁸⁵ Daniel Ogden, *Magic, Witchcraft, and Ghosts in the Greek and Roman Worlds: A Sourcebook*, Second Edition (2002; repr., New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), 75.

⁸⁶ Martin, *Medieval Russia, 980-1584*, 232-233.

⁸⁷ Martin, *Medieval Russia*, 223-224

In a similar vein, our knowledge of magic in Scandinavia comes from Icelandic sources that were written down some hundreds of years after their official Christianization. Many of these texts have become famous as sagas or stories, and authors such as Snorri Sturlurson are still heatedly discussed by medievalists.⁸⁸ There are also legal sources that have survived, giving us a look at a recently Christianized society (paralleling the Rus' to some extent). As a result of this, we are left with sources that discuss a pre-Christian era, in which some evidence of magic has remained, which likely envisaged magic as it appeared to an early Christian society rather than a full blown pagan culture as related by faithful adherents.⁸⁹ Unlike the Rus' chroniclers, Snorri Sturlurson was no monk but a man of his world. Even so, there is still the indication that there were pagan undercurrents within Scandinavian society as Snorri relates that the Christian priest Sturla of Hvamm⁹⁰ was almost blinded in one eye by the wife of one of his opponents in order to make him resemble the trickster god Óðinn.⁹¹ Judith Jesch goes so far as to explain that even though Snorri Sturlurson's *Prose Edda* was influenced by his Christian present, "we are left with a substantial body of information about the heathen myths of Snorri's Viking ancestors."⁹² Traces of pre-Christian influence, as well as views of magic as practiced in the Christianized era all come together in Varango-Scandinavian sources.

These same sources would have been coalescing and forming orally during the time of the mythic Rurik and his journey east. The figure of Rurik himself is also an enigma relevant to this communication of knowledge, as there is some possibility that he may be identified with the Danish Viking Rorik of Dorestad who was active around the same era.⁹³ Should that be the case, not only would the oral transmission of magic and Scandinavian tales be validated, but

⁸⁸ Authors such as Peter Brown, Max Dashu, Judith Jesch, Richard Kieckhefer, & Stephen Mitchell are some of the recent authors who have all dealt with Snorri's authorship.

⁸⁹ Kieckhefer, *Magic in the Middle Ages*, 63.

⁹⁰ Western Iceland

⁹¹ Peter Brown, *The Rise of Western Christendom: Triumph and Diversity, A.D. 200-1000*, (West Sussex, UK: John Wiley & Sons, 2012), 481.

⁹² Jesch, *Women in the Viking Age*, 134-135.

⁹³ Ostrowski, "Pagan Past and Christian Identity in the Primary Chronicle," 238.

there is also the possibility that Vladimir Svyatoslavich would not be the first Christian ruler of the Rus'. Instead, it would be Rurik/Rorik who was baptized sometime around 863 as is indicated by reference to his possible penance for allowing a Viking raid to occur.⁹⁴ Although it may be attractive to declare Rorik and Rurik the same individual this is still an active debate and one that this paper will now discretely skirt around. Prior to examining oral communication later in this section, I will first tackle some of the written sources for magic in Scandinavian regions.

What is left then, are remnants of earlier times, and there are indeed possible remnants concerning witchcraft and soothsaying as they may have occurred at their present time, and not just in texts such as the *Prose Edda*. A law code, likely recorded originally in 12th century Norway, warns about consulting soothsayers and witches. A different code from the same time and place warns of women biting the toes or fingers off of their children for longer life and lists the fines associated with such an action.⁹⁵ The pagan past was still being written about in king's chronicles, but legal references do seem to point to magic being alive and well in Scandinavian thought outside of the Sagas. Stephen A. Mitchell clarifies in reference to the mentioned law codes "... the existence of a law of this sort from the early era of Christianity in Norway against such behavior does not guarantee that such activities were actually practiced in the earlier pagan world or that they continued to exist in the post-Conversion world of medieval Norway."⁹⁶ For these laws to still be on the books however indicates a fear of, or suspicion of such activities; and magic only works if others believe it does.

The Scandinavian myths and legends were recorded from a Christian present, but they can tell us that magic was mythologically viewed as the specialty of the Æsir Óðinn and Freyja

⁹⁴ Simon Coupland, "From Poachers to Gamekeepers: Scandinavian Warlords and Carolingian Kings," *Early Medieval Europe* 7, no. 1 (2003): 98.

⁹⁵ Stephen A Mitchell, *Witchcraft and Magic in the Nordic Middle Ages*, (Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2011), 21.

⁹⁶ Mitchell, *Witchcraft and Magic in the Nordic Middle Ages*, 22.

who used the magic called *seiðr* to accomplish various magical feats, including augury.⁹⁷ Interestingly, there is some thought that *seiðr* itself was considered *ergi* (unmanly); Max Dashu states that this must have been “...because the shamanic act itself involved a state of receptivity, seen as a “female” vulnerability arising from the nature of trance, in which spirits entered into the *seiðkona* [enchantress].”⁹⁸ Stephen A. Mitchell also makes note that many scholars have remarked on women holding a singularly important position in respect to prophecy, even going back to reference the Roman writer Tacitus.⁹⁹

In addition to the heavy presence of female magic practitioners in the Varangian tradition, as opposed to the PVL’s male-dominant portrayal, there are also heavy links to shamanic practices and ideals. *Seiðr* itself as a term is gathered into shamanistic contexts and identified further with Sámi in both a male and female context.¹⁰⁰ While local magicians are generally identified with women in the local Scandinavian tradition, the connection to the Sámi links a masculine and feminine practice through shamanic stereotypes of performance and ritual. Richard Kieckhefer notes “Like the shamans of the far North, Icelandic magicians are sometimes portrayed as having special psychic powers while asleep or in a trance.”¹⁰¹ Interestingly enough, the Varangians seem to have not separated between Sámi or Finn shamanic practices and conjoined them together as ‘Finnar,’ which could be identified with the figure of the *tietäjä* who would lead chants and songs for audiences as a type of service magician who were thought to be “wizards” of special power.¹⁰²

These northern viewpoints, though only the surface has been scratched, are different from the picture presented by the PVL of sorcerers, though some similarities are of course present. For one, there is much more emphasis on female magic users. *Seiðr* is specifically

⁹⁷ Mitchell, *Witchcraft and Magic in the Nordic Middle Ages*, 28.

⁹⁸ Dashu, *Witches and Pagans: Women in European Folk Religion, 700-1100*, 142.

⁹⁹ Mitchell, *Witchcraft and Magic in the Nordic Middle Ages*, 28.

¹⁰⁰ Mitchell, *Witchcraft and Magic in the Nordic Middle Ages*, 106.

¹⁰¹ Kieckhefer, *Magic in the Middle Ages*, 66.

¹⁰² Hutton, *The Witch: A History of Fear, from Ancient Times to the Present*, 89-90.

termed *ergi* and supposed to be off limits or “emasculating” for men to practice. However, in a reversal of this discourse, the chief kingly god Óðinn is a proud and open practitioner of *seiðr*. There is some indication of the identification of magic with women in the PVL as the chronicler states that “...in the beginning the devil deceived woman, and she in turn deceived man. Thus even down to the present day women perform magic by black arts, poison, and other devilish deceits.”¹⁰³ This condemnation however, is stereotypical and could have been inherited from a number of early medieval liturgical and historical traditions.¹⁰⁴ The only actual example of a woman using magic in the PVL comes in the 1044 entry where “Him [Vseslav] his mother bore by enchantment...”¹⁰⁵ Shared between these two traditions most strongly however, is the view that the ‘Finnar’ or *volkhv* are powerful, dangerous magic users, and soothsayers.

There are several manners in which Varangian beliefs and views could have been transferred: noble movement and through the *družhina*. For the first method the movement of nobles and warlords into the lands of the Rus’ as conquerors came first, and later through dynastic marriages. When Vladimir Svyatoslavich landed near Novgorod in 980 one of the tasks he accomplished was to ensure that the Rurikid dynasty would have complete control over the remaining lands of the Rus’ by killing the local warlord Rogvolod of Polotsk, raping his daughter Rogneda, and then claiming her as his concubine.¹⁰⁶ Prior to this the majority of the nobility of the Rus’ likely came from the Varangian lands and would have imported their ideals of kingship and rule, such as the Óðinnic sacral-king cult. As will be mentioned later some of the Rus’ princes were even given the title *khagan*, which to the earlier Khazars was an actual sacred title, but which was almost certainly not for the Rus’.¹⁰⁷ The steppe sacrality of

¹⁰³ RPC 153, PSRL 180. искони бо бѣсѣ жену прелсти . си же мужа . тако в си роди много волхвуютъ . женѣ чародѣством и втравою . и инѣми бѣсовьскѣми козньми

¹⁰⁴ Kahlos, “The Early Church,” 154.

¹⁰⁵ RPC 139, PSRL 155. ѡгоже [Всеславъ] роди мѣи ѿ вѣлхвованьѡ

¹⁰⁶ Martin, *Medieval Russia, 980-1584*, 1.

¹⁰⁷ Vladimir Petrukhin, “Sacral Kingship and the Judaism of the Khazars,” In *Conversions: Looking for Ideological Change in the Early Middle Ages*, eds. Leszek Stupecki and Rudolf Simek, (Vienna: Fassbaender 2013), 295-296.

khagan seems to have not maintained the same hold the Scandinavian traditions did in this instance.

In addition to the rapine and blood of dynastic contexts - once Vladimir Svyatoslavich had successfully had his last brother Yaropolk Svyatoslavich killed, no further Varangian nobility competed with the Rurikid dynasty. Instead, additional Scandinavian nobility would enter Varangian areas through dynastic marriages but not as equals. These marriages worked both to import and export ideals and people, one the one hand is the marriage of Yaroslav Vladimirovich to Ingegerd Olofsdotter of Sweden. This marriage saw a noblewoman of the Swedish royal family arrive to the Rus'ian lands along with soldiers, family members, female companions, and in particular a noble kinsman named Ragnvald Úlfsson.¹⁰⁸ This same Ragnvald would be given land and titles within the Rus' creating another manner for the influx of ideals and learning through the nobility.

In the opposite direction Yaroslav Vladimirovich would marry one of his own daughters Elisiv/Elizabeth Yaroslavna to the famous Viking Harald Hardrada.¹⁰⁹ In both the cases of Ingegerd and Elisiv the dynastic marriages were not just the movement of individual peoples, but of courts bringing their own peoples and ideas along with them. These courts at the upper levels of state would have been familiar and even in contact with members of the clergy and monastic orders. What this allows is for exchanges of ideals on religion and magic to proliferate within the upper society of the Rus' long past the time of the adoption of Christianity, leading to exchanges of magic knowledge and stereotypes. Rather than being singly reliant on Byzantine thoughts, Varangian ideas of magic and sorcery (from the Sámi or Varangian native tradition) were able to infiltrate the courts of the princes and the churches

¹⁰⁸ Raffensperger, *Reimagining Europe*, 63-64.

¹⁰⁹ Raffensperger, *Reimagining Europe*, 84.

through the Varangians who were part of the *druzhina* and court society as can be seen by the close communication the general Blud had with Vladimir and Yaropolk Svyatoslavich.¹¹⁰

The second method, the *druzhina*, was more influential in the early Rus' and by the time of the 1071 incident their influence was likely beginning to fade. Early on the *druzhina* were drawn from picked local peoples (Slav, Varangian, & Pecheneg), though by the time of Svyatopolk Iziaslavich's 1093 mustering his retinue had swollen to 800 men, far above what could still account for individual relations with each of his men.¹¹¹ By the late 11th and early 12th century the *druzhina* were beginning to degenerate from a powerful personal army to form the ranks of *boyars* or a subset of the 'nobility.'¹¹² Early on however, this group of armed companions provided counsel and assistance to the Rus'ian princes. Svyatoslav Igorevich even stated that one of his reasons to not adopt the faith of his mother Olga of Pskov was to ensure that his Varangian/local *druzhina* remained loyal to him.¹¹³ Early Rus'ian princes then, as they relied on their *druzhina*, were able to import Varangian ideals and thought into their lands. Even the figure of Yan Vyshata was working as a *druzhina* as he killed the Beloozero *volkhv*.

Acting as mercenaries and military enforcement, the *druzhina* were unlikely to bring books along with them providing detailed accounts of their beliefs and ideas on magic. However, they would bring along their oral culture and tales, which is what would have been communicated, especially as the early *druzhina* maintained close contact with their rulers. As a result of this Scandinavian ideals of magic have the possibility of transmission orally by the time of the PVL while textual transmission would only begin later.¹¹⁴ As mentioned above these oral accounts may have gone into the creation of the accounts of Igor's death and the tale of Olga's wrath upon the Derevlian people. The account of Yan (see Chapter 3) may also have

¹¹⁰ RPC 93.

¹¹¹ RPC 175.

¹¹² Petr Stefanovich, "'The Grand Retinue' Phenomenon in Northern and Eastern Europe in the 10-11th Centuries," *Ancient Civilizations from Scythia to Siberia* 26, no. 2 (December 18, 2020): 447.

¹¹³ RPC 84.

¹¹⁴ Frog, "Medieval Christians' Knowledge of Shamanism in the North," 27.

been orally transmitted to the chronicler and be evidence of a concurrent oral tale that was transcribed with the writing of the PVL.

Varangian ideals on magic and sorcerers were able to flow into the Rus' at the upper level via the nobility and mid-levels through the *druzhina*. This flow of information helps to explain the identification of the *volkhv* with foreign, Finnic, sorcerers. From the Poetic Edda, and legal accounts that remain, we can see that the Varangian lands had their own magic tradition that would have blended and influenced the Rus' as well through their various contacts and relations. When the authors of the PVL were working to compile their work the beliefs of the Varangian nobility and soldiers who helped to create portions of Rus'ian society were helping to shape their and the prince's worldview, even if they did not openly say so.

Byzantine Thaumaturgy

Jesus was a *magos* who was hated by the gods.¹¹⁵ This was one of the criticisms leveled at early Christians in the still pagan Roman Empire. Apollonius of Tyana had also healed the sick, ascended to heaven, manifested himself after death, and even raised a person from the dead.¹¹⁶ Apollonius' inclusion in the PVL is also interesting as the description of his using amulets to cure a plague of scorpions and earthquakes is one of the only textual pieces of evidence for Rus'ian knowledge of Hellenistic and Byzantine amulets in the early Rus'.¹¹⁷ At this time the division between magic, religion, and philosophy was not so much a wall as a light fog. Apollonius himself showcased a combination of religious fervor towards Asclepius alongside magic practices which led to confusion on his ritualistic divine foretelling as being magically derived and not religiously.¹¹⁸ The confusion of magic and religion was not limited to just Late

¹¹⁵ John Petropoulos, *Greek Magic: Ancient, Medieval and Modern*, (New York: Routledge, 2008), 41.

¹¹⁶ Ogden, *Magic, Witchcraft, and Ghosts in the Greek and Roman Worlds: A Sourcebook*, 61-69.

¹¹⁷ Ryan, *The Bathhouse at Midnight: An Historical Survey of Magic and Divination in Russia*, 241.

¹¹⁸ Graf, *Magic in the Ancient World*, 95.

Antiquity though; throughout the Middle Ages the debate of what was magic vs religion would remain a heated topic.

Within the Greco-Roman world magic itself was a tool that could be used for good or bad, and that was only illegal when harmful sorcery was the aim.¹¹⁹ So while magic was legal, there was still a hint of possible misuse. Magic, to give one example, was something hidden that people did away from the public view, neoplatonic philosophers such as Porphyry and Iamblichus had even begun developing rituals for personal use rather than in communal worship to the Roman gods.¹²⁰ There were also certain religious cults that would fit this characterization and required private initiation, all of whom would later be lumped together in Christian condemnation of the demonic. As early Christian rites were also hidden, the Christian community was forced to defend itself from claims that they were practicing magic. While not an accusation that only Christians had to defend against, it was a clear signifier of something appearing to be societally different. The miracles of Jesus were thus attacked as sorcerous.

The Roman view of magic saw private ritual as inherently dangerous and tainted as actions taken against individuals or society as a whole for malevolent ends.¹²¹ The indoor Christian services were this inherently secretive and debauched at worst, or extremely tone deaf at best. Jesus' acts and Christian ritual were thus magic. In rebuttal, Christians argued for the miracles being divinely inspired from God and not of sorcerous origin. One of the results was the condemnation of any non-Church ceremony as relying on demonic influence.¹²² By enforcing this difference of religion and magic a clear imagined border was established. Any Christian rites and ceremonies were divinely inspired and authorized, anything without was the work of demons.

¹¹⁹ Philip C Almond, *The Devil: A New Biography*, (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 2014), 79.

¹²⁰ Kieckhefer, *Magic in the Middle Ages*, 38.

¹²¹ Graf, *Magic in the Ancient World*, 53-54.

¹²² Hutton, *The Witch: A History of Fear, from Ancient Times to the Present*, 148.

This would continue into the formal adoption of Christianity under the Eastern Roman Empire, conventionally referred to by modern historians as the Byzantine Empire, wherein magic was generally a body of non-Christian knowledge and practices.¹²³ It should be noted that philosophy, works of literature, and other survivals of the pagan past continued to remain relevant and studied at most if not all levels of society; so long as they were not inherently magical or demonic in nature. What was inherently too magical or demonic could of course vary based on the interpretation of the time. Pre-Christian beliefs among the Rus' are relatively unknown but probably reflected Varangian-Steppe practices mixed with native Slavic variations and beliefs in regard to magic. As the PVL is the earliest known source, the history of magic in the Rus' is related in a method that was imported from the Byzantine manuscript tradition, ecclesiastical codes in particular were adopted and translated into the Slavic language and writing of the Rus' from Byzantine originals along with other religious material.¹²⁴ The weight of that importation of knowledge told most heavily on the monastics and religious figures who utilized these texts continuously throughout every single day of the year. As a result of these new linguistic tools and techniques the PVL itself is used to color the emergence of the Kyivan Rus' under Vladimir Svyatoslavich, as it translates into Christianity, and generate, a chronicle that is ecclesiastical in form and function based on the Byzantine model.¹²⁵

In addition to this importation of Christian thought, the "Varangian Way" and trade connections further enhanced connections during the time of the PVL. This southern route was one of the prime motivations for the Varangian ventures and even prior to Christianization and the rise of the Rurikid dynasty copper *folles* coins, generally worthless unlike the silver

¹²³ Walker, "Magic in Medieval Byzantium," 209.

¹²⁴ Franklin, *Writing, Society and Culture in Early Rus, c.950–1300*, 139.

¹²⁵ *Sermons and Rhetoric of Kievan Rus'*, Trans. Simon Franklin, (Cambridge, MA: Harvard Ukrainian, 2011), xxxix-xl.

dirhams, from Byzantium are found near Kyiv around 900.¹²⁶ One of the byproducts of the militaristic manner of the Rus'ian princes was a thriving slave trade that saw soldiers, civilians, and others sold into slavery. Byzantium was a major consumer of Rus'ian slaves; and it was through this trade that the marble and precious materials used to decorate the Rus'ian churches would arrive in the Rus'.¹²⁷ Later analysis of the 13th century Crimean slave trade specifically shows that part of this slave trade deliberately abducted young female children and women between 8-24 years of age from local peoples including the pagan Finnic peoples whence the *volkhv* emerged.¹²⁸ From the pagan Finns, nominally Christian Rus', pagan Polovtsy, and then to Constantinople the currents of ideas and information continued to flow as raw materials of honey, furs, wood, and slaves were used to purchase Byzantine books and precious goods for the Rus'.

Among the ideas and imports the Byzantine Empire transmitted to the Rus' were the theological ideologies and precedents that were common or known to the bishops, monks, and others who arrived to the Rus' from Greek Orthodox heritage lands. One part of this transferred intellectual and theological ideology likely corresponds to amuletic import and copying in the 10th-12th centuries of the *zmeeviki* (sing. *zmeevik*) "serpent-amulets" used as medical charms and at first produced in Byzantine workshops.¹²⁹ Amulets were used/believed to ward off affliction or to cure one through magic and religious means. These amulets generally came with two preponderant images: one that depicted a "holy rider" trampling/stabbing/vanquishing a female figure, or a face with serpents radiating from it (not a medusa); both generally also

¹²⁶ Franklin & Shepard, *The Emergence of Rus: 750-1200*, 10.

¹²⁷ Martin, *Medieval Russia, 980-1584*, 70-71.

¹²⁸ Jukka Korpela, "The Baltic Finnic People in the Medieval and Pre-Modern Eastern European Slave Trade." *Russian History* 41, no. 1 (2014): 98.

¹²⁹ Jeffrey Spier, "Medieval Byzantine Magical Amulets and Their Tradition," *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 56, no. 1 (January 1, 1993): 27-29, 32. The *hystera* formula that was normally copied is given as: 'Womb, black, blackening, as a snake you coil and as a serpent you hiss and as a lion you roar, and as a lamb, lie down!' The Rus'ian amulets change from the Greek script to the Old Church Slavonic, a notable gold amulet even includes both Greek and Slavonic.

co-opted Christian imagery and had saint-like figures on the obverse sides.¹³⁰ A literal depiction of driving out and crushing the illness or malady.

The female forms on these amulets are unnamed aside from one example where the name Abizou Anabardalea is given.¹³¹ Jeffrey Spier connects this imagery of the Abyzou/Abizou with the Jewish Lilith and the Mesopotamian Lilitu/Lamashtu.¹³² He correlates this idea by further tying the female figure to the demon Obyzouth from the *Testament of Solomon* (a non-canonical religious text). The image of the head with serpents may also be tied to this demonic entity based on research by Vera Zaleskaia, though Spier believes that it is likely the imagery is a symbol for the “wandering womb” itself in a medical sense.¹³³ In this sense, they would have been products of the merchant and upper classes in the Middle Ages that served a very real medical cause, possibly even actually working if the placebo effect was strong enough.

This trampling or commanding of demons is linked to the Late Antique Roman-Christian heritage of demons by naming and driving out the malignant spirit via an exorcism ritual, in the amuletic example as a medical exorcism.¹³⁴ As something easy to transport and plentifully made, these amulets would be immensely popular for prospective buyers. These amulets show a material connection that was likely transmitted via commissions and imperial gifts from Byzantium to the Rus’ where the *hystera* was replaced with the Slavonic *dna* “evil most evil or death” showing that these medical amulets were commanding exorcist items.¹³⁵ Adapting the language may have even been a method to ensure they would work on Rus’ian demons, to whom Greek may have been unfamiliar. These post-iconoclastic amulets were also following the new principals of religious imagery, even if these amulets themselves may not

¹³⁰ Spier, “Medieval Byzantine Magical Amulets and Their Tradition,” 35-38.

¹³¹ Spier, “Medieval Byzantine Magical Amulets and Their Tradition,” 30.

¹³² These were generally female demons who abducted and killed/devoured children.

¹³³ Spier, “Medieval Byzantine Magical Amulets and Their Tradition,” 38-42.

¹³⁴ Petropoulos, *Greek Magic: Ancient, Medieval and Modern*, 42.

¹³⁵ Spier, “Medieval Byzantine Magical Amulets and Their Tradition,” 27-29, 49-50.

have been officially church endorsed, by not repeating multiple symbols repeatedly on the same amulet and would also explain the formality and rough similarity of the two types of images used.¹³⁶ The repetition of multiple symbols was a pre-iconoclastic device meant to increase the effectiveness of the icon or image, in a post-iconoclastic art form this meant that the individual image was enough on its own, the power came from outside of the image. These amulets seem to be one of the only forms of magical amulet to have been imported to the Rus', with later 19th century peasants even pairing copper *zmeeviki* with their pectoral crosses.¹³⁷ Byzantine and Rus'ian merchants seem to have imported a fusing of religion and magic to the Rus' nobility via amulets, and then slowly downward to the rest of Rus'ian territories.

Through this transmission of a physical ideology in the amulets, it is also highly probable that the imported religious men would have also brought with them their knowledge of demons and spirits along with their psalters and other religious texts. The most relevant Byzantine treatise for this topic would be *Dialogue on the Operation of Demons* by or attributed to Michael Psellos.¹³⁸ The text itself is a conversation between Psellos' characters Timothy and Thracian on the supposed beliefs of the Messalians which describes their practices in a very unsympathetic light. Purporting that the Messalians serve the Devil, declare Satan a son of God, hold incestuous orgies, and even sacrifice babies in cannibalistic ceremonies this work clearly shows there was no manner in which the Messalians could be anything other than heretics.¹³⁹ Reflecting at the absolute latest the 13th century beliefs of Byzantine Demonology this work is important for understanding certain Byzantine views of demons and spirits in the world and their relationship with the holy. Psellos himself seems to have had an intensive knowledge of the *Chaldean Oracles*, though was cautious enough to not teach or communicate

¹³⁶ Maguire, "Magic and the Christian Image," 67-68.

¹³⁷ Ryan, *The Bathhouse at Midnight: An Historical Survey of Magic and Divination in Russia*, 241.

¹³⁸ Petropoulos, *Greek Magic: Ancient, Medieval and Modern*, 58.

¹³⁹ (Pseudo-) Michael Psellos, *Dialogue on the Operation of Daemons*, Edited by Joseph H. Peterson, Translated by Marcus Collisson, esotericarchives.com, 2007, <http://www.esotericarchives.com/psellos/daemonibus.pdf>, 24.

a belief in said texts which allowed for the control and appeasement of pagan gods and demons.¹⁴⁰ At the end of the work is a particularly important understanding of demons and their prophetic abilities which Thracian states the demons do possess “but not a causal or intelligent, nor experimental foreknowledge, but merely conjectural, for which reason it most generally fails, so that they scarcely ever utter a particle of truth.”¹⁴¹ The demons that are opposed to God in this case are then shown as capable of soothsaying, which is just as the *volkhv* in the later sections of the PVL will be shown. Even if *Dialogue on the Operation of Demons* was never physically transported to the Rus’ ecclesiastical imagery, thought, and routine made its way to the Rus’ian monks, bishops and other church figures from the Byzantine religious world. Whether it was Psellos or other intellectual modes of transport, there were plentiful ways for demonology to worm its way toward Kyiv from Tsargrad. It was, after all, the monks who would author the PVL and provide us with our modern image of the *volkhv* and the devils they called on.

The Byzantine Empire had a profound and direct impact on the Rus’, but while it may have been hyper-represented in the church through liturgy and chronicle traditions, it had a much lesser impact at the princely level. In this regard the PVL and other chronicles may present a stronger connection to Byzantium than was actually “real” in terms of the worldview of the non-church person and prince. It would instead be Latin, Varangian, and Byzantine views of magic that were all acting in concert. A gradual conversion began in 988, and by 1071 the process was still ongoing, with the monks having to adapt Byzantine thought to their own local norms while working to Christianize their land.

¹⁴⁰ John Duffy, "Reactions of Two Byzantine Intellectuals to the Theory and Practice of Magic: Michael Psellos and Michael Italikos," In *Byzantine Magic*, ed. Henry Maguire (Washington, D.C.: Dumbarton Oaks Research Library and Collection. 1995), 88, 93.

¹⁴¹ Psellos, *Dialogue on the Operation of Daemons*, 47.

Latin Battlegrounds

Latin contact with the Rus' was not isolated. Despite the issues of geographic determination of what is and is not "Europe," the Rus' were still intricately linked at the upper level to the Latin west. The Latin tradition of magic and sorcery is early on intimately linked with the Greco-Roman past, but by the 12th century (and prior to it as well) there were some differences that had begun to open between the Greek speaking Roman Empire in Byzantium and the Latin speaking nobility in the west. These were based not just off of local differences that cropped up due to the distances involved and regional developments but were also based off of the unique history and culture of the western lands. All of these lands and ideas were in turn, intrinsically and heavily linked to the Rus' conjugally and monetarily until the 13th century invasion of Batu Khan and Subutai.

By the completion of the PVL in the early 12th century, something new was beginning to form in the west: universities. At this point, the border between "learned" and "common" became the most present it had likely ever been. Medicine especially was now being claimed by university educated physicians to be their own sphere of knowledge that was divorced from the workings of magic healers, though Richard Kieckhefer is quick to point out that the difference between medicine and magic was not made any clearer by this development.¹⁴² In contrast to this ideal, evidence from early modern 17th century Russia indicates that medical knowledge and magic practices were not only still reliant on priestly religio-magic cures, but that there was also an ideal of exorcism by removing the "physical" disease from the body through specific chants and sympathetic magic (which is generally identified with the Middle Byzantine tradition).¹⁴³ It would seem folk beliefs in magic were continuing strong into the 17th century Russian peasantry at the very least. Latin magic in the Middle Ages is a massive field

¹⁴² Kieckhefer, *Magic in the Middle Ages*, 77.

¹⁴³ Russell Zguta, "Witchcraft and Medicine in Pre-Petrine Russia," *Russian Review* 37, no. 4 (October 1978): 444-445.

with vast amounts of research poured into it. Thankfully, the PVL focuses on some very specific issues for comparison.

When looking at the PVL it is sorcery that is the most pronounced magic sub-field, particularly that of soothsaying on the part of the *volkhv*. Latin sorcery seems to generally have been practiced by both men and women, and to have had a range of involvement though usually perceived as negative and harmful or unnatural in some manner, like stripping someone of their free will with a love potion.¹⁴⁴ Sorcery could have involved any magic issues such as the creation of love potions, calling down hail on a farmers field, protecting said farmers field from nature or another magic practitioner, or anything else that could not be quickly proved as a natural occurrence. Similar to the Byzantine (though more broadly Christian) tradition, sorcerers were thought to call on the demonic in order to work their magic and Latin authors were correspondingly as hostile to magicians as the authors of the PVL are to the *volkhv*.¹⁴⁵ With this similarity in thought on the power of the sorcerer, and a known understanding that prophecy could be invoked through magic “demonic” acts, connections between the Rus’ and the Latins must be understood on several more mundane levels.

Since magic in the Latin west has been, and is still being, studied to a high degree, rather than dwell on the similarities of magic practices, connections and points of contact must be emphasized. This will focus on two areas: marriage and trade contacts. Each of these aspects helped to bridge cultural gaps and exposed the monastic authors of the PVL to viewpoints that likely reinforce their ideas of the *volkhv*.

Marital ties are extremely important as can be seen from the impact the marriages or relations the two Vladimir’s (Svyatoslavich and Monomakh) had with their Byzantine connections and the emphasis these are given in histories of the Rus’. The marriage of Vladimir

¹⁴⁴ Kieckhefer, *Magic in the Middle Ages*, 99.

¹⁴⁵ Hutton, *The Witch: A History of Fear, from Ancient Times to the Present*, 155.

Svyatoslavich to Anna Porphyrogenita marked not only the traditional baptism of the Rus' but also served as a blood tie to the Roman (Byzantine) Empire. Politically, this was important and marked them as separate from their neighbors to the west who were adopting Christianity from non-Imperial sources. The other major example, of Vladimir Monomakh, does not refer to a direct connection to a Byzantine wife but instead remarks on his maternal heritage as his mother was of the Monomachos family. In both of these examples, extreme emphasis has been placed on these Byzantine ties for their Roman heritage, adoption of the Greek rite, and as a prestige marker.¹⁴⁶ But these marriages were rare.

The majority of the Rus'ian princes married within members of the Latin rite, or by marrying Polovtsy noblewomen who converted to Christianity at marriage.¹⁴⁷ These steppe connections are also emphasized in Metropolitan Hilarion's 11th century *Sermon on Law and Grace* where both Vladimir Svyatoslavich and his son Yaroslav Vladimirovich are given the title of *khagan* rather than the more standard *knyaz* (prince).¹⁴⁸ Vladimir Petrukhin makes a note that these titles were generally given to princes of the eastern areas of the Rus' and they likely signified "the ruler of the edge of the Christian world" but were otherwise bereft of their actual political meaning.¹⁴⁹ It should be said that the authors of the PVL were extremely reluctant to mention the Polovtsy in a positive light in any manner, likely from the fact that Polovtsy raids were a constant threat to the Cave Monastery.

For some additional perspective, Christian Raffensperger analyzed dynastic marriages from the 10th through 12th centuries in the Rus' and concluded that of the fifty-two known marriages, forty of them were with Latin kingdoms to the west of the Rus'.¹⁵⁰ Of note are the various contacts the Rus' had with the Kingdom of Hungary through marriage. Márta Font

¹⁴⁶ Martin, *Medieval Russia, 980-1584*, 8.

¹⁴⁷ Raffensperger, *Reimagining Europe*, 77.

¹⁴⁸ Vladimir Petrukhin, "The Title of "khagan" in Old Slavic Traditions," *Chronica* 18 (2018): 239.

¹⁴⁹ Petrukhin, "The Title of "khagan" in Old Slavic Traditions," 240.

¹⁵⁰ Raffensperger, *Reimagining Europe*, 71.

points out in particular that Svyatoslav Vladimirovich attempted to flee to Hungary when the civil war between Yaroslav and Svyatopolk broke out due to his possible marriage to a Hungarian princess, as well as the later 1043 marriage of King Saint Andrew I to Anastasia Yaroslavna.¹⁵¹ The west, it would seem, was a much more immediate and useful connection than Byzantium for local concerns. Márta Font further demonstrates that towards the end of the 12th century the Kingdom of Hungary was taking notice of the wealthy lands of the Galicia-Volhynia region and was tied into the dynastic struggles within those lands by marriage ties (Yaroslav Svyatopolchich & King Saint Ladislaus' daughter) and economic possibilities.¹⁵² As mentioned above, these marriages were not just political pairings but saw transfers of small groups of people and even relatives that inhabited the local areas and courts, and would have mingled with prince, princess, priest, *druzhina*, *boyar*, and service person.

Even as Rus'ian noblewoman were sent abroad to foreign courts, they did not remain isolated but stayed in contact with and actively worked as agents for their home kingdom and family.¹⁵³ These upper-level contacts and communications were preceded by communications and agreements between the families involved using priests and other persons connected to the families as couriers and contacts. These royal women were trained and valued from their birth for their crucial role in politics.¹⁵⁴ Marriages were not mere joinings of family trees or dynasties for alliances and peace, they were information and knowledge brokerings operated primarily by women.

Moving to another aspect of communication, trade itself played a major factor in the systems and ideas transfer as well. Even during the civil war between Yaroslav and Svyatopolk Vladimirovich, Kyiv was a center for east-west trade routes that was tied to both Krakow and

¹⁵¹ Márta Font, *The Kings of the House of Árpád and the Rurikid Princes: Cooperation and Conflict in Medieval Hungary and Kievan Rus'*, (Budapest, Hungary: Research Centre of the Humanities, 2020), 108,114.

¹⁵² Font, *The Kings of the House of Árpád and the Rurikid Princes*, 116

¹⁵³ Raffensperger, *Reimagining Europe*, 113.

¹⁵⁴ Raffensperger, *Reimagining Europe*, 113.

Prague.¹⁵⁵ Throughout the 13th century and even beyond the Rus' were able to foster ties via Jewish merchants, and this led to the growth and importance of Galicia-Volhynia as a principality within the Rus'.¹⁵⁶ In addition to the material and intellectual routes fostered by these mercantile connections, the slave trade also diverted to the west as well, and saw the transport of enslaved peoples from the Finno-Ugrian regions into Latin lands in addition to the aforementioned Byzantine slave trade. In a more material example of the importance of trade, two of the gates of Kyiv were the Polish Gate and the Hungarian Gate, as an indication of the importance of these trading partners and routes.¹⁵⁷ Easy access for these merchants meant more wealth for everyone, and a certain level of trust required by both parties. Part of Svyatoslav Igorevich's *druzhina* may have even had a Hungarian contingent that would have aided in establishing these trade ties to Kyiv.¹⁵⁸ Connection to the *druzhina* was highly important to the early warlords, and fostering ties to their homeland may have helped to keep them loyal to his service. In order to feed warfare in the steppe and in civil wars, weapons were also a prime commodity in trade. Swords in the Rus' bear characteristics of connections to the Rhine River trade route to Mainz including Latin makers marks; and there are even Rus'ian copies of the same style that blend western techniques, Scandinavian ornamentation, and Cyrillic writing for the makers mark showcasing blending in thought and technique.¹⁵⁹ It would seem the tools of war were also fused with various ideas within the fractious Rus'ian polity.

In both marriage and mercantilism close connections with the Latin west can be seen. In addition to the common tradition of viewing magic as demonic, it is apparent that influences on the nature of magic and sorcerers could have clearly crossed from the Krakow-Prague borderland and come to Kyiv and the Cave Monastery. Transmission of the cult of martyred

¹⁵⁵ Franklin & Shepard, *The Emergence of Rus: 750-1200*, 199.

¹⁵⁶ Martin, *Medieval Russia, 980-1584*, 72.

¹⁵⁷ Raffensperger, *Reimagining Europe*, 125.

¹⁵⁸ Font, *The Kings of the House of Árpád and the Rurikid Princes*, 104.

¹⁵⁹ Raffensperger, *Reimagining Europe*, 128.

kings and princes is evident from Boris and Gleb's veneration and sacralization, speaking to a Latin religious tradition entering the Rus' separate from the Byzantine and highly similar to the martyrdom of Wenceslaus in feature.¹⁶⁰ Doctrinal differences would take some time to become major issues between the Latin and Greek rite yet. Rather than being isolated and remote from the western ideals of magic, witchcraft, and sorcery these ideas would have been hardened and reinforced from upper and mid-level connections while common magic remained prolific at most levels of society.

Sacral Blood

A final note on these influences is well illustrated by the concept of sacralization and royal saints. Combining these three regions of influence, there was the issue of the Rus' recent Christianization. While it is unknown if the early rulers of the Rus' functioned as god-kings, it is known that Vladimir Svyatoslavich functioned as the high priest of the pagan pantheon. Christianization left a vacuum. While the princes had been the bringers and deliverers of spiritual power, they were now receiving it rather than delivering it. This led to a drive to sacralize the Rus'ian dynasty, a move that began under the auspices of Yaroslav Vladimirovich, and eventually saw many of the early members of the Christian Rus' sainted.

When attempting to seek spiritual aid the saints were always available as intercessors to God, and as the Rus' were now Christian, they desired a saint of their own to call on for succor. Boris and Gleb of course fit this description of a local saint, particularly for the princes and their families who made up the nobility. This search for a divine companionship between God, His angels, and man was also one with echoes to the Neoplatonists of Late Antiquity (Plotinus in particular) who sought out *parhedroi* in order to act as protectors.¹⁶¹ Attaining uniquely Rus'ian saints and protector figures would go some way to differentiating and

¹⁶⁰ Klaniczay, *Holy Rulers and Blessed Princesses: Dynastic Cults in Medieval Central Europe*, 112.

¹⁶¹ Graf, *Magic in the Ancient World*, 117.

showing how the Rus'ian church was not just a mere transplant of the Byzantine. These royal saints were also expressly related to the Rus'ian Rurik clan and were able to avoid issues of patronage such as St. Adalbert's cult dealt with.¹⁶² While the princes had accepted Christianity, they were also keen to maintain some level of control over the new institution. This was a task made all the easier by the physical distance from the Byzantine court.

This message of sacralization was likely placed into the PVL by adopting Boris and Gleb as not only a eucharistic offering (see page 10) but also as a stand in for a pagan veneration of these two princes who consecrated the princely line of the Rus' as martyr-princes of the Óðinnic tradition, now turned to Christian aims.¹⁶³ While it does seem that Yaroslav Vladimirovich was primarily interested in highlighting the primacy of his father as the Christianizer of the Rus' from Hilarion's *Sermon on Law and Grace* in the 11th century, the PVL itself indicates a drive to showcase the holy and sacral nature of the murdered princes Boris and Gleb. Similar martyr tales of princes and kings can be seen in parallel examples in the tales of saints such as Sigismund (d. 523/4), Edmund (d. 869), and Wenceslas (d. 935) - all killed in political struggles and given qualities of gentleness or of meekly bowing to Judas like betrayal.¹⁶⁴ Copying these other examples allowed the Yaroslavichii to sacralize their own royal line and to showcase a royal tradition of holiness, however recent that may have been. Vladimir Svyatoslavich, Yaroslav Vladimirovich, and the original convert Olga of Pskov would all eventually become saints of the Rus' as well as the "hero" of the second half of the PVL, Vladimir Monomakh. With the adoption of royal saints, the Rus'ian royal line had familial saints and figures to call on, and so show their inclusion within the broader realm of Christianity even if they were at one of its borderlands.

¹⁶² Gábor Klaniczay. "Saints' Cults in Medieval Central Europe: Rivalries and Alliances," In *Symbolic Identity and the Cultural Memory of Saints*, eds. Nils Holger Petersen, Anu Mänd, Sebastián Salvadó and Tracey R. Sands (Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2018), 27.

¹⁶³ Edward S. Reisman. "The Cult of Boris and Gleb: Remnant of a Varangian Tradition?" *Russian Review* 37, no. 2 (April 1978): 155.

¹⁶⁴ Klaniczay, *Holy Rulers and Blessed Princesses: Dynastic Cults in Medieval Central Europe*, 68, 93, 105.

These sacral kingships allowed fledgling dynasties and political shifts to occur under favorable auspices and with greater legitimacy. The murder of Boris and Gleb allowed Yaroslav's descendants to claim authority and sacralization as they were the side who had vanquished the supposed instigator of the murders, Svyatopolk Vladimirovich "the Damned," the Yaroslavichii had successfully initiated the start of a dynastic cult of saints.¹⁶⁵ Adopted into the Rus'ian tradition as a eucharistic offering and now of sacral-kingship, the cult of the soon to be Saints Boris and Gleb would transform them into warrior saints. Sent from the Virgin Mary in a later tale they would manifest and save Novgorod from a Suzdalian attack, which W. F. Ryan notes as being a common occurrence in both Slavonic and Byzantine legends and chronicles.¹⁶⁶ The road to sacralization was an evolution of the state. One that had begun much earlier, at the end of an era of warlords.

Vladimir Svyatoslavich had attempted to sacralize under pagan auspices originally. When that failed, he turned to Christianity. Having killed his older brother for the throne, some manner of legitimacy was needed, and his conquest relied on the murder of his brother through betrayal, indicating some loyalties remained for Yaropolk Svyatoslavich. In both the 980's pagan reformation and in the 988 Christianization the path to a destruction of the older pagan tribal cult had begun. In order to legitimize and empower the princely line, the destruction of the old pagan religion and culture was necessary. The old beliefs likely were influenced by immediate familial ties to the village and focused on the local tribal welfare.¹⁶⁷ This would mean that in the early years of the Rus' (8th C. - 980) tribute collection and "protection" were the only ties the princes needed to rely on to claim authority over a village or city, an era of warlords. With Vladimir Svyatoslavich attempting to consolidate his power and legitimize himself, the older pagan reliance on a small community was ripped apart and destroyed, or at

¹⁶⁵ Klaniczay, *Holy Rulers and Blessed Princesses: Dynastic Cults in Medieval Central Europe*, 111.

¹⁶⁶ Ryan, *The Bathhouse at Midnight: An Historical Survey of Magic and Divination in Russia*, 237.

¹⁶⁷ Petrukhin, *The Christianization of Rus: from paganism to christianity*, 154.

least this was attempted, and a new order had to be enforced. The fate of the individual, the afterlife, and social bonds was now something enforced by the prince, his *druzhina*, and after 988 - the Church.¹⁶⁸ This control meant that any outsiders offering spiritual information or service, were immediate threats to the authority and control of the princes.

The princes were then able to claim a sacral bloodline and heritage, as well as a unique right to rule their own lands. This reaffirmed their conquests and patrimonies as well as their inclusion in the Rurikid dynasty. This was an important message, as the Rurikid dynasty was to grow, expand, and fracture into messy pieces with fratricidal wars that saw the Rus' divided into smaller princedoms just prior to the Mongol invasions. The princes were all still able to claim descent from a common line by this point, however. As the *volkhv* moved through the Rus', they unwittingly stepped into political, religious, and societal issues all wrapped up together.

Chapter 2 Summary

The *volkhv* called on demons and the Devil to work their magic, and magic itself was the application of spirituality without the consent of the Church. The term sorcerer is used as it is the same term the PVL uses in 1071 to identify magic users such as the *volkhv* by connecting them to such famous figures such as Simon Magus, Jannes & Jambres, and Kunop. Thus, while shaman may be a more accurate term to use in general, as this discussion uses the PVL and the monk's viewpoint, sorcerer is what the *volkhv* shall be.

One of the earliest influences on the Rus', is the influence of Scandinavian knowledge. Law codes and shaman legends from the Scandinavian areas in comparative times to the PVL point to shared understandings. Marriages to Scandinavian nobles and oral communication within the *druzhina* allowed for increased contact and influence. The most discussed and prolific influence is the Byzantine influence on the Rus'. The ideas of Michael Psellos and

¹⁶⁸ Petrukhin, *The Christianization of Rus: from paganism to christianity*, 154.

other imported Byzantine religious knowledge allowed the Rus' to adapt a Christian linguistic toolbox to their own needs. These connections likely informed the authors of the PVL more than strictly oral influences, but they were also adapted and modified to fit the visions the chroniclers had of their own land and the effects the *volkhv* had on it. While Byzantine thought may have been the bedrock, Latin ideals were extremely likely to have infiltrated into the Rus' through the large number of marriages the early Rus' had with western kingdoms. As is evident, while the Byzantine religious model was imported first, other groups had just as much, if not more influence on the Rus' along with their own domestic knowledge and understandings as well.

Finally, by sacralizing the princely line, the Rus' adopted and utilized knowledge from Latin, Byzantine, and Scandinavian models in order to show their divine right to rule. Sacralization meant that only the descendants of Vladimir Svyatoslavich were now eligible for the throne in Kyiv, disbaring any future warlords who could displace the princes. The PVL was not an isolated document, and the Rus' were not either, they were a well-connected and involved principality within the Middle Ages.

All these ideals from the Slavic, Varangian, Byzantine, and Latin would come together in the most vicious attack and description of the *volkhv* in the PVL. In 1071 the civil wars briefly abated, and the Christian chronicler could turn to fully bringing the lands of the Rus' under princely and Church control. In 1071, the Christian chronicler turned to attack the *volkhv* and their hold on the people of the Rus'.

Chapter 3: 1071 - The Auspicious Year

The thunder of cavalry and mailed warriors ceased, the arrow flew amongst kinsmen no more, and the feet of the *Lyakh*¹⁶⁹ were turned towards home. The civil wars had ended, and the chaos caused by the calamitous defeat during the night battle near the Al'ta River (1068) had been resolved. The horses and bows of the Polovtsy still sounded through border raids, but the internal clash amongst the Rurikid dynasty had finally been rendered silent. Iziaslav, Svyatoslav, and Vsevolod (the Yaroslavichii) ruled in their patronymics with peace between them. The quiet of the realm from war, in the chroniclers' eyes, was shattered in 1071 not by war but by the sudden appearance and malefic workings of the sorcerous *volkhv*/ВОЛХВ in multiple cities and peripheral regions under the nominal control of the Rus'ian princes. In distant Beloozero a duo of *volkhv* terrorized the countryside by promising to end a famine through the murder of elderly women. In Kyiv and Novgorod *volkhv* appeared and roused the common people to wrath. In the chroniclers' eyes the forces of demons and the Antichrist were infiltrating the cities of the Rus' that Vladimir Svyatoslavich had just recently brought Christianity.

From whence and for what cause did the chronicler note so many instances of soothsaying, rebellion, and non-Christian practice? To begin, less than one hundred years had elapsed from the formal conversion of the Rus'ian royal line in 988 by Great King/Ruler¹⁷⁰ Vladimir Svyatoslavich “the Great” and Christianity was gradually spreading outward from fortified settlements. Individual warriors and families had already begun converting earlier. In contrast to the “homegrown” Christianity of the 6th century Latin West¹⁷¹, there was a *dvoeverie*/ditheism (Dual-Christianity) that combined elements of pagan and Christian ritual

¹⁶⁹ The Polish, who had recently helped Iziaslav Yaroslavich reclaim Kyiv from Vseslav Bryacheslavich - Gallus Anonymous' *Gesta Principum Polonorum* & the 1069 entry of the PVL shed more light on this occurrence.

¹⁷⁰ Christian Raffensperger, *The Kingdom of Rus'*, (Kalamazoo: Arc Humanities Press, 2017), 65.

¹⁷¹ Brown, *The Rise of Western Christendom: Triumph and Diversity, A.D. 200-1000*, 147.

and terminology that was spreading¹⁷² though it may be more commonly termed a syncretic movement. By 1071 the Rus'ian domains finally had a break from the depredations of civil conflict amongst their ruling dynasty. In fact, there was now one branch, the Yaroslavichii, that had assumed dominance and lead position within the fractious Rurikid dynasty. They were not unopposed; however, other descendants of Vladimir Svyatoslavich were still in contention with the Yaroslavichii. While this state of internal peace would not last long, this temporary dynastic unity allowed the reigning princes and the church a reprieve from the hellish warfare of the previous years. There was now a firm and united throne in Kyiv from which the process of Christianization could continue, be enforced, and consolidated. Opinions on what this meant however, differed according to the chroniclers and the princes.

Christianization, as mentioned above, had already begun prior to the official baptism of Grand King Vladimir Svyatoslavich.¹⁷³ But the Greek Christianity that was brought from Kherson was adopted only in the major cities and their immediate surroundings. This effort itself was likely a “continuation” of the pagan cult Vladimir Svyatoslavich had tried to install in 980. As part of the Christianization process the idol of Perun was cut down and beaten on the way out of the city while the Church of St. Basil was built where the pagan temple had stood, a symbol of the Christian victory over paganism.¹⁷⁴ There was passive resistance not just to Christianity, but to the development of the prince's power.

Welding together the peoples of the Rus' would take some time and would not be a quick process. Cities such as Novgorod, Kyiv, Polotsk, Chernigov, and Pereyaslavl' were the centers and locusts of Christianity¹⁷⁵ from which Greek educated monks and clergy could begin

¹⁷² Zguta, “Witchcraft and Medicine in Pre-Petrine Russia,” 448.

¹⁷³ Igor Melnichuk, “First Foreign-Policy Success of Kievan Commanding Elite in Europe: Byzantine Military Campaign of 860 and Askold's Christianization,” *European Researcher* 49, no. 5–2 (2013): 1314.

¹⁷⁴ Petrukhin, *The Christianization of Rus: from paganism to christianity*, 161.

¹⁷⁵ N.М. Гальковский. [Galkovsky, I. M.], *Борьба Христианства с Остатками Язычества в Древней Руси. Том 1* [*The Christian Struggle with Pagan Remnants in the Old Rus'*], Харьков: Епархіальна типографія, 1916, Accessed September 9, 2022, https://azbyka.ru/otechnik/Istoriya_Tserkvi/borba-hristianstva-s-ostatkami-jazychestva-v-drevnej-rusi-tom-1/4#note462. Footnotes 477-478.

the process of educating the native Rus'ian peoples of the lands.¹⁷⁶ This was, in essence, a land where the pagan past still lived on passively through common belief and practice and threatened the ruling princes and their new Christian faith.¹⁷⁷ The struggle to unify and legitimize was necessary for the princes to wield their power, and for the Church to grow and expand in power and influence. Perun had been cast aside after the blood of man had not succeeded in providing the power the Rus' wanted, it was now up to the Christian faith to bring these fractious peoples together in a binding manner.

The process of Christianization was not fast and encountered the aforementioned passive resistance of the common people as well as native princes failing to adhere to the Christian model. Vseslav Bryacheslavich (1029-1101) was a particularly troublesome prince who managed to temporarily oust Iziaslav Yaroslavich from Kyiv and had a hint of sorcery about himself. Vseslav was supposedly born:

...by enchantment, for when his mother bore him, there was a caul¹⁷⁸ over his head, and the magicians bade his mother bind this caul upon him, that he might carry it with him the rest of his life. Vseslav accordingly bears it to this day, and for this reason he is pitiless in bloodshed.¹⁷⁹

The caul as a magical symbol or bearer of magical significance is also attested to in Carlo Ginzberg's *Night Battles*. Here the caul is taken by the 16th century *benandanti*, a group of peasants from the Friuli Italian culture, to be a symbol of predestination for service in a spiritual regiment who fight witches in their dreams.¹⁸⁰ On a less demonic note the caul of a hyena mixed with oil is also noted by Pliny the Elder as a cure for swollen ulcers.¹⁸¹ Carlo Ginzburg

¹⁷⁶ Martin, *Medieval Russia, 980-1584*, 22.

¹⁷⁷ Kivelson and Worobec, *Witchcraft in Russia and Ukraine, 1000–1900: A Sourcebook*, 16.

¹⁷⁸ This is the embryonic sack that surrounds a fetus within the mother's womb. When a child is born there is a possibility of this sack remaining intact upon delivery. An alternative root from *язвѣнъ* may instead denote an open wound on the head at birth that was ordered to be bound by the *volkhv*.

¹⁷⁹ RPC 139, PSRL 155. *вѣлхванъ . мѣри бо родивши юго . бысѣ юму язвено на главѣ юго . рекоша бо волсви мѣри юго . се язвено наважи на нь . да носить є до живота своего . еже носить Всеславъ и до сего днѣ на собѣ . сего ради немлѣтъ єсть на кровъпролитѣ*

¹⁸⁰ Ginzburg, *The Night Battles: Witchcraft & Agrarian Cults in the Sixteenth & Seventeenth Centuries*, trans. Anne & John Tedeschi. (1966; repr., New York: Penguin Group, 1985), 15.

¹⁸¹ Ogden, *Magic, Witchcraft, and Ghosts in the Greek and Roman Worlds: A Sourcebook*, 46-47.

also notes that the caul could also be a reference to other superstitions where it was a protection against weapons in warfare which is more in line with the warlike demeanor of Vseslav Bryacheslavich.¹⁸² Identifying a rogue prince who had sat on the throne of Kyiv with sorcery is a sound thrashing of his name and legitimacy, and a useful way to lambast a rival for the princely throne. It should be remembered that the Yaroslavichii were able to exert pressure on the Cave Monastery, irritating the princes would be a rash move.

Why would magicians be privy to the birth of a prince as the PVL seems to indicate, much less possibly in the fortified noble quarters? For certain Vseslav Bryacheslavich has a reputation for dark sorcery and was even seen as a dark werewolf-like figure.¹⁸³ This image developed over time and was not like Carlo Ginzburg's Livonian peasant werewolves (who protected the peasant's harvest from the Devil)¹⁸⁴ but was an image of a sorcerous creature of the night from the pagan past. Vseslav Bryacheslavich of Polotsk was one of the last and most powerful of the non-Yaroslavichii, a political and military threat to the throne of Kyiv, and his conflicts saw some of the most viscous inter-Rus'ian fighting of the era.¹⁸⁵ It would seem the royal princes were still not completely isolated from their recent pagan past, though it is generally those princes outside of the line of Yaroslav who have this dark mark on them. This may be a separation of the sacral ruling clan from the more distant relatives, it was Yaroslav who avenged the killings of Boris and Gleb according to the PVL. With a now united ruling elite and momentary peace, the stage was finally set for Christianity to be imposed and spread out from the safe centers of princely protection. The year 1071 was a moment of consolidation and control, a time when the church and the princely elite were able to look out on the lands of the peasants and distant subjects they extorted for tribute, soldiers, and slaves.

¹⁸² Ginzburg, *The Night Battles: Witchcraft & Agrarian Cults in the Sixteenth & Seventeenth Centuries*, 15.

¹⁸³ Franklin & Shepard, *The Emergence of Rus: 750-1200*, 255.

¹⁸⁴ Ginzburg, *The Night Battles: Witchcraft & Agrarian Cults in the Sixteenth & Seventeenth Centuries*, 29-30.

¹⁸⁵ Franklin & Shepard, *The Emergence of Rus: 750-1200*, 255.

The Rurikid dynasty had created a micro-Christendom in the lands of the Eastern Slavs that was centered on the areas of princely control and prerogative. Pagan Lithuanian tribes still posed a threat to physical control, but cooperation with the Catholic Poles helped reduce pressure from that direction as the Rus' princes allied with and even relied on military aid from the Poles for dynastic conflicts at certain times.¹⁸⁶ It was from the south and south east that more violent threats emerged in the form of the pagan Polovtsy/Pechenegs, at first. As a comparison, Peter Brown noted in his analysis of Visigothic Spain: "...Christian churches had become profoundly regionalized." The same could be said for the Rus'ian churches where many of the metropolitans, who came from Greece until Hilarion of Kyiv was appointed Metropolitan in 1051 under the authority of Yaroslav "the Wise" Vladimirovich and the local bishops, would not speak Old East Russian for some time and where religious education had to start from the top down.¹⁸⁷ The Rus'ian church was not a direct transplant from the Byzantine model, but was forming and adapting to a local situation that was somewhat isolated from the Middle Byzantine tradition by virtue of geography. In the Rus' there was not only a local Christian tradition that was already in place, but there was also a pagan fabric upon which society had been built. In the countryside the *volkhv* were still active, utilized, and followed by many people where the church had not been able to earnestly begin its efforts yet.

The people of the countryside were not merely a "pagan" remnant. They would have considered themselves a Christian people both from earlier attempts by Greek and Latin missions and "Varangian " convert adventurers¹⁸⁸, but folk beliefs would have continued regardless, as can be seen from later analysis of magic in Imperial Russia.¹⁸⁹ Even in the

¹⁸⁶ Franklin. & Shepard, *The Emergence of Rus: 750-1200*, 253. When Iziaslav utilized the forces of Boleslaw II to retake his patrimony of Kyiv he was directly calling on the familial ties in order to hold the throne. Vladimir Monomakh in his "Testament," recalls being sent to Poland by Svyatoslav II Yaroslavich in 1076 to aid Boleslaw II.

¹⁸⁷ Brown, *The Rise of Western Christendom: Triumph and Diversity, A.D. 200-1000*, 364.

¹⁸⁸ Melnichuk, "First Foreign-Policy Success of Kievan Commanding Elite in Europe," 1318.

¹⁸⁹ Christine D Worobec, "Witchcraft Beliefs and Practices in Prerevolutionary Russian and Ukrainian Villages," *Russian Review* 54, no. 2 (April 1995): 187.

“enlightened” areas of Western Europe folk tradition continued almost unabated with pagan undertones up until the late 19th century when modernization and intellectual traffic annihilated the rural culture, even in Frazer’s time he still saw patterns of folkloric belief amongst the peasantry of his era.¹⁹⁰ Additionally the native pre-Christian faith of the Rus’ was helmed by the princes, which would have allowed for a total collapse of any outwardly unique pagan faith as Vladimir Svyatoslavich imposed his particular clan over other Varango-Norse warlords in the area,¹⁹¹ a process that Yaroslav Vladimirovich would continue in order to impose his own line above his brothers. Paganism was dead as an organized and confessed faith, pagan ritual, theology, and practice still survived.

The 1071 entry serves a dual purpose for our unnamed chroniclers.¹⁹² On the part of the Church and princes, the entry showcases a borderland¹⁹³ in the history of Christianization of the Rus’ian lands between the cities (Christianity) and the rural population (Rural/*Dvoeverie* Christianity/Syncretic). This will be explored as an attempt on the part of the church and the princes to enforce and maintain order in the lands and to create a unifying Christian faith amongst not only the people but also the priests and leaders of the villages to put a halt to “diabolical” practices that were not considered acceptable. The local nobility, for example, seem to have continued utilizing *sopka*¹⁹⁴ burials for some time after 988.¹⁹⁵ Continued reliance on pagan places of burial and worship would be immediately suspect, especially in areas that were in close contact with neighboring pagan peoples like most of the *sopka* were.

¹⁹⁰ James Frazer. *The Golden Bough: The Roots of Religion and Folklore*. 1890. (Reprint, New York: Avenel Books, 1981), 99.

¹⁹¹ Galkovsky, *The Christian Struggle with Pagan Remnants in the Old Rus’*, Footnotes 454-455.

¹⁹² While the chronicler is historically identified as Nestor, there is enough scholarship challenging this idea that it is safe to say that it is up for debate and highly unlikely a single individual was responsible for the PVL’s authorship.

¹⁹³ ‘Borderlands’ in the sense that this reflects a dual christianity, the one the princes followed under the ministries of the Church, and the christianity the peasantry beyond the cities followed.

¹⁹⁴ These were mounds whence on top of and within pagan burials would take place, the sketch by Vasily Surikov: Княгиня Ольга встречает тело князя Игоря (Queen Olga Encounters the Body of King Igor) shows this, as a visual aid they resemble the Passage Tombs of Ireland to some extent.

¹⁹⁵ Nicholas Petrov, “The Incorporation of Monumental Pagan Barrows into Medieval Russian Christian Culture,” *Russian History* 32, no. 3/4 (2005): 438.

The second purpose of the entry showcases a struggle for the correct kind of Christianity in the Rus'ian lands away from the cities, but also has a message meant for the readers of this chronicle, aside from the monks, - the princes themselves and what may have been their continued reliance on magical divination and sorcery, though the Yaroslavichii seem to have generally permanently disappeared *volkhv* they captured.¹⁹⁶ As shown earlier, contemporary princes like Vseslav Bryacheslavich who were still alive at the time of this entry were considered to be under the effects of magical spells and power. Christianity was not merely a new faith, it was a tool for political control that expressly presented a social order that the princes could profit from.¹⁹⁷ This may have been a warning for the Yaroslavichii, and an instruction that shows how to properly deal with non-Christian augury and divination practices. It is not only magic and sorcery that is the topic here, but a struggle to unify and control a society in transition from a pagan past to Christian future.

The monk who authored the 1071 entry quickly lists the geopolitical issues of the year (the retaking of Polotsk by Vseslav Bryacheslavich and a Polovtsy raid) before diving straight into his subject matter: "At this time, a magician appeared inspired by the devil."¹⁹⁸ Setting the tone - the author then describes his introductory incident before highlighting his first section: "In this connection we may discuss infernal incitation and its effects."¹⁹⁹ Then further on still the final clarification: "We shall now proceed to discuss their [volkhv] appearance and their magic."²⁰⁰ This is a lesson, akin to what could be seen in a modern monograph or work similar in tone to the works of Peter Brown, James Frazer, Janet Martin, or Christian Raffensperger. Taking a full five pages in the original Laurentian Codex this moral lesson highlights the role of the common people and peasantry allying or supporting the *volkhv*, as well as examples of

¹⁹⁶ Galkovsky, *The Christian Struggle with Pagan Remnants in the Old Rus'*, Footnotes 459-460.

¹⁹⁷ Griffin, *The Liturgical Past in Byzantium and Early Rus*, 241-242.

¹⁹⁸ RPC 150, PSRL 174. в си [же] времена приде волхвъ прелщень бѣсомъ

¹⁹⁹ RPC 150, PSRL 175. наоучивше глѣти . ѿкоже се скажемъ бѣсовскою наоущенью . и дѣйство бывше

²⁰⁰ RPC 153, PSRL 179. ѿко и се скажемъ въ зорѣ ихъ . и въ мракъ ихъ

princes and their *druzhina*²⁰¹ in halting these *volkhv*, while emphasizing repeatedly and emphatically the role of these *volkhv* as soothsayers colluding with the Devil and his demons. We will now separately examine the four main sections of the 1071 incident in the PVL before drawing some conclusions about the events and entry per section.

The Kyiv Incident

The first *volkhv* within our tale arrives in Kyiv and begins to augur the future. The first thing that is made clear by the author of this entry is that the *volkhv* were inspired by the devil, which is standard language for combating anti-Christian sorcerers. Magic was inspired by the Devil, and the PVL clearly shows that the practicing *volkhv* were calling on devils.²⁰² This insistence on magic and reliance on the Devil should not be a surprise, Byzantine religious authority and thought had long considered all forms of magic, even some religious talismans, a form of magic and sought to discourage their use so that church teachings and faith could not be corrupted.²⁰³ This debate likely followed similar patterns in magical discourse with thought swinging wildly based on social considerations of the time. It should still be mentioned that even if this was official policy, its repeated condemnation points to magic still being practiced amongst all layers of society to a certain extent.²⁰⁴ Using spiritual and magic means to combat and rectify the issues of daily life was still a common occurrence, and one that seems to have made common sense to many people at the time.

What is clear is that the *volkhv* who arrives in Kyiv draws his power from the Devil and that his main powers were those of soothsaying. Soothsaying in particular had a heritage before it came to the Rus' that the learned monks from the Cave Monastery would have been aware

²⁰¹ The *druzhina* were the military core of a princes' retinue as they traveled from place to place and allowed them to enforce their political will, gather tribute, and delegate military issues, similar groups allowed the kingdom of Poland to grow and thrive under the early Mieszkovid rule, Sea Empire of Cnut, and Bohemian areas.

²⁰² Kivelson and Worobec, *Witchcraft in Russia and Ukraine, 1000–1900: A Sourcebook*, 7.

²⁰³ Walker, "Magic in Medieval Byzantium," 212-214.

²⁰⁴ Kahlos, "The Early Church," 173.

of from Middle Byzantine tradition, the most famous of which may have been lecanomancy (water dish divination).²⁰⁵ From the distant Byzantine court - augury, soothsaying, and reading the stars were all known methods that learned men would have been not only aware of, but may have been acquainted with through learned Byzantine sorcerers or court intrigue. Complicating this relationship was the position of these Byzantine seers and prognostic magic users as part of a learned (if often condemned) group within the court, especially those who used horoscopes and utilized astral prognostication.²⁰⁶ What magic was and was not acceptable was an area of constant and heated debate.

In the Byzantine controlled areas these practices were allowed to continue, though as mentioned there were constant arguments and ups and downs in the acceptability and even legality of these practices, based on the identification of the practice with either natural magic or diabolical magic. These arguments and stances would have been transmitted through Greek thought and education, as well as literature, that the churchmen would have either brought with them or been familiar with through verbal transmission. On the one hand, there was (through the *volkhv*) a local common tradition²⁰⁷ of soothsaying and augury that was repugnant to the churchmen due to its alleged diabolical connections: in contrast with the Byzantine book based tradition imported to Kyiv that saw God's signs in the natural world as intelligently designed, not something magic and devils could accurately augur. One of the main implications of these repeated condemnations of native fortune telling individuals, the *volkhv*, may have been the reliance of the princes on their advice or their magical offerings or as a warning against relapsing to these practices.

²⁰⁵ Walker, "Magic in Medieval Byzantium," 216-218.

²⁰⁶ Walker, "Magic in Medieval Byzantium," 226.

²⁰⁷ Russell Zguta, "The Pagan Priests of Early Russia: Some New Insights," *Slavic Review* 33, no. 2 (June 1974): 263.

The future this particular *volkhv* augured in Kyiv was particularly interesting. In a twofold prognostication he foretold the Dnieper would reverse its course and flow backwards, and the lands of the Rus' and the Greeks would switch places.

He came to Kiev and informed the inhabitants that after the lapse of five years the Dnieper would flow backward, and that the various countries would change their locations, so that Greece would be where Rus' was, and Rus' where Greece was, and that other lands would be similarly dislocated.²⁰⁸

These two prognostications in particular are identified as having transcended the entry in the PVL and continued to circulate and be uttered throughout Rus'ian history into the early modern period.²⁰⁹ This was a threat to the Rus, as it sought to upend the order the prince and Church were trying to establish. It does then conform to the idea of creating a Christian society built on the principles of the church which created a stark and clear world order using the liturgy as a political tool.²¹⁰ The inclusion of five years as a time frame lends an interesting element to this prognostication. Vladimir Petrukhin specifically notes that this prophecy must be Byzantine in origin as the five years can be associated with five pagan gods in Byzantine legend.²¹¹ Pulling on Byzantine legends then, the chronicler is able to make the *volkhv* a puppet while demonstrating the threat these soothsayers bring. They showcase a deviation from the chain of rule that was being established. More expressly the chroniclers must now show that the divination of the *volkhv* is fallible and imperfect, and that only God's power and signs can be interpreted by those who are faithful. Any deviation would have to be a representation of the devils' workings that could be dealt with by the sword and spear wielding princes and their *druzhdina*.

²⁰⁸ RPC 150, PSRL 174. пришедь бо Кыѣву . глѣще сиче . повѣдаѣ людемъ . ꙗко на патосѣ лѣто . Днѣпру потещи вспать . и землямъ преступати на ина мѣста . ꙗко стати Гречьскы земли [на Руской] . а Русьскы на Гречьской . и прочимъ землямъ измѣнитисѧ

²⁰⁹ Kivelson and Worobec, *Witchcraft in Russia and Ukraine, 1000–1900: A Sourcebook*, 18-19.

²¹⁰ Griffin, *The Liturgical Past in Byzantium and Early Rus*, 20.

²¹¹ Petrukhin, *The Christianization of Rus: from paganism to christianity*, 213.

The 1024 entry in the PVL notes that the *volkhv* appeared and killed aged villagers, prior to being captured by Yaroslav, at another point prior to the 1071 Beloozero incident.²¹² While some of these sorcerers were killed as an example, others were taken captive and vanished from the historical record. It is possible, as evidenced from other rulers (John the Grammarian) and even a pope (Paul III), that these magic users may have been “repurposed” by the local nobility in order to serve as tame soothsayers who received a reprieve from death as reward for continuous service to the princes.²¹³ This would at the very least provide some explanation for the appearance of the *volkhv* at the birth of Vseslav Bryacheslavich, particularly if medical/magical knowledge was needed due to a troublesome birth. Donald Ostrowski also identifies the role of the *volkhv* in the 1024 incident as working within God’s providentialism and as tools of his wrath.²¹⁴ This would allow the *volkhv* to be used as a punishment from God, and would allow the *volkhv* to remain deluded as to their power and function both within God’s will while still serving the Devil.

With that said, it may have been attractive for the princes to have the *volkhv* on hand for immediate magic solutions and soothsaying instead of the more distant and difficult to decipher Christian interpretations of events. Hence, this possible warning and attempt to restrain their power in the PVL by making them unwitting agents of God. If the nobility were retaining captive *volkhv* for divination purposes, the PVL remains almost silent in that regard. It should also be noted that according to this entry they targeted elderly people through devilish support and satanic inspiration, the role of the demonic will be visited more in depth in Chapter 4.

²¹² RPC 134.

²¹³ Helen Parish, “Magic and Priestcraft: Reformers and Reformation,” In *The Cambridge History of Magic and Witchcraft in the West: From Antiquity to the Present*, edited by David Collins, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 417.

²¹⁴ Ostrowski, “Pagan Past and Christian Identity in the Primary Chronicle,” 243.

The constant movement and drive of the princes to journey through their lands as well as the lands of their brethren meant that the princes spent little enough time within their own halls and patrimonies. Repeated raids by Polovtsy, politicking, warfare, and looting raids occupied the majority of their time when not within their settled homes. Yan Vyshata, a member of the *druzhina* of Svyatoslav Yaroslavich, had a priest traveling with him who was even referred to as “Yan’s priest” in the PVL.²¹⁵ This was also the era when the core of the prince's strength, their *druzhina*, was beginning to break down which would lead to issues enforcing physical and political control.²¹⁶ By the later 11th century the *druzhina* were not a large enough body to control the battlefield, and had even split into two distinct rankings, the larger and smaller.²¹⁷ This slow breakdown is one of the contributing factors to the rise of the nobility, known in later Rus’ian/Muscovite history as *boyars*. If the itinerant nature of the princes and their *druzhina* was enough to engender the churchmen to join the roaming bands of political enforcers it would be foreseeable that mingling with people who were Christian in word but pagan in deed could “corrupt” the worldly princes from the faith instilled in them by the new Christianity they professed. This is especially the case of peasant communities that still lived closer to pagan peoples such as the Finns or Chud than the Christian cities. Indeed, hoary and lauded heroes of the Rus’ like Mstislav Vladimirovich had even taken their enemies' wives and women as spoils of war in 1022.²¹⁸ Mstislav as well was inhabiting distant Tmutarakan and was in closer contact with the Polovtsy than other peoples.

So why is Kyiv listed first for where the *volkhv* would infiltrate society? To clarify against some later occurrences: Novgorod has two separate incidents attributed to it, and the Beloozero tale is the longest and most detailed of the accounts. In contrast, the Kyivan *volkhv* is a summer breeze, here in the chronicle and then gone in almost the same length of time the

²¹⁵ RPC 151, PSRL 176. попина ИАнева

²¹⁶ Stefanovich, “‘The Grand Retinue’ Phenomenon,” 446.

²¹⁷ Franklin & Jonathan, *The Emergence of Rus: 750-1200*, 194.

²¹⁸ RPC 134.

Polovtsy would raid the country in an entry. There are a few different reasons for mentioning Kyiv as the first city. To begin with, Kyiv was “the” first city. It was the arch-patrimony, the throne of thrones for the Rurikid dynasty (until the later rise of Vladimir-Suzdal). After Oleg the Prophet had taken the city from Askold and Dir in the latter half of the 9th century, Kyiv had remained the seat of the head of the dynasty.²¹⁹ Despite Svyatoslav Igorevich’s aborted attempt to move the capital to Pereyaslavets in the mid-10th century. The princes would jostle and determine their rank based off of the patrimony they inhabited, and this would change as princes died off. A more detailed explanation of this *rota* system can be found in Janet Martin’s 2008 book on Medieval Russia.²²⁰ Even as it perched as the pinnacle of princely power, Kyiv was also vulnerable, while smaller Polovtsy raids could be stopped by the bulwarks and fortifications raised by Vladimir “the Great” Svyatoslavich, larger raids could still penetrate towards Kyiv and lay siege to the city, or even see it sacked.²²¹ As mentioned earlier, this hostile Polovtsy threat is likely the reason the chroniclers of the PVL mention them rarely in positive detail. The princes did marry into steppe families, and had trade contacts as well, but the constant warfare and raiding seems to have, understandably, put the chroniclers off. Kyiv itself was a frontline city, especially if Pereyaslavl did not hold the line.

In this regard, Kyiv is the perfect place to start. Not only was it the “capital” of the Rurikid dynasty²²² but it was physically vulnerable to attack from outside. In much the same way, the Kyivan prince and people were just as vulnerable from spiritual attacks which could cause those with weak or imperfect faith to waver or be led astray. This particular section lays out, succinctly, the attitude for the rest of the entries for that year and also has the least amount

²¹⁹ John Lister Illingworth Fennell, *The Crisis of Medieval Russia, 1200-1304*. (Essex: Longman Group Limited, 1983), 5-6

²²⁰ Martin, *Medieval Russia, 980-1584*, 30.

²²¹ Martin, *Medieval Russia, 980-1584*, 22.

²²² At least for this brief span of time, within a few years the fractured lands of the Kyivan Rus’ would start looking to other regions apart from Kyiv and the area of Vladimir-Suzdal would come to prominence, and from that place a fort-city along the Moskva River would come to prominence under the Daniilovich.

of specific detail. As situated in this narrative, Kyiv is not only narratively a catchy way to attain the eyes of the princely reader, but it is also a way to situate this spiritual struggle as being at the heart of the entirety of the Kyivan Rus' and of vital importance to the Rurikid dynasty.

With the *volkhv* being firmly established as calling on diabolic sources of power and that this power was predominantly prognostic in nature the writer declares the central stance of these entries and the character they will take throughout. "The ignorant believed him, but the faithful ridiculed him and told him that the devil was only deluding him to his ruin."²²³ It is then reported that he disappeared suddenly, presumed to be dead. This is a beginning, a starting point that highlights the two issues that were occurring in the Rus' at this time. The Church could not contend with their foes without the assistance of the military arm of the Rus'ian polity due to a local group of magic users known as the *volkhv* (now associated with Finnic seers).²²⁴ The struggle for the souls of the princes and people of the Rus' was in full swing through the chronicler's quill. The civil wars had ended, the Church could now wage its war against diabolic forces.

Murder in Beloozero

The most famous of the entries for this year is the murder of women, and the character, discussion, and fate of the two *volkhv* who briefly made their way north towards Beloozero within what would later become the Vladimir-Suzdal region under the auspices of the Monomakh cadet dynasty. One of the first things of note is that the lands of the northeast, and possibly more, were suffering from a famine.²²⁵ Possibly not surprising then, the *volkhv* were able to find a receptive people who may have already been warned by a local bishop or itinerant

²²³ RPC 150, PSRL 174. ꙗкоже невѣгласи послушаху . вѣрнии же насмѣхаются гл҃ше ꙗму . бѣсь тобою играетъ на пагубу тобѣ

²²⁴ Zguta, "The Pagan Priests of Early Russia: Some New Insights," 263.

²²⁵ RPC 150.

priest to abstain from consultation of these wandering *volkhv*. However, the situation was no longer tenable due to the famine, and the *volkhv* may have encountered a more receptive or desperate population that was ready to address any and all spirits they needed.

Similar to the 1024 entry these mentioned *volkhv* operated as a group (specifically as a pair) and not individually. This may indicate a stronger acceptance in the local area, or of a teacher and apprentice. Of interest, is the fact that these *volkhv* appear as wandering sorcerers in these examples. This is similar in some ways to the druids of Ireland; they seem to have moved from place to place offering their services either to the villages as a whole or at least to the local village elder or headsman.²²⁶ Their movement is recorded as having started near Rostov and moved north where they would stop at trading posts along the rivers, the highways of the Kyivan Rus' as bridges and roads decayed with each season.

As they progressed on their journey, they followed a pattern or ritual. On stopping at a settlement the *volkhv* would select the women who they decreed were responsible for the shortages, who also happened to be the most venerable, and would then stab them in the back, and "draw forth" the goods that the woman had been accused of causing a scarcity of.²²⁷ They may have also accused these elderly women of witchcraft in order to enhance the ritual killing and more assuredly lay blame on the women for the famine.²²⁸ This may possibly be an excuse for their killings, or may reflect the very real belief that these elderly women were acting as witches and threatening the community. Additionally, the PVL notes that these women were not just designated by the *volkhv*, but would be handed over by their own families and male relations in order to fix the shortages - essentially "scapegoating" women in the society.²²⁹ This itself is very interesting, but could be rhetoric on the chroniclers part as when these two *volkhv* are killed (later), they are killed through blood revenge as Yan allows his men to deal

²²⁶ Brown, *The Rise of Western Christendom: Triumph and Diversity, A.D. 200-1000*, 336.

²²⁷ RPC 150-151, PSRL 175. вѣнмаста

²²⁸ Petrukhin, *Myths of the Finno-Ugrians*, 49.

²²⁹ Dashu, *Witches and Pagans: Women in European Folk Religion, 700-1100*, 287.

death on these *volkhv* for the killing of their family members. It is also of interest that to conclude these murders the PVL makes a special note of including a final physical component: “Thus they killed many women and appropriated their property.”²³⁰ Likely, this was payment for their services which was due to them having orchestrated the ritual murders and “solving” the famine through magic.

Work has already been done on this particular incident by Russel Zguta who successfully highlighted the continuity between this practice and the later practices of the peasant population in Imperial Russia. In this analysis he describes the stabbing from the back and coupled drawing of goods from the wound as a part of a larger folk ceremony and celebration that continued in varied form through the Russian Empire (though in a nonlethal manner).²³¹ This seems to have been a ceremony for good fortune though. Russell Zguta notes that in the late 19th century incident village elders prepared a similar ceremony as a last rite since their community was in the midst of dying from a cholera epidemic.²³² Vladimir Petrukhin also notes this similarity amongst Mordvians while also mentioning a similar festival amongst the Veps, Karelians, and Finns who all had a festival where a scythe was hung from a woman’s neck who then had to make pies for everyone under threat of “death” as part of new year festivals.²³³ These luck festivals were likely supposed to ensure a bountiful harvest in the coming year and were harmless to the inhabitants, but could have easily turned into a more primeval variant in times of trouble. The *volkhv* may very well have been familiar with these festivals and adapted them into a more violent nature to solve the famine. Christian, the people of the Rus’ were, but for now in name only.

²³⁰ RPC 151, PSRL 175. и оубивашета многы жены . [и] имѣнье ихъ ѿимашета собѣ

²³¹ Zguta, “The Pagan Priests of Early Russia: Some New Insights,” 262.

²³² Zguta, “The Pagan Priests of Early Russia: Some New Insights,” 261.

²³³ Petrukhin, *Myths of the Finno-Ugrians*, 48-49. Vladimir Petrukhin also makes the point that the new year in Rus’ was in September and so would normally have come at a time of abundance, when there was no immediate food issue.

Apart from Russell Zguta's clarification of the origins and meaning behind the ritual itself and the way it was normally performed,²³⁴ there are two areas that need qualification: first is the killing of women which is somewhat unusual in the Rus', and second is the scapegoating of women and the elderly by the *volkhv*. The actual killing of a human being is something that in earlier forms of ritual probably would have occurred in the times of prehistory or periods of history that have since become lost to us. The Vikings themselves were familiar with it however and to some extent the Rus' as well from their maritime travels.²³⁵ Vladimir Svyatoslavich is also recorded in the PVL as having killed humans as sacrifices to Perun prior to his conversion.²³⁶ From both a native Slavic religious element and from their Varangian past then, the murder of human beings for religious purposes is evident. At the time of the 1071 incident we only have to look to the account of Ahmad ibn Fadlan to see that it was not too distant a time when the elite of the early Rus' were still perceived as killing humans as offerings.²³⁷ In isolated communities such as Beloozero these principals of blood magic and faith may have still survived in oral legend, a famine and a knowledgeable *volkhv* were all that was missing from using this dire form of ritual magic when deemed necessary.

In times of famine, such as was affecting Rostov, it would not be beyond the pale for drastic measures to be needed, used, and relied upon. The murder of the women in this case, was a knee jerk reaction that relied on an existing structure and ritual format the native peoples were already utilizing and relying on but could have been intensified in order to counteract natural disasters they were currently suffering. In an article by Alexey I. Alexeev in 1228 the inhabitants of Veliky Novgorod blamed Archbishop Arsenius for an unfortunately warm and

²³⁴ Zguta, "The Pagan Priests of Early Russia: Some New Insights," 261-262.

²³⁵ Rebecca Stein, and Philip L. Stein. *The Anthropology of Religion, Magic, and Witchcraft*. (New York: Taylor & Francis, 2017), 154.

²³⁶ RPC 93.

²³⁷ Ibn Fadlan, *Mission to the Volga*, 37.

rainy autumn, his sin of fornication being the possible reason for these issues.²³⁸ Even into the era of princely fracturing the people seem to have still attributed supernatural phenomena to certain individuals, just not the *volkhv* in this instance. Both the bishop and the *volkhv* could have been seen as agents of divine and spiritual power, and their own sins and iniquities (in the bishop's case) could harm the community by offending God or the spirits. Tellingly, when the *volkhv* were finally captured by Yan Vyshata they informed him that they had killed the women “Because they prevent plenty, and if we remove them, abundance will return.”²³⁹ Conveniently laying the blame of everything on the old women and relieving themselves of any ill intent.

In both the 1024 incident and the 1071 killings the *volkhv* specifically targeted a group of individuals. In the first incident it is elderly people, in our present instance it is old women. In 1024 the *volkhv* insist that the elderly will “spoil the harvest” in some manner and they are then chosen to be killed, a famine is also present. In a similar vein, the 1071 women are killed because they “prevent plenty” and their removal will end the famine. Women and the elderly represent two groups that were vulnerable, and later were often the subject of witchcraft charges and trials. The *volkhv* were likely not randomly identifying threats to the community. They were killing scapegoated peoples and leaving themselves as the only option for supernatural intervention.

Another difference that distinguishes this group apart from other instances of the *volkhv* or even other magical instances in later Rus’ian and Muscovite history is the last technical detail on the movement pattern of this group. When the *volkhv* arrived at the northern part of their trip, Beloozero, they were accompanied by a host of three hundred people who followed and even fought to defend the *volkhv* when Yan Vyshata and his men attempted to stop their activities. These three hundred are likely a combination of issues wrapped together. They

²³⁸ Alexey I. Alexeev, “A Few Notes About the ‘Strigol’Niki’ Heresy,” *Cahiers Du Monde Russe* 46, no. 1/2 (2005): 289.

²³⁹ RPC 151, PSRL 176. ѡнѣма же рекшема . ѣако ти держать ѡбилѣе . да аще истребивѣ сихъ будетъ гобино

represent the common fear of groups of pagans or heretics and deluded Christian inhabitants flocking to false and inappropriate teachings as a result of the actions of the *volkhv*: similar in many ways to the idea of the witches sabbath.²⁴⁰ Groups of people such as this are generally represented as heretical groups, at least until later theories on witchcraft would coalesce in the 15th century. The character of the solitary individual or small group of sorcerous like *volkhv* fits best with depictions of learned magicians or common magic peddlers than would an entry describing a Witches Sabbath.²⁴¹ More tellingly, the amassing of this group also echoes the tale of a Slavonic Antichrist legend that will be discussed later. Whether real or not, this grouping was now a representation of a fear of heresy, paganism, and the eschatological Antichrist. If the *volkhv* were not an immediate threat before this, they were now a primary disturbance in the Rus’.

As has been seen during the Kyiv incident and will be further illustrated in later appearances, the *volkhv* who appeared in the major cities were able to amass followers, which would explain a dual link between an heretical understanding of Christian practices and a native belief that were still fused. In Beloozero, the fears of the religious borderland were only made more manifest by the distance from princely and church power (these territories would not truly enter the orbit of the Rus’ until the late 12th century). The priests of the earlier pagan religion were the princes, with their conversion official practice of paganism ceased. In that void the dual forces of native spirituality bolstered by the Finnic/Chud *volkhv* boiled together with the Christian influence from the princes and their support of Greek Christianity.

Yan Vyshata arrived to collect taxes, or more likely to enforce tribute collection in the distant outposts far removed from the Kyivan throne and there encountered the troublemakers.²⁴² After a confrontation Yan’s priest is killed, and he is forced to rely on the

²⁴⁰ Michael Bailey, “Diabolic Magic,” In *The Cambridge History of Magic and Witchcraft in the West: From Antiquity to the Present*, edited by David Collins, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 373-375.

²⁴¹ Bailey, “Diabolic Magic,” 333.

²⁴² RPC 151.

native peoples to bring forth the *volkhv* to him for punishment after force of arms fails. This particular tale may also be an oral legend, possibly even told by Yan to the chronicler, inserted into the 1071 entries based on the level of detail provided.²⁴³ This view is also shared by Vladimir Petrukhin who believes Yan shared this tale personally with the chronicler.²⁴⁴ Yan begins the process of sailing back south down the Sheksna River as he questions the *volkhv* about their crimes and beliefs in what quickly becomes a dialogue between the two. The central debate in this dialogue is about spiritual knowledge. The *volkhv* argue that they are able to draw the goods affected by the famine from the women's bodies because of their knowledge that the women themselves were blocking the goods from growing or being produced. Yan maintains that man can know nothing and that only God is able to grant knowledge, hence, it is not possible that these acts were conceived of and authored by divine power but were diabolic in nature.²⁴⁵ If anything the famine is a sign of God's providential warnings to the Rus', though the author does not interpret the famine as other signs in the PVL are elaborated upon.

This dialogue continues into an explanation of the origins of man and will be illustrated more fully below. A work by I. M. Galkovsky discussing this tale notes that the origin of man legend was still present amongst the Nizhny Novgorod Mordvians by the early 20th century and notes that the Rus'ian peasantry and Finns were mostly cordial with each other allowing for Finnish beliefs to infiltrate into Rus'ian lands.²⁴⁶ Vladimir Petrukhin also makes a note that the Chud and Slav cultures near Novgorod saw intermixing and even art production meant exclusively for trade with each other.²⁴⁷ This conversation and/or interrogation leads to Yan confirming that these *volkhv* were sent by and draw their powers from the Antichrist. The *volkhv* also relates a creation story where Satan creates man from God's castoff bathing straw

²⁴³ Timberlake, "Redactions of the Primary Chronicle," 207.

²⁴⁴ Petrukhin, *Myths of the Finno-Ugrians*, 46.

²⁴⁵ RPC 152.

²⁴⁶ Galkovsky, *The Christian Struggle with Pagan Remnants in the Old Rus'*, Footnotes 473 & 474.

²⁴⁷ Petrukhin, *Myths of the Finno-Ugrians*, 45.

and God then breathes life into the inanimate material.²⁴⁸ This tale bears similarities with the *Interrogatio Iohannis*, a Bogomil apocryphal text where the Devil creates the physical form of mankind from clay and makes angels enter the clay form of man and woman.²⁴⁹ As stated in the *Interrogatio Iohannis*:

And he [Satan] bore in mind to make Man, as a servant for himself; and he took some clay from earth and made a human, similar to himself. And he ordered the angel of the second heaven to enter the loamy body, and he took [some] off it and made another body with the shape of a woman, and ordered the angel of the first heaven to enter it. - The angels wept heavily, seeing that a mortal shape had come over them...²⁵⁰

This tale is likely the reason for many of the Bogomil comparisons that have occurred with this incident. Another similar tale is told by Michael Psellos in *Dialogue on the Operation of Demons* noting that the heretics whom Thracian encountered believe Satan to be a son of God and in similar fashion shows that the creation of humans is similar to the *volkhv's* beliefs with two creators.²⁵¹ Satan is said to have sat with God in a similar manner to Jesus in both of these legends, an echo and example of dualism. In the end the *volkhv* make one last prognostication, that they will not escape Yan alive, which Yan informs them is correct, all their fortune telling of harm coming to Yan will fail when Yan ends their lives.²⁵² This will be highlighted below after a final analysis of the general identification of Bogomil similarities within the Rus'ian context.

Conflation with Bogomilism is made for good reason in the PVL, as this conflation provides a basis for combating the *volkhv* along with their soothsaying and demonic practice. Heresies arose for many reasons, and the Byzantine heresy of Bogomilism offered a firm answer to the question of evil in the world by identifying an evil that combated God, the Devil,

²⁴⁸ RPC 151-152.

²⁴⁹ *Heresies of the High Middle Ages*, Trans. Walter L. Wakefield and Austin P. Evans, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1991), 460.

²⁵⁰ *Interrogatio Iohannis (The Secret Book of the Cathars) and Apokryphon Iohannis (The Secret Book of John) With an Introduction: The Birth of Christendom Its Significance in the 21st Century*, ed. M. P. Steiner, (Basel, Switzerland: Edition Oriflame, 2020), 183. Et cogitavit facere hominem in servitio sibi et tulit limum de terra et fecit hominem similem sibi. Et praecepit angelo secundi caeli introire in corpus luti et tulit de eo et fecit alium corpus in forma mulieris praecepitque angeli primi caeli introire in illum. Angeli ploraverunt multum videntes...

²⁵¹ Psellos, *Dialogue on the Operation of Demons*, 19-20.

²⁵² RPC 151.

aligning with the views of the *volkhv* and other Slavic peoples.²⁵³ An effect of the Book of Revelation was to generate the Devil as an “almost equal” adversary of God, creating strong dualist beliefs the Christian church would have to contend with.²⁵⁴ While this is characteristic of the dualist heresy of Bogomilism, it also bears a striking resemblance to the beliefs of the *volkhv* when questioned by Yan in Beloozero. The heavy dualist nature of the tale was likely exaggerated by the author of the PVL in order to identify the heathen gods with devils, as this is also the only Rus’ian source to refer to dualism this strongly.²⁵⁵ Turning the *volkhv* into demonic adversaries, left little to no room for interpretation on their power. Very likely, the chroniclers fused native beliefs with Bogomil ideals in order to demonize them, especially if Yan orally recounted these tales to them. This dualist/Bogomil connection is also noted by Dimitri Obolensky in his book on the Bogomil heresies.²⁵⁶ The *volkhv* themselves, through the pen of the chronicler make a rather interesting claim.

God washed himself in the bath, and after perspiring, dried himself with straw and threw it out of heaven upon the earth. Then Satan quarreled with God as to which of them should create man out of it. But the devil made man, and God set a soul in him. As a result, whenever a man dies, his body goes to the earth and his soul to God.²⁵⁷

Yan makes the pointed rebuttal to this tale that:

He whom you call Antichrist was cast out from the number of these angels and expelled from heaven for his presumption. He dwells indeed in the abyss, as you say, and there abides until God shall come from heaven to seize this Antichrist, and bind him with bonds, and cast him out, when he shall have taken him captive with his minions and those who believe in him.²⁵⁸

²⁵³ Christopher Livanos, “Monotheists, Dualists, and Pagans,” In *The Byzantine World*, edited by Paul Stephenson, (New York: Routledge, 2010), 108.

²⁵⁴ Juanita F. Ruys, *Demons in the Middle Ages*, (Kalamazoo: Arc Humanities Press. 2017), 5.

²⁵⁵ John V. A. Fine, “Were There Bogomils in Kievan Rus’?,” *Russian History* 7, no. 1/2 (1980): 24.

²⁵⁶ Dimitri Obolensky, *The Bogomils: A Study in Balkan Neo-Manichaeism*, 1948. (Reprint, Surrey: Cambridge University Press, 1972), 278.

²⁵⁷ RPC 151, PSRL 176-177. Бѣмывѣса въ мовници и вспотивѣса ѿ са ветъхомъ . и верже с ѿсе на землю . и распрѣса сотона с Бмѣ . кому в немъ створити члѣвка . и створи дѣяволь члѣвка . а Бѣ дѣю в не вложи . тѣмже аще оумреть члѣвък в землю идеть тѣло . а дѣа к Бу

²⁵⁸ RPC 152, PSRL 177. югоже вы глѣта антихрѣс . за величанье юго низъвержень быс с ѿсе . и естъ в безднѣ ѿкожъ то вы глѣта . жда югда придетъ Бѣ с ѿсе . сего имъ антихѣта . сважетъ оузами . и посадить и емъ юго с слугами своими . и иже к нему вѣрують

Yan then, is the mouthpiece of the chronicler in order to communicate a Christian theology and understanding of demons and the Devil to the princes using a known enemy, the *volkhv*, in terms that had been used to examine past heresies, and indicate that the author of the PVL was as the very least aware of some of the details of the Bogomil heresy.²⁵⁹ This does not mean that the *volkhv* or their followers were actually themselves followers of Bogomilism, but merely paired in such terms by the Christian providentialist chronicler. Vladimir Petrukhin indicates that this tale may not be pagan in form, as the chroniclers would not have willingly communicated pagan ideology, instead the chronicler expressly used the Bogomil tale as it would immediately identify the *volkhv* as Devil worshippers.²⁶⁰ While scholarship may not agree on all aspects of this legend, its inclusion points to one thing regarding the *volkhv*. They were in league with the Devil and the Antichrist, and threats to the Rus'ian people.

In essence, this tale conflates the *volkhv* and the heretics of old in order to combat them more effectively. This was a strategy that was often used in accusatory epistles when combating heretical activity, and also had a basis in Middle Byzantine tradition with heresies compared backwards to combat them (to a root issue of Judaism, Barbarism, Hellenism, or Scythian belief).²⁶¹ Utilizing their connections the monks at the monastery were beginning to demonize and intellectually tear down the *volkhv*, as their own recent conversion led to a reluctance to demonize their own lands - but the *volkhv* were not of their land.

By intoning references to the Bogomils the monks could use a clear and known threat that shared similarities with native tales from the Finnic peoples.²⁶² How much of the legend was actually taken from real thought and how much was grafted onto existing folk legend will likely never be known. However, there were enough similarities for these beliefs to continue

²⁵⁹ Obolensky, *The Bogomils: A Study in Balkan Neo-Manichaeism*, 278.

²⁶⁰ Petrukhin, *The Christianization of Rus: from paganism to christianity*, 212.

²⁶¹ Alexeev, "A Few Notes About the 'Strigol'Niki' Heresy," 289.

²⁶² Obolensky, *The Bogomils: A Study in Balkan Neo-Manichaeism*, 278. The Finnish Mordva peoples still held a similar legend into the 19th century.

up into the time of the Russian Empire as noted above. This would also allow the monks to express both a condemnation of the soothsaying *volkhv* and the idolatrous remnants in their own Christian society as they attempted to create a “common” Christianity within the Rus’ separate from any contact with the demonic old gods such as Perun, Khors, Dazhbog, or Stribog.²⁶³ Similar to earlier Byzantine authors, the demonic no longer lived in the city but instead intruded briefly like the *volkhv* but lived far removed from the large cities.²⁶⁴ Away from the Church and their centers of power, the demons could still dwell in the wild areas of the world.

Groups of people appearing indicate evidence of a religious and magic frontier in this area, especially in connection with the male identity of the *volkhv* and their targeting of women.²⁶⁵ The Beloozero incident illustrates a lack of control of a borderland region where Christianity was not the monolithic entity that is communicated at the baptism of Vladimir Svyatoslavich. The church was still fighting to fully establish itself, and that order had to be maintained in the face of the Devil’s stumbling blocks. The fight for the soul of the Rus’ian people was still ongoing, and in this vein 1071 is not a cessation of hostility, but a shift from the physical battleground to a metaphysical and philosophical battleground in the eyes of the chroniclers.

To end our current section, we must dwell on the festering deaths. When it becomes clear to the *volkhv* that Yan intends to kill them an odd, almost ritualistic sequence occurs. First, the *volkhv* asserted their right to stand trial before Svyatoslav Yaroslavich. Other magic users during Yaroslav’s reign had stood trial and vanished from the historical record before this, and their insistence on standing trial may come from the very real possibility that the princes were relying on captive *volkhv* in order to tell the future through astral or natural

²⁶³ Martha Rampton, *Trafficking with Demons: Magic, Ritual, and Gender from Late Antiquity to 1000*, (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 2021), 105.

²⁶⁴ Cyril Mango, “Diabolus Byzantinus,” *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 46 (1992): 219.

²⁶⁵ Kahlos, “The Early Church,” 156.

magics. For this reason Yan may have turned them over to his men for an older and more immediate form of justice, satisfaction for their murdered relatives through blood revenge.²⁶⁶ If there were a possibility the *volkhv* could have been spared by the prince this would explain the nature and reason for these entries' firm condemnation of soothsaying, as the direct readers of this chronicle would have been other monastics or the princes themselves. Finally, Yan uses pincers to pull the beards from the *volkhv*, the blood revenge is allowed, and the murderers are hung from an oak tree, in and of itself a possible sacred or significant act as it mirrors the manner of death for Gleb Vladimirovich by his brother Svyatopolk the Damned.²⁶⁷ Pulling the beard was not only a ritual humiliation prior to death, but may have even symbolized the soul being violently torn from the body.²⁶⁸ The punishment for these two *volkhv* is also the exact same as the punishment that Ahmad ibn Fadlan recounts in his 921-922 account for thieves and bandits wherein:

When they [the Rūsiyyah] catch a thief or a bandit, they take him to a solid tree and put a sturdy rope around his neck. They tie him to the tree and he hangs there until he eventually decomposes from exposure to the rain and the winds.²⁶⁹

The two sorcerer's corpses are spared waiting for the ravaging rains and winds as the *volkhv* are then eaten by bears.

They then seized and killed the magicians, whom they hanged upon an oak tree. They thus deservedly suffered punishment at God's hand. After Yan had departed homeward, a bear came up the next night, gnawed them and ate them up.²⁷⁰

For the Christian chronicler the bear was an unclean animal and a fitting end to these servants of the Antichrist, for the Finno-Ugrian peoples the bear is a sacred totem animal; but in either case the *volkhv* are destroyed body and soul.²⁷¹ By leaving them out for exposure and for the destruction and desecration of their forms, it is ensured that their spirits would likely not find

²⁶⁶ Petrukhin, *The Christianization of Rus: from paganism to christianity*, 212.

²⁶⁷ Reisman, "The Cult of Boris and Gleb: Remnant of a Varangian Tradition?," 151.

²⁶⁸ Petrukhin, *Myths of the Finno-Ugrians*, 51.

²⁶⁹ Ibn Fadlan, *Mission to the Volga*, 34.

²⁷⁰ RPC 152, PSRL 178. вни же поимше оубиша ѿ . и повѣсиша є на дубѣ ѿмьстѣе приимше ѿ Ба по правдѣ . ѿневи же идущо | домови . в другую ношь . медвѣдь възлѣзь оугрызѣ єю и снѣсть

²⁷¹ Petrukhin, *Myths of the Finno-Ugrians*, 52.

rest. There is also a Karelian tale Vladimir Petrukhin recounts about an old man who seeks a mourner for his recently deceased wife and brings a bear home to act as the mourner, while out getting the priest for the funeral the bear then ate her corpse.²⁷² Thankfully for the *volkhv*, they at least had a mourner present for their funeral. In the end the chronicler shows that soothsaying and these *volkhv* are inspired by the devil and:

of such nature is the instigation of the devils, for devils do not perceive man's thoughts, though they often inspire thought in man without knowing his secrets. God alone knows the mind of man, but devils know nothing, for they are weak and evil to look upon.²⁷³

The magical divination of the *volkhv* is cast aside as only God knows all, and instead the providentialism of God is brought forth subjecting even the *volkhv* to their fate.²⁷⁴ This is not the first time that the chronicler has used false foretelling within the tale. In one of the earlier entries bearing Scandinavian influence Oleg the Prophet was generally believed to have powers of divination or a supernatural sense of knowing, this would not save him from dying of snake bite. Vladimir Petrukhin makes the case that this is an early example of soothsaying being rendered useless as it shows Oleg the Prophet being unable to use his gifts to see his own demise.²⁷⁵ Oleg the Prophet may have secured Kyiv for the Rurikid dynasty, but he was not amongst the Christianizers of that line. If Oleg, a hero of the early Rus' could not accurately use soothsaying, how much less these wandering *volkhv*! The *volkhv* are a visible mark of the work still to be done in securing the belief of the Rus'ian peoples, but one that can be killed and cast aside.

²⁷² Petrukhin, *Myths of the Finno-Ugrians*, 52-53.

²⁷³ RPC 153, PSRL 178-179. но се јестъ бѣсовское наоученіе . бѣси бо не вѣдаютъ мѣсли члѣвчское . но влагають помѣсль въ члѣвца . тайны не свѣдуше . Бѣ іединъ свѣсть помѣшленъ члѣвчскаѧ . бѣси же не свѣдають ничтоже . суть бо немошни и худѧ взоромъ

²⁷⁴ Brian P. Bennett, "Sign Languages: Divination and Providentialism in the 'Primary Chronicle' of Kievan Rus'," *The Slavonic and East European Review* 83, no. 3 (2005): 391-392.

²⁷⁵ Petrukhin, *The Christianization of Rus: from paganism to christianity*, 49.

The Appearance and Magic of Magicians

“We shall now proceed to discuss their appearance and their magic.”²⁷⁶ As the chronicler begins to close in on his main point, we are blessed by a brief characterization of how magic was thought to function, and some of the peculiar aspects of it in the Kyivan Rus’ from the sheltered if educated eyes of the monks. Of great interest in this section is the geographical scope and material components that are referenced during the proceeding events. Heading north from Novgorod a man goes amongst the Chud people in order to have his fate told by a sorcerer in that area.

The reliance of the native population on the *volkhv* as indicated from the Beloozero incident could enforce the idea that there was a reliance on “foreign” magic within the courts of the princes if they were recruiting these practitioners by force and amongst the common people of the land as well.²⁷⁷ If the idea of foreign magic being more potent than the native magic due to its “alienness” is correct, then it would highlight the chroniclers' vehement tirade in this borderland of magic and religious struggle. This was due to the continued pagan practices of the Finnic-pagan tribes north of Novgorod combined with cultural and trade contacts, some of which may have been the Novgorod slave trade that fed a stream of (mostly young women and girls [8-24 years old]) into the trade network, and the peasant contacts with the Mordvian peoples which have been noted earlier.²⁷⁸ These were not just isolated northern peoples either, the people of Novgorod would go to war with them, and in some instances had their forces wiped out by the northern pagans.

As these magical elements continued to exert control and power, efforts to promote the Christian faith encountered issues from the local people and their understanding of Christianity, as well as the princes of the Rus’. These issues were exacerbated as the princes of the Rus’ had

²⁷⁶ RPC 153, PSRL 179 . ѡако и се скажемъ ѡ взорѣ ихъ . и ѡ ѡмраченїи ихъ

²⁷⁷ Walker, “Magic in Medieval Byzantium,” 218.

²⁷⁸ Korpela, “The Baltic Finnic People in the Medieval and Pre-Modern Eastern European Slave Trade,” 100.

converted to the Greek branch of Christianity but were becoming more and more tied to the Latin West through marriage and trade.²⁷⁹ These marital ties facilitated not just the movement of a single woman and some choice companions, but miniature courts that were now a part of the Rus'ian noble landscape in the cities and patrimonies.²⁸⁰ As mentioned above, Christianization had begun from above, these Latin members would have likely been seen as a threat by the members of the native clergy. In addition to dynastic ties there was also the very real threat that foreign kings and princes posed to the Rus' as the Yaroslavichii continued to rely on foreign auxiliary soldiers, particularly the *Lyakhs*.²⁸¹ The Rus'ian princes often married Polovtsy noblewomen as well, but these women were generally made to convert, and may have been more familiar to the Rus' than they cared to admit.²⁸² Combined with native beliefs (the “dual-faith”) and Latin/Polovtsy influence in politics, the Greek educated authors would have rightly seen threats and disorder at all levels of society within the Rus'.

Returning to the Chud people, the man from Novgorod originally waits for the *volkhv* to begin telling his future, which he accomplishes by laying down in a trance to allow the demons to come upon/in him.²⁸³ The idea of laying down for soothsaying is also echoed by a 17th century French traveler who also attempted to have his fortune told by a Sámi shaman who entered into a similar trance by lying still on the ground for a long time after a musical ritual.²⁸⁴ The *volkhv* began to call upon devils but was unable to due to the cross about the neck of the Novgorodian. A comparison between this tale and another from *Historia Norwegie* has been made that connects these two elements of trances to a shamanistic tradition orally shared between Scandinavia and the Rus' as shown by the narrative pattern.²⁸⁵ Aside from the usual

²⁷⁹ Raffensperger, *Reimagining Europe*, 123.

²⁸⁰ Raffensperger, *Reimagining Europe*, 113.

²⁸¹ Martin, *Medieval Russia, 980-1584*, 56.

²⁸² Raffensperger, *Reimagining Europe*, 77.

²⁸³ RPC 153.

²⁸⁴ Petrukhin, *Myths of the Finno-Ugrians*, 43-44.

²⁸⁵ Frog, “Medieval Christians' Knowledge of Shamanism in the North,” 57.

demonizing of the old gods, and calling on the Devil for power, we see another side of magical thought in the Rus' - magical amulets and the power of the cross as a symbol or relic. Even though the man is likely not the most devout of Christians (he is approaching someone summoning devils) the symbol he bears still has power. Similar thought may have been imported from the Middle Byzantine tradition of magical amulets. A more famous set of examples are instances of the "wandering womb" and its treatment in both men and women via amuletic cures.²⁸⁶ These amulets were shown to have been produced in the Byzantine world and then to have moved and had some local production in Rus'ian lands complete with copied Greek lettering.²⁸⁷

The use of the amuletic pectoral cross kept against the flesh of the owner's chest itself was seen as a Christian amulet of protection. W. F. Ryan specifically notes that many Russians wore the pectoral cross they were given at baptism and only removed it during sex, bathing, or to trample on it and become a magician, its mere brandishing being enough to banish demons.²⁸⁸ By showcasing this particular example the author of this section is specifically illustrating a learned and intellectual form of Christianized magical power that was co-opted from the Middle Byzantine tradition.²⁸⁹ As Simon Franklin notes: "Not only did the Rus import their Christianity; they also imported their written modes of Christian magic."²⁹⁰ By showcasing the power of the cross as a symbol against the devil and its power, another weapon in the term of open Christian piety was brought to bear against the demonic power of the *volkhv*. This also means that if any princes were thinking of using captured *volkhv* as court magicians they would not be able to work their magic, as the prince and his retainers should all be wearing their pectoral crosses. This adoption of the pectoral cross strikes a similar chord to the use of

²⁸⁶ Spier, "Medieval Byzantine Magical Amulets and Their Tradition," 42.

²⁸⁷ Spier, "Medieval Byzantine Magical Amulets and Their Tradition," 28.

²⁸⁸ Ryan, *The Bathhouse at Midnight: An Historical Survey of Magic and Divination in Russia*, 230.

²⁸⁹ Franklin, *Writing, Society and Culture in Early Rus, c.950–1300*, 268, 272.

²⁹⁰ Franklin, *Writing, Society and Culture in Early Rus, c.950–1300*, 272.

pagan amulets becoming prominent when religious struggle began, and open declaration of allegiance was desired (though the pagan amulets generally lack text). In a similar way, wearing the cross was now seen as part and parcel to being one with the power structure of the church and prince.

After the Novgorodian man fails to have his fortune told in a timely manner (thanks to his amulet), there are more invectives against prognostication as a tool of devils, a diatribe on the weakness of women in the face of demonic power, and denunciations on how only those with “imperfect” faith are led astray. This diatribe may double as an accidental confession on the chroniclers part showing how the “rationalized theodicy” of Christianity was not accepted by the more rural population in contrast to the more immediate aid of soothsayers, especially in areas where the written word was not as prevalent.²⁹¹ What good was the book educated priest if his rituals couldn’t stop a famine? The *volkhv* at least promised aid. A series of figures including Simon Magus, Jannes & Jambres, and Kunop of Patmos²⁹² all appear as examples of magi and sorcerers. Combined, these four sorcerers provide a type that it is likely the *volkhv* followed or were thought to follow. All of these figures appear in antagonistic roles within their own stories having had direct conflict with apostles, prophets of God, or religious figures. In addition, they are all patterned after the learned sorcerer who was knowledgeable and educated. Looking at these choices, it seems likely that the *volkhv* that so troubled the countryside, princes and churchmen were highly likely to be a folk-educated class of magicians that may have had their start in the Finnic regions, but were possibly also recruiting from the Rus’ian lands as well and not merely practicing their craft there. They were also all later connected to the Devil or Antichrist as well.

²⁹¹ Bennett, “Sign Languages: Divination and Providentialism in the ‘Primary Chronicle’ of Kievan Rus’,” 388.

²⁹² Rendered as Kynop in some texts, he seems to be from one of the Apocrypha, specifically the Acts of John as written by Prochorus, there is a stone called the Rock of Kynops near Patmos in Greece.

The Novgorod man does eventually get his prophecy told but is forced to leave his pectoral cross outside the *volkhv*'s abode. Vladimir Petrukhin remarks that the removal of the cross is something that was done not only in medieval Rus' but also in modern Russia when divining.²⁹³ The man was seeking knowledge that the new Church was unable to provide him and so he sought it in a place outside of the Rus'. Enforcing Christian strictures was difficult, and the lure of knowledge made the *volkhv* an attractive alternative to the Church when spiritual answers were not immediate.

Gleb Svyatoslavich Axes a Question

The final confirmation that the chronicle is arguing against popular "dual faith" as a religious frontier and princely non-conformity is offered in the conclusion for this year's momentous and diabolic character. In Novgorod, another *volkhv* makes his appearance, and a mass revolt breaks out in the city. The *volkhv* incite the people to rebellion and a line is drawn between the bishop of the city and the prince along with his men. The common people, deluded by the magical miracle worker, side with him and showcase their willingness to abandon the Christianity brought to them by Vladimir Svyatoslavich (in Novgorod's case Dobrynya²⁹⁴). It is left to the prince of the city and his men to defend the church. Gleb Svyatoslavich confirms that the *volkhv* proclaims to be able to see all future events, including those going to happen that day. With this ascertained, Gleb pulls an ax and retorts by splitting his skull and argument open in a single blow.

Then Gleb hid an axe under his garments, approached the magician, and inquired of him whether he knew what was to happen on the morrow or might even occur before evening. The magician replied that he was omniscient. Then Gleb inquired whether he even knew what was about to occur that very day. The magician answered that he himself should perform great miracles. But Gleb drew forth the axe and smote him, so

²⁹³ Petrukhin, *Myths of the Finno-Ugrians*, 44.

²⁹⁴ Dobrynya was Vladimir's uncle and likely was more of a father to him than Svyatoslav the absentee and ever campaigning warlord-father.

that he fell dead, and the people dispersed. Thus the man who had sold himself to the devil perished body and soul.²⁹⁵

In this conclusion to the chroniclers' rhetoric all is laid bare in a final sweeping event (that does not appear in the First Novgorod Chronicle).²⁹⁶ The commoners (of imperfect faith) are deluded and led astray by a *volkhv* who relied on devilish magic for power and prognostic support. This *volkhv* is led astray by the Devil and eventually killed for the Devil's lack of understanding. It is then the prince and his men who defend the Church and protect it from the outside influence of the frontier. These events in 1071 are also given as a possibility for the impetus and creation of additional laws added into what would become known as the *Russkaya Pravda*.²⁹⁷ The year 1071 is not a moment of peace amidst civil conflict, it showcases a raging battle the church was waging to secure the obedience and faith of the princes against a “dual-faith” native population that had not aligned with the teaching of the Church.²⁹⁸ The religious frontier of the Kyivan Rus' was a borderland between the steppe people, Latin dignitaries, merchants, and the Scandinavian peoples. Not only was the Rus' not fully Christianized by 1071, but it was also fighting a struggle to unite the church, the princes, and the people. Christian faith and princely power were beginning to work together, the process for conquering the Rus'ian lands was started and was making the Antichrist stir.

Chapter 3 Summary

Through infernal soothsaying and divination, the *volkhv* were able to mislead the peoples of the Rus' even in the heart of Kyiv and Novgorod. In order to combat the dual-Christianity and rural areas resistance and/or heresy the PVL illustrates the dangers and threats posed by these

²⁹⁵ RPC 154, PSRL 181. Глѣбъ же возма топоръ подъ skutomъ . приде к волхву и речѣ юму . то вѣси ли что утро хочеть быти . и что ли до вечера . он же речѣ проповѣжь всѣмъ . и речѣ Глѣбъ то вѣси ли что [ти] хочеть быти днѣшъ . чюдеса велика створю речѣ . Глѣбъ же вынемъ топоръ роста и . и паде мертвъ и людѣе разидошася . он же погыбе тѣломъ и дшѣю предавъсѣ дьяволу

²⁹⁶ *The Chronicle of Novgorod, 1016-1471*, trans. Robert Michell and Nevill Forbes, (London, UK: Offices of the Society, 1914), 5.

²⁹⁷ Petrukhin, *The Ancient Rus: 9th Century - 1263*, 113.

²⁹⁸ Shepard, “The Coming of Christianity to Rus: Authorized and Unauthorized Versions,” 214.

areas of imperfect faith when outside and non-Christian influence arrives. They are vulnerable, and it is the prince's role to bring the Church to those areas and to educate the people so that they will not be misled by false teachers. In this vein does a *volkhv* unsuccessfully attempt to amass a following in Kyiv. The church needed the princes to cease their infighting, and to amass military and political might to drive out the non-Christian influences that the *volkhv* posed. Christianity still had a way to go.

The discussion within the Beloozero incident showcases the forces of the soothsaying and Devilish *volkhv* contrasted to the providentialist Christianity that was combating it. Yan takes on the role of the Christianized Rus' in contrast and in conflict with both the *volkhv* and the misguided peasantry. The *volkhv* murder elderly women as an attempt to fix a famine that God brought to the Rus', likely for their sins. The PVL argues that it is foolish to attempt any interpretation of natural signs without God's aid through the tale of Yan and the chronicler. The threat of heresy and Bogomilism rears its head in the PVL and shows a visible line of thought from the Bulgarian/Byzantine influx of knowledge on how to combat heretical movements. The illustration shows the possible instability that could come from allowing these *volkhv* to continue free and sounds a call to action on the prince's part. The demonic power of the *volkhv* is turned to cataclysmic ends as the Antichrist's name and power of foretelling is invoked before falling prey to God's providentialism which the *volkhv* inadvertently end up serving. The border areas are fraught with challenges to Christianization, and the *volkhv* prey on those isolated peoples, the princes had to act and wage a war against these issues.

By the power of the cross the demons can be driven back, more evidence of Byzantine ideals. The power of the cross and its development as a power that can be used to drive back demons and the Devil are used illustratively for two reasons. First, the pectoral cross shows that the Rus'ian people can be safeguarded with this magical-religious symbol and that its adoption and use are being reinforced through this tale. Second, the tale explains how the pagan

regions to the north are the home of demons, and that the *volkhv* from those places worship and call on them for foresight and aid. This aid is not godly, as the gift of foresight and possession can only be granted when the pendent has been removed from the demon's presence.

In conjunction with this however is the inadvertent showing that the Rus'ian faith is not strong in all areas yet. For these figures to crop up with such regularity and in so many different areas of the Rus' demonstrate a Christianity that is still shaky within the borderlands of the Rus' and even within the city of Novgorod. Here it takes Gleb bringing his authority and ax down to enforce order again. The princes and the church must act to combat this force. Yan is able to combat the *volkhv* through debate where he shows the foolishness of the *volkhv*, and then the true reason for the famine which inspired the people to accept the services of these sorcerous individuals. Gleb shows the lies of the demons the *volkhv* call on and exposes their foretelling as rubbish before killing the sorcerer. Here then, in 1071, is the drive for a unification of the Rus'ian land, and a call for the princes to recognize the wolves in their midst that prey on their flock.

These *volkhv* are demonstrated to be not just a heretical threat but a demonic one that requires the intervention of the princes and the Church. Through their misguided actions the *volkhv* unwittingly do the work of demons and the Devil but can be repulsed with the signs of God while the sheer foolishness of demons in the presence of God's providence is shown. Each attack by the *volkhv* on the Rus' is driven off by the prince, the Church, or the Devil's fallibility. The *volkhv* are powerful and wreak destruction on people, predominantly murdering older women, but they are ultimately deceived invaders who are only temporarily intruding into the Rus'. With the might of the princes alongside the Church, the *volkhv* can be defeated and annihilated, but it places the Rus' as vulnerable, and needing to be ever watchful against insidious attack from the Devil and the *volkhv* who inadvertently serve him.

Chapter 4: The Rus'ian Borderland of Faith & Magic

Even as the church waged a spiritual war towards the outer limits of the Rus'ian spiritual domain their enemy was still lurking amongst the authors of the PVL, the black robed monks, and tempting them. While the princely line of the Yaroslavichii was attempting to unify and consolidate themselves as political authority fragmented, the one who had tried to know God's full goodness attacked the monks at the Kyivan Cave Monastery.²⁹⁹ Without, the war for the Christianization and consolidation of the soul of the Rus'ian people was occurring, but from within the Devil was ripping and tearing at the fortress of faith the monks of the Cave monastery envisaged themselves as. In order to express these views of spiritual conflict, resources and phrases developed from Late Antiquity and up to the then current times were used within the PVL to highlight the struggle and black knights who fought it. The Devil and his demons were everywhere, from the *volkhv* who used demonic power to ensnare and misguide peasant and prince, to the demon who came for the soul of black robed Michael Tol'bekovich upon a swine.

This section will delve into and analyze the role of the Antichrist in his role opposing Christianity. Following this I will then examine the Devil and his malefic host in the Christian community, particularly its imported heritage to the Rus'. It will then transition to showcase several important examples of demons assaulting the monks of the Cave Monastery. This will also serve as a step to catalog the gifts given to the monks by God. This analysis will show what these attacks and depredations mean. The demons were active in the lands of the Rus', and it was the task of the monks to spearhead the defense against them as a redoubt of spiritual Christian might.

²⁹⁹ Ruys, *Demons in the Middle Ages*, 69. The Devil's sin is not always identified with overweening pride, through it is still the most common attribute, leading to his fall (Augustinian) but in desiring to know and understand God fully prior to when he was permitted to know him, the other angels then followed the Devil as he was their leader (king) and they remained loyal to him due to their love for the Devil (Thomas Aquinas/Peter of John Olivi) 69-72.

And the Son of Perdition Will Fight³⁰⁰

Throughout the PVL there are numerous accounts or mentions of the Devil, devils, demons, and even the Antichrist; the 1071 incident is one of the most replete of these entries alongside the 1074 account of monastic heroes and saints. The story of the Antichrist begins long before the Rus' formed, before the arrival of the Polovtsy, during the Roman Empire. The Antichrist as an individual was eventually seen as a single son of Satan following the writings of Jerome of Stridon in the 4th and 5th centuries.³⁰¹ Similar to Jesus, but not identical in power as almost all Christian writers would be quick to clarify. The Antichrist then, is an inferior figure to the Devil, literally acting as the Devil's servant in early Christian thought.³⁰² More importantly, the Antichrist himself was a sign of the eschatological end times and the return of Jesus; a figure to be looked for and feared in equal measure. He (almost always a male figure) was now ever on the move and present, possibly not physically, but spiritually permeating the world as a harbinger of apocalypse.

The issue remains that in the PVL the Devil and the Antichrist are referred to in the 1071 entry quite specifically. Rus'ian understanding of the Antichrist would have been imported from Byzantine texts translated into Slavonic scripts. Originating from Pseudo Methodius in roughly the 7th century as an apocalyptic Syriac text the writing called the *Visions of Daniel* survived in a Slavonic version from the 9th century which was itself taken from a Byzantine Greek translation.³⁰³ This would have allowed for the Slavonic version to make its way to Rus' physically or through verbal transmission at the very least by the time the first redaction of the PVL was being finished in the 12th century. The text itself contains a pseudo-historical account of the Roman-Byzantine empire and its emperors, the Arab invasions, and

³⁰⁰ Paul J. Alexander, *The Byzantine Apocalyptic Tradition*, (Berkley, CA: University of California Press, 1985), 72.

³⁰¹ Almond, *The Antichrist: A New Biography*, 76.

³⁰² Russell, *The Devil: Perceptions of Evil from Antiquity to Primitive Christianity*, 231.

³⁰³ Alexander, *The Byzantine Apocalyptic Tradition*, 60-61.

then turns to illustrating a prophecy where a final emperor will rule in Jerusalem after driving out the Arabs, following this the Antichrist will appear performing signs and wonders and gathering a multitude prior to slaying the descended Enoch and Elijah.³⁰⁴ The Greek and Slavonic translations of this piece were heavily edited rendering it different from the original as is noted by Paul Alexander in his translation and analysis of the text.³⁰⁵ The Antichrist himself at least, has a leg into the door of Rus'ian thought.

The 1071 entry clearly does not state that the Antichrist himself is moving from the abyss or on earth, but that the *volkhv* themselves are serving him. The Antichrist is after all a symbol of the end of the world and the approach of judgment.³⁰⁶ Everything occurring in the natural world was sent by God, and Christian providentialism gave a logical key for interpreting what these signs meant. As a result of this the coming of the Antichrist was to be sought after, as the signs would likely be there, and the *volkhv* were therefore seen as serving him specifically in the Beloozero incident. Not only did the *volkhv* take on a ceremonial role and draw forth goods that the people sorely needed, but they also began to amass a following that is not mentioned again. In this regard, the *volkhv* are used as a pseudo-Antichrist legend and allow the author to draw this figure into the Rus'ian understanding of the spiritual threats to Christianity.

The Demon Arrives Upon a Swine

While it was readily apparent that the *volkhv* were calling upon demons to exert the influence of malefic prophecy within the Rus'ian lands, the language used to describe demonic influence in the monastery speaks to an imported heritage. The Devil and his host were well known to Latin and Byzantine authors and were a topic that rose and fell just as the topic of magic itself

³⁰⁴ Alexander, *The Byzantine Apocalyptic Tradition*, 63, 71-72.

³⁰⁵ Alexander, *The Byzantine Apocalyptic Tradition*, 61.

³⁰⁶ Jeffrey Burton Russell, *The Prince of Darkness: Radical Evil and the Power of Good in History*. (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1988), 84.

did in thought and theory. In communicating the powers of demons and in describing how the monastery dealt with these attacks, thought and rhetoric that had been developed over hundreds of years could be brought together to showcase the strength of the Cave Monastery as a fortress against the Devil's power, and a showcase of the Rus' strength of faith. The Devil was a very real adversary to the authors of the PVL, and they communicated his influence amongst the *volkhv* and in demonic incidents in hardened and calculated manners that would have been familiar within both Latin and Byzantine texts as can be seen from the earlier Antichrist discussion.

Demonic influence had been a part of Christian thought since the struggle with Neoplatonic philosophers and pagan priests during Late Antiquity and had emerged as a way to combat the challenges to Christianity in the second through fourth centuries as a way to reframe the public belief of demons and pagan practices as something inherently dangerous.³⁰⁷ These views were also being expressed by Neoplatonic philosophy at this time, with demons being seen as inherently malicious and causers of disease and other misfortune.³⁰⁸ The line between the neutral demon and the malevolent demon had to be enforced and clarified, especially within a Christian cosmology. From this fire Christian thought was hardened and tested in continuous debate and persecution. In art and literature, the Devil and even his demons would come to be depicted as black, winged, draconic, and ugly creatures.³⁰⁹ Byzantine art styles in particular showed the devil as a seedy and pathetic character.³¹⁰ In particular, both demons and the Devil found themselves attaining new forms and roles through these unchained fires of debate.

³⁰⁷ Mango, "Diabolus Byzantinus," 217.

³⁰⁸ Valerie I. J. Flint, *The Rise of Magic in Early Medieval Europe*, (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1991), 20.

³⁰⁹ Richard Greenfield, "Fallen into Outer Darkness: Later Byzantine Depictions and Conceptions of the Devil and the Demons," *Etnofoor*, vol. 5, no. 1/2, (1992), 7.

³¹⁰ Mango, "Diabolus Byzantinus," 221.

A key element to consider is the role that demons and the Devil play in prophecy in the PVL in 1071 and in 1074. When the Novgorodian man went to have his prophecy told by the Chud *volkhv* demonic possession is brought into the tale. The uncertain knowledge that demons could provide was sought by the Novgorodian man and a demon came, but was unable to lodge within the *volkhv* due to the pectoral cross being worn by the seeker.³¹¹ The cross, as a token and symbol of God, not only keeps the demon at bay but literally forces the demon to stay back due to the external (but clearly not internal) manifestation of Christianity.³¹² The *volkhv* explains that the demons (which he calls gods) “...dare not approach, since you wear a symbol of which they are afraid.”³¹³ As mentioned earlier, amulets were thought to have ritual and actual power in the Rus’ and Byzantine thought, some of which were the previously mentioned snake amulets which seem to have dealt with medical exorcisms of evil demons.³¹⁴ The power and use of these amulets shows a clear intellectual link to Byzantine thought on magic and ritual.

This similarity with earlier Christian thought is then reenforced when the *volkhv* describes his gods following the familiar Byzantine visual pattern of the devil as a dark and corrupted being (the opposite of an angel)³¹⁵ as being “In the abysses; they are black of visage, winged and tailed, and they mount up under heaven obedient to your gods. For your angels dwell in heaven...”³¹⁶ In this view then, Christian thoughts are brought forth from Byzantine knowledge along with imagery of demons and the Devil in order to demonize the pagan and now demonic others. Christianity had spread and found a firm footing through monasteries and churches, now the monks had to combat the imperfect Christianity outside of their walls.

³¹¹ RPC 153.

³¹² Rampton, *Trafficking with Demons*, 123.

³¹³ RPC 153, PSRL 179. бѣи не смѣють прити нѣчто имаши на собѣ . ꙗгоже боѣтса

³¹⁴ Richard Greenfield, "A Contribution to the Study of Palaeologan Magic," In *Byzantine Magic*, ed. Henry Maguire, (Washington, D.C.: Dumbarton Oaks Research Library and Collection, 1995), 137.

³¹⁵ Greenfield, “Fallen into Outer Darkness,” 70.

³¹⁶ RPC 153, PSRL 179. живутъ [онъ же рече] в безднахъ . суть же вбразомъ черни . крилаты хвосты имуще . всходать же и подь нѣбомъ

The most insidious weapon the PVL mentions the *volkhv* using constantly is the demonic gift of soothsaying and augury. In ancient times pre-Christian demons were thought to have the ability to tell the future, and in the Middle Ages it was thought demons had access to divine revelation from before their fall, though now cut off from new revelations and relied on earthly understanding for prophecy.³¹⁷ Certain pagan cults often claimed to have people or oracles with prophetic or soothsaying abilities as a way to accrue donations and draw worshipers. Since the soothsaying of the *volkhv* came from outside the Church it was viewed as demonic and a perversion of knowledge of the natural world which God could impart of his own choosing and not for humans to claim ahead of time.³¹⁸ Just the same as earlier pagan soothsayers, the *volkhv* themselves are shown to rely on false revelation.

As Chapter 3 has already demonstrated, each time the *volkhv* appeared they relied on prophecy and foreknowledge to demonstrate their power; it was this sin of desiring knowledge before its time that saw the fall of the Devil, the rape of Dinah, and even the fall of Eve.³¹⁹ In combating the *volkhv*, the monks were able to draw on an established Christian language and understanding of the demonic, prophetic, and their characteristics. They also brought the language of Christian providentialism to bear against the *volkhv* who used similar language of signs to chart the course of the natural world, a conflict between Christian providentialism and demonic divination.³²⁰ However, God could impart prophecy when it was needed or helpful to his devout, and the Cave Monastery needed a weapon.

Four Holy Men

The holy weapon God gave the Rus', in the eyes of the chroniclers, was the Cave Monastery. On May third 1074 Saint Theodosius, Prior of the Crypt Monastery and bringer of monasticism

³¹⁷ Ruys, *Demons in the Middle Ages*, 101.

³¹⁸ Rampton, *Trafficking with Demons*, 112.

³¹⁹ Ruys, *Demons in the Middle Ages*, 101.

³²⁰ Bennett. "Sign Languages: Divination and Providentialism in the 'Primary Chronicle' of Kievan Rus'," 378.

to the Rus', died and left the brotherhood under the care of Prior Stephen the Cantor.³²¹ While soothsaying and the power the *volkhv* used were demonic in origin, there was still the possibility for Christian peoples to be able to interpret the signs of God, particularly in regards to particularly holy people. Reading the providential nature of God is then a replacement for the magical augury and divination of pagan peoples.³²² The entry to 1074, which eulogizes Prior Theodosius, lays out the holiness and blessings the monks of the Crypt Monastery have been given as a showcase of their spiritual strength, in particular, their power of foretelling and the tireless manner in which they recognize and fight demons. The discussion of the monastery at the death of Prior Theodosius highlights the power and strength of the monastery in the face of the Devil and his demonic assaults on the brethren therein, and thus on the whole of the Rus'.

Among the important brothers mentioned are Damien the presbyter, Jeremy, Matthew, and the tormented Isaac. Of these four, three of them are mentioned as having the power of foretelling granted to them by God, while the last was a man tormented by demons for years on end. Foretelling (sometimes prophecy) was not unique to the monks but is also recorded by Michael Psellos when discussing Empress Zoë who utilized an icon of Jesus to predict the future after offering incense and perfumes to God.³²³ Even sanctified lay peoples could be gifted it would seem. Middle Byzantine tradition had a history of monks with foresight giving prophecy at odd times and in churches.³²⁴ Particularly when it came to telling predictions about a person's destiny, something that outside the Church was inherently demonic as it removed free will. The idea that the monks at the Cave Monastery have these gifts as well would not be a great leap in comparison to the recent discussion of the *volkhv* the chronicler had just finished.

³²¹ RPC 158.

³²² Bennett, "Sign Languages: Divination and Providentialism in the 'Primary Chronicle' of Kievan Rus'," 382.

³²³ Duffy, "Reactions of Two Byzantine Intellectuals to the Theory and Practice of Magic," 90.

³²⁴ Peter Charanis, "The Monk as an Element of Byzantine Society," *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 25 (1971): 75.

Each of these monks, to some extent, were among the few blessed to interpret God's providentialism.³²⁵ Damien was known for his ascetic eating habits and was granted extraordinary healing abilities, and foreknowledge of his own death was given to him by an angel sent by God.³²⁶ Jeremy was an elder monk who remembered times before the conversion of the Rus' and was given the gift of foresight and helped guard his brothers against *acedia* "spiritual weariness/burnout,"³²⁷ and "If he made any prophecy, whether good or evil, the ancient's word was fulfilled."³²⁸ While the dangers of *acedia* are readily acknowledged in the PVL the more immediate danger of the demonic seems to have burst through the gates mounted on a swine.

Matthew was another brother with the gift of prophecy and "second sight," the ability to see demons who were often disguised as foreigners and strange individuals. He even saw the demons come to tempt his brothers in the monastery, a sure sign that they were being tested for their faith. St. Anthony the Great as well was said to be able to perceive demons and to see their attacks on others as well, possibly a model for this particular incident with Matthew.³²⁹ In the incident from the PVL a demon appears in the midst service disguised as a Pole and throws flowers called *lepki* at the singing monks, if the flower sticks to them they become tired and leave the Church to sleep.³³⁰ At another time he notices a demon riding upon a swine through the monasteries gates:

...he saw one person who rode upon a swine, while others ran after him. Then the old man inquired of them whither they were going. Then the demon who rode upon the swine replied, "After Michael Tol'bekovich." The old man straightway made the sign of the cross and went on to his cell. When day had dawned, the ancient reflected, and

³²⁵ Bennett, "Sign Languages: Divination and Providentialism in the 'Primary Chronicle' of Kievan Rus'," 379.

³²⁶ RPC 159.

³²⁷ Ruys, *Demons in the Middle Ages*, 15.

³²⁸ RPC 160, PSRL 190. аще к нему что речаше . ли добро ли зло . сбудашетсѧ старче слово

³²⁹ St. Athanasius, "St. Anthony the Great," Saint Mary & St Shenouda's Coptic Orthodox Church, n.d., Accessed March 28, 2023. https://smass.co.uk/images/pdf/Life_In_Christ/IntercessionOfSaints/St_Anthony.pdf. 81.

³³⁰ RPC 160.

bade the porter go and inquire whither Michael was in his cell. The answer was returned that he had just jumped from the palisades after matins.³³¹

The final member of the monastery mentioned is Isaac, who is himself not given the gift of prophecy, but is proof of the spiritual strength of the monastery in the face of the Devil. Isaac is instead given the gift of years of spiritual warfare. Through immoderate asceticism he found himself vulnerable to the demons. A pair of demons approach him in the form of handsome youths and trick him into obeying them as angels, once Isaac prostrates himself, they reveal themselves as demons and make him subservient to them and a demon named Christ.

St. Anthony similarly was tempted by the Devil who took the form of a woman in order to try and tempt Anthony with lust.³³² St. Martin of Tours was also similarly tempted by the Devil appearing in the guise of Jupiter, Mercury, and Minerva and also had demons verbally abuse him.³³³ As a final comparison St. Paul the Anchorite was spiritually tormented in his cave retreat which would also become his tomb.³³⁴ Isaac is not so lucky as St. Anthony or St. Martin (or just weaker in faith) and falls for the demon's tricks and is made to dance for them prior to them viciously beating him.³³⁵ Fortunately, he gets better.

Demons physically assaulting others is also seen in the life of St. Martin of Tours when the proconsul Tetradius' servant was taken hold of by a demon and only cured by promising to convert to Christianity.³³⁶ Isaac was so injured by this attack that he remained immobile for three years. For another three years after his recovery the demons continued to attack and attempt to deceive him, but bolstered by his brothers he was able to drive the demons off with

³³¹ RPC 160, PSRL 191. вчи свои видѣ . єдино҃го сѣдаща на свинѣи . а другѣѣѣ текуща вколо него . и рече имѣ старецъ . камо идете и рече сѣда на свинѣи бѣсѣ по Михала по Тольбековича . старецъ же знаменася крѣстнымъ знаменѣемъ . и приде в кѣлюю свою . ѣако бысѣ свѣтъ и разумѣ старецъ . рече кѣлеинику . иди впрашаи є ли Михалъ в кельи . и рѣша єму ѣако давѣ скочилъ рече со столпѣѣѣ по заоутрени

³³² St. Athanasius, "St. Anthony the Great," 11-12.

³³³ Sulpitius Severus, "The Life of Saint Martin of Tours," ed. Alexander Roberts, Westminster Abbey BC, n.d., Accessed March 28, 2023, <https://westminsterabbey.ca/wp-content/uploads/2018/07/Life-of-Saint-Martin-of-Tours.pdf>, 45.

³³⁴ Alice-Mary Talbot, "Caves, Demons and Holy Men." In *Le Saint, Le Moine Et Le Paysan: Melanges d'Histoire Byzantine Offerts a Michel Kaplan*, edited by Olivier Delouis, Sophie Métivier and Paule Pagès, (Paris: Éditions de la Sorbonne, 2016), 713.

³³⁵ RPC 161.

³³⁶ Severus, "The Life of Saint Martin of Tours," 36.

prayer and the sign of the cross.³³⁷ The driving off of demons with prayer or the cross was a common occurrence in Christian legend. In a similar Byzantine legend the magician Vigrinos tricks a woman into taking the name of the Antichrist into her house on an oil lamp and tormenting her while she sleeps, her troubles are dealt with when a pious man named Epiphanios takes the foul icons then disperses a host of red demons via prayer.³³⁸ The demons physically attempt to attack him but are driven off by the faith of the holy man.

Isaac's initial weakness when the demons appear to him may also be a way to communicate a sanctification of the monastery and the cave systems it was built upon. The act of overcoming the demons after a spiritual battle sanctifies or purifies an area of its darkness, often being the cause of a monastery being founded there.³³⁹ Isaac's monastery had not been founded as such though. Instead the original crypt was founded by a presbyter called Hilarion, who left to become Metropolitan of St. Sophia whence the crypt was occupied by Antonius of Lyubech who gathered the original monks around him.³⁴⁰ Isaac then was tormented extremely violently and with great suffering in order to show the posthumous consecration of the Crypt Monastery as a holy site.

The constant assault on Isaac's mind may have even strengthened him spiritually in order to focus correctly and become a better monk.³⁴¹ Not only was the demonic assault on Isaac a blessing for the monastery, but it highlights an aspect of the Crypt monasteries training. The attacks of demons would continue towards individual monks until they had successfully mastered inner contemplation and meditation.³⁴² The demons appear as they are actively growing in spirituality, and thus symbolize a strong and growing Church. The devil attacks

³³⁷ RPC 164.

³³⁸ George T. Calofonos, "The Magician Vigrinos and His Victim: A case of magic from the Life of St Andrew the Fool," In *Greek Magic: Ancient, Medieval and Modern*, ed. J.C.B Petropoulos (New York: Routledge, 2008), 66.

³³⁹ Talbot, "Caves, Demons and Holy Men," 714.

³⁴⁰ RPC 139-140.

³⁴¹ Graiver, "Demonic Machinations and Cognitive Mechanisms," 25.

³⁴² Graiver, "Demonic Machinations and Cognitive Mechanisms," 23.

because of the threat the monks pose, and the *volkhv* stand in mute counterpoint to these blessed black robed monks.

The authors of the PVL used a known language concerning demons, the Devil, and the Antichrist in order to discuss the depredations and threat of the *volkhv*, demonstrate God's power, and showcase the strength of the monastery. By framing the *volkhv* and their threat in language reminiscent of the Bogomil heresy the monks were able to bring linguistic weapons from a past heresy to bear on their foe the *volkhv* and to better conceptualize their desire to unify the Christian faith of the Rus' in the face of the pagan *volkhv*. By showing that members of their order had the gift of prophecy, the uniqueness and mystique of the *volkhv* was stripped from them and the world view of Christian providentialism and the correct manner of soothsaying was illustrated.³⁴³ The Cave Monastery of the Rus' was shown to be a domain of spiritual purity as indicated by the Devil's attempt to besiege it and the Rus' as a whole.³⁴⁴ The devil would continue to test the Rus' and the monastery, but it was a sign that the cause was just, and that the Rus'ian lands belonged to God (and therefore the princes and church).

Chapter 4 Summary

The Devil was attacking the Rus' through the *volkhv*, and this was evidence of the strength of faith that existed, at least in the Cave Monastery.

The apocalyptic figure of the Antichrist appears in the same legend that the Bogomil connection was earlier made. The *volkhv* channels him spiritually, though not physically, and replicate his powers on earth. Showing this connection is key, demonstrating the real threat of the *volkhv* to the princes and to other readers. The Antichrist was sought after constantly as a sign of the return of Jesus, and the Rus' were beginning to use God's providential signs to look for the Antichrist and the hoped for return of Jesus.

³⁴³ Bennett, "Sign Languages: Divination and Providentialism in the 'Primary Chronicle' of Kievan Rus'," 395.

³⁴⁴ Ruys, *Demons in the Middle Ages*, 35.

The Devil himself though was not content to allow his prodigal son to exert his influence alone. The demons take the role of the Gods of the Chud peoples, influencing and leading astray the *volkhv* who call on them. The Devil is omnipresent and bent on attacking Rus'ian society as a whole for its Christian faith. By using their natural knowledge, the Devil and his demons are able to lead away and delude the people, and it is this demonic belief that so threatens and charms the people when used by the *volkhv*.

To combat this power, the holy powers of the Crypt Monastery are illuminated. First, the gifts of foretelling are granted to their own members, showing the perfect foreknowledge that God may provide in contrast to the imperfect and false visions granted by the Devil. The monk Isaac is tormented and assaulted by demons as a showcase of not just the monastery's power via his recovery but the danger the monastery poses to the Devil, functioning as a retroactive sanctification of the grounds it is built on. The monks are literally spiritual warriors, in a fortress of faith that attracts and repels the Devil in his attacks. This showcases the desperation of the Devil, and the power of God and his Church; it is the princes who now need to venture out and complete the process of purifying the Rus'ian land and its peoples.

Concluding Summary

The PVL showcases the *volkhv* as sorcerers inspired by the Devil. By using imported language from Late Antiquity through Byzantine ideology the Rus' show their nascent Christian polity as still working to convert the outer limits of their territory. Showing the attacks of the *volkhv* and the Devil in a form similar to early Christian heresy allows the authors of the PVL to demonstrate the power and sincerity of faith they possess, while twisting and adapting the language. Even with this adopted language, the *volkhv* remained a local and unique aspect of Rus'ian culture that continued to compete against the Christian authorities and princes.

So, what and who were the *volkhv*? In actuality, they would likely be similar to the Siberian shamans such as the Chud people's tale illustrated and were likely wandering magical-religious fortune tellers and service magicians. These figures were very probably selling their magic services to the local peoples of the north and also the other Slavic peoples of the Rus' for some time prior to Christianization. That, however, is reality from our modern viewpoint. The PVL was not written by a modern academic, but by an educated and specialized male scholar of the early 12th century who saw the Devil actively at work in his daily world.

The authors of the PVL did not care that the *volkhv* were shamanistic service magicians. This was secondary to their concerns. What the monks were writing was not merely a chronicle, but a foundational text that explained their origins from the pagan times of the Rurikid dynasty and Rus', the Christianization of the land and dynasty due to the actions of a specific branch of that dynasty, and the struggles of their sons as they entered into their own era. The past was understandable, though pagan. The events of the past led to the present time, the wars and triumphs, defeats and betrayals all led up to the glorious Christianization of the Rus' and the successful move for sacralization of the dynasty under Yaroslav Vladimirovich's reign. God's providential hand had guided the Rus' to this point, and now they had to be worthy of these gifts.

The sons of Yaroslav were messy and did not fit the idealized image of the older rulers who had come before. Infighting amongst the three sons saw increased interference from the Polovtsy and Polish forces, internal family issues began tearing the Rus' apart. Adding on to these dire events the sorcerous werewolf Vseslav Bryacheslavich threatened the Rus' through his warfare as well, as another descendent of Vladimir Svyatoslavich there was a real threat that he could upset the balance of the Yaroslavichii.

Polovtsy raids grew in strength and power, and not all of the princes were assisting to repel these attacks. For the Rus'ian princes to allow the Polovtsy into their lands, and even to join with them, was untenable to the authors who were constantly threatened by them in the Cave Monastery. The princes themselves continued to marry into the Polovtsy royalty and traded with them, to an extent that the PVL will never reveal. By 1071 then, it was clear that the land was messier than the providential nature of their baptism would indicate. Famine, warfare, and destruction were everywhere.

The Polovtsy had just raided, a round of civil wars had stopped, and it seemed that this was a time for rest. But while the princes could breathe easy and recover the strength of their *druzhina* for a time, the monks were struggling to make sense of and explain their tale. The whole Rus'ian land had been baptized under the reign of Vladimir, there was supposed to be unity as God intended. Instead, the princes and land seemed to be splitting as unity was called for. It was clear that while God was showing his signs through natural means, the princes were not understanding them. In this scene, the *volkhv* appeared as a valuable target.

If war, famine, and natural disaster were all signs from God that could be interpreted through Christian providentialism then it was clear the Rus' were blessed with His attention to a high degree! The Polovtsy had just punished the Rus', and the Yaroslavichii had just endured a devastating degree of internal struggle; punishment and reconciliation had clearly begun to take a toll on them. But the Devil was in the details, or in this case, in the land. God's signs

were everywhere, especially as the rulers violated and sinned. How much worse than, that demonic agents were moving through and offering their own interpretation of these events to the people while even offering to solve and alleviate the harm being visited upon the Rus'!

These then, were the *volkhv*. An inadvertent challenge to the Cave Monastery and Christianity in the Rus'. Did the *volkhv* themselves realize what role they were going to play? Almost certainly not, they were merely offering spiritual services as they had time and again. To the chroniclers however, it was apparent that there was an open challenge to Christianity within the Rus', and they brought down to full force of their rhetoric on them. The 1071 entry was a point of rest from the wars, situated right after the major disasters both military and natural, but right before the 1072 translation of the relics of Boris and Gleb. Symbols of the sacralization of the princely line this movement and ensconcing of the relics was a sign and symbol of God's providentialism and grace to the Rus'. The princes had to live up to it now.

The *volkhv* were a demonic threat to the chroniclers, perversions of the gifts which God would grant to the monastery as shown in 1074. By deceiving and leading astray the people through magical signs and fortune telling, the *volkhv* threatened the sanctity of the Rus'ian land, and were signs that the Antichrist was moving spiritually within the Rus' under the allowance of the Devil. The monastery itself was enduring a siege from these forces as well and resisted only by the grace of God and courage of the black robed defenders. The *volkhv* existed in a liminal world, between their actual existence and function within society and the function of demonic others they represented to the chroniclers in the Cave monastery. The Polovtsy, fratricidal wars, and divine signs within the PVL are all signs of God's providential nature to the Christian peoples of the world. The *volkhv* were then scapegoated just as they scapegoated and murdered vulnerable peoples and were rendered as a demonic adversary to be vanquished by a united Rus' - the Church and princes.

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